

Minor Prophets, Major Message

5. Where is the respect due to me? (Mal 1. 6-14)

Welcome (10 mins)

Whom do you most respect? Why?

Worship (10 mins)

Pray that God would highlight particular phrases or words to you as you **read psalm 85** out loud, slowly.

Ask people to speak out a word or phrase that struck them about God's character, his goodness and faithfulness.

Pray to draw these things together and for open minds as you approach the Word section.

Word (30 mins)

Set the scene:

Penultimate session in the Minor Prophets, first of two weeks on Malachi. Mal is last book of the bible, written about 100 years after the exiles have returned. The temple *has* been rebuilt, but this new generation is just as corrupt, unjust and faithless as their ancestors. This session looks at the poverty of their worship and lack of respect shown to God. The main objective is to encourage us to worship more fully and whole heartedly.

Read Malachi 1. 6-14 (you could ask someone else to read the part of the people which starts 'but you say/ask').

This section paints a picture of one aspect of Israel's life that is not pleasing to God.

Q) What is the problem being described here? What's going on?

note: The sacrificial system was established to take into account varied economic status. So this is not about God expecting poor people to give what they don't have. They had it, but wouldn't give it.

Q) Who is this problem with?

Note: People (v14) and priests (v6), bottom to top

Q) What is the result of their corrupt and lazy worship? (v10) God would rather the temple was shut up than be faced with such defiled offerings.

Note: Israel's worship has got into a very bad state, and they seem to be totally ignorant of the problem.

Q) What do the people's responses to God's accusations tell us about them? Pick these out now (6, 7 13).

Q) Why do you think they have stopped caring so much? What makes us give up on sacrificial worship? (stop caring, think we can't afford it, want to defy him openly, try to fool him and ourselves that it's ok, prioritise other things etc.)

Q) Is there anything that you have 'in your flock' (14) and know you are holding onto rather than giving to God? What would help you to release it?

Q) Living as a follower of Christ is not always easy. What of God's requirements feel like a burden (13) to you today? Can you be honest about these and turn this into prayer together.

Q) Witness (10 mins)

Finish by **reading John 4. 23-24** (or 4-26 if you have the time) as a reminder of what God really offers and values from us now.

Pray for our worship as a church and for those who lead us in worship, both spoken and sung.

Pray that we would have a passionate commitment to bringing the best in worship as individuals and a church.