



Mt Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Making and Growing Followers of Jesus

October 15, 2026

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Have you ever had someone do something for you so special that you immediately thought, “Wow, they must love me!” One time when I was in college in North Carolina, I was feeling the loneliness of having my parents a thousand miles away in Oklahoma. It seemed like I was adrift without roots. Then one of my aunts reached out and offered to drive me to our family reunion in Virginia. Mind you, she lived three hours away from me, came to pick me up, and drove me almost two hours back to the reunion. And she repeated the drive at the end of the day. The sacrifice of that love was overwhelming. It wasn’t just the gift of being with my extended family, it was that she cared that much about me – ME! I was 18 when that happened, and obviously, that has stayed with me throughout my life.

Last week, as we studied the first part of Malachi 1, the first of six conversations, we saw that the people had been questioning God’s love for them. God reminded them that He chose them and would never let them go. The rest of the book, then, is grounded in that promise. God’s love endures forever. Unfortunately, with each new conversation, we begin to see how Israel’s response to that love had been mediocre at best. It would have been as if I had gotten out of my aunt’s car and not even said thank you.

In Malachi 1:6 and following, God opens the second conversation by stating that they had defiled the altar and shown contempt for His name. The people asked how they have done that, and God gives them a list. In Mal 1:8, God says, “When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong?” God has loved them and chosen them, and how have they responded? By cheating God and keeping the best for themselves. What a selfish response to God’s love!

In the video that accompanies our study this week, Dave Cornes asks how we bring ourselves to worship. Do we do so in a hurried and half-hearted way? Or are we coming with our whole hearts, yearning to be in the presence of God with His people? (I have special grace for young families on that one—just getting the kids to church is an accomplishment in itself!) But for the rest of us, what kind of offering are we bringing to the Lord? Are we keeping the best of our time, talents, and treasures for ourselves? Or are we giving to the Lord out of gratitude for His love for us? Are we keeping score, only giving to others as we have received? Or are we humbled by the fact that we can never out-give God? I don’t know about you, but my answer to most of those questions is “Ouch!”

As you prepare your hearts for worship this Sunday, ask the Lord for help doing exactly that: preparing your hearts. Ask Him to show you anywhere you have given Him a half-hearted offering. And ask Him for the courage and gratitude to respond to His love with your whole heart and soul and mind and strength. Then, rest in the fact that He loves you and will never let you go.

Blessings,
Pastor Carolyn