Sermon Notes for August 9, 2015

The Marks of a True Minister

Malachi 2:1-9

Introduction

“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” I Timothy 3:1

It’s not that the qualifications for leaders are different than others, but the bar is raised.

“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” James 3:1

What does God expect of those who are called to serve?

I. Relevance. Verses 1-2, 5

Reverence for God includes honor and respect.

Kaiser calls it “a love for God’s glory.”

It is shown in our worship – Levi stood in awe of God’s name.

It is shown in our life. Who comes first?

It is shown in our listening. We listen to those we respect.

Here was the heart of the problem. The priests were not listening to God.

Reverence for God is something that must be learned.

We teach our children reverence for God by the way we live and by the way we talk about God.

II. True Instruction. Verses 6-7

Hold fast to the Word of God and teach it faithfully.

Here we get at one of the primary duties of pastors and leaders in the church.

• “Able to teach.” I Timothy 3:2
• “A workman who correctly handles the word of truth.” II Timothy 2:15
• “The whole counsel of God”. Acts 20:27
• We are messengers of the Lord.

Ezra, the priest, was a great example of this.
“For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.” Ezra 7:10

Charles Hodge

- Taught at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1820-1878.
- He taught over 3000 students.
- He was the leading exponent of “Princeton Theology”.
- Stood firm on inerrancy and the authority of Scripture.
- Devotion to Christ was the outstanding characteristic of his life and it was what he looked for in others.
- His influence continues to this day among Evangelicals.

Faithfulness is what God desires.

“Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?” declares the Lord. “Is not my word like fire,” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? Jeremiah 23:28-29

III. Godly Character. Verses 6b, 8-9

Levi walked with God in peace and uprightness and turned many from sin.

In contrast, the priests in Malachi’s day:

- Turned away from God.
- Were guilty of false teaching.
- Caused many to stumble.
- Were unfaithful to the covenant with Levi.

God expects more from pastors and leaders.

We are to be an example to others.

- “Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.” I Corinthians 11:1
- “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.” I Timothy 4:12-13
- “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care...not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” I Peter 5:2-3

To the church, the Scripture says:

“Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” Hebrews 13:7

Could it be that the low state of the church in America is because of the low state of the clergy?
Conclusion

What can we do?

Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705)

- He is called the father of Pietism.
- He was a German Lutheran Pastor and Teacher.
- He was deeply distressed by the low state of the church and clergy in his day.
- He wrote a book called Pia Desideria “Pious Longings”.

This is what Spener called for:

- Biblical and practical preaching by the clergy.
- Small groups in the church to join in Bible Study and prayer.
- Personal holiness and practical Christianity.
- Devotion over doctrinal squabbles.
- The priesthood of all believers.
- Women as well as men could share what they were learning.
- Sympathy over denunciation.

Could God do it again? Yes he can!