

SOUL FOOD

DECEMBER 29, 2016

MALACHI 2:1-17 FAITHLESS

One of the signs that a culture is coming apart is that its people do not keep their commitments. When those commitments have been made to or before the Lord, as well as to one another, the offense is much more serious.

There is something very stable about a society in which, if a person gives his or her word, you can count on it. Wouldn't it be great to return to the time when business deals could be sealed with a mere handshake? Marriages endure. People make commitments and keep them. God is a God of just weights and measures. Jesus teaches His followers that we must let our no be no and our yes be yes. Truly, apart from trust, no society or economy can function. But with growing self-centeredness and faithlessness, sooner or later we will deal with an angry God. As our passage for today teaches us, God despises faithlessness.

Within the covenant community of ancient Israel, some of the worst examples of such faithlessness were bound up with the religious practices of the culture—but not all of them:

The lips of the priest should “preserve knowledge” and “from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty.” The priest was to revere God and stand in awe of his name, convey true instruction, and maintain the way of the covenant. But because the priests have proved faithless at all this, God will cause them to be despised and humiliated before all the people. Even in our day we find that banks and other financial institutions decline to deal with churches because of unfaithfulness in past deals. Also, it seems that people lump unscrupulous used car salesmen with pastors.

As do some other prophets, Malachi portrays spiritual apostasy in terms of adultery. Unsurprisingly, faithlessness in the spiritual arena is accompanied by faithlessness in marriages and the home. Those who weep at the altar as they bring their offerings wonder why God does not pay any attention at their attempts at spiritual bribery. In spite of their dramatic spiritual performances God simply does not pay any attention. Why not? “It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.” These people have wearied the Father with all of their spiritual and moral unfaithfulness. NO! Keep the faith!