

## Speaking Without Words – Malachi 1:6-14

### I. Introduction:

- A. Let's say that I did something to offend you, and, as every Christian should, I came and apologized.
1. What should I think, if you put your hands on your hips; your eye-brows narrowed; you raised your voice; and you crisply said, *"I forgive you?"*
  2. Should I believe your words, even though they were exactly what I was hoping to hear, but they were not expressed in a very forgiving way?
  3. What would you think if I said, with slumped shoulders, down-cast eyes and a mumbling tone, *"I am really happy to be here?"* or *"I am delighted to meet you?"*
  4. Should Brother Austin believe me if after a service I came to him saying, *"That was a great message, but..."*
- B. Words are an excellent means of communication.
1. God has given to human beings tongues, throats, lips, lungs and minds in a combination which He has given to no animal in His creation.
  2. He has created in us the ability to communicate, not only our emotions, but also ideas, our imaginations and our hopes.
  3. But... the words we speak may not actually convey our true message.
  4. Words are not the only means of communication.
  5. What should I think of a dog which is wagging his tail, but the hair on it back is sticking up and its lips are pulled back showing a gallery of sharp teeth?
  6. Might it not be saying, *"I am happy to meet you. What flavor is your hand?"*
- C. Of course, we all have the ability to deceive and dissemble; to use words which cover what is in our hearts.
1. And we may use body language to augment the deception – displaying a smile for example.
  2. Either one may lie; either our smile or our words.
  3. God has told us in **Leviticus 11** – *"Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another." "But thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."*
  4. Again, we might use the proper words for some situation, but our posture, our facial expression, our tone of voice, or our attitude may say something else, negating the words coming out of our mouths.
  5. We may be speaking the truth. but the way we appear may keep people from believing us.
  6. Body language can be very eloquent.
  7. The proverb is often very true, *"Our actions speak more loudly than our words."*
- D. Here in this paragraph, the Holy Spirit hints at the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication.
1. The Lord and Malachi refer to *"ye say"* half a dozen times.
  2. Sometimes, those are references to words, and sometimes it about other means of communication.
  3. *"I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?"*
  4. *"Your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel."*
  5. *"Where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts... And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?"*
  6. *"And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee?"*
  7. *"Ye have profaned (my sacrifice), in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted..."*
  8. *"Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it..."*
- E. Several times Malachi points to what Israel and her priests might have actually said or thought to say.
1. *"Wherein hast thou loved us? Wherein have we despised thy name?" "Wherein have we polluted thee?"*
  2. But then there are statements which no priest in his right mind would ever say directly to the Almighty God.
  3. But God knows and reveals their hearts, declaring, *"Ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted..."*
  4. *"Your blind and lame sacrifices tell me that you consider the table of the Lord polluted."*
  5. *"Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it..."* when you *"brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick."*

- F. And then in a sort of conclusion the Lord says in **verse 14**: *“cursed be the deceiver.”*
1. There were hypocrites among the Israelites who attempted to deceive others, and even God, by pretending they didn't have worthy animals to offer as sacrifices.
  2. There were some Ananias and Sapphiras who were suggesting that they were giving of their best to the Master.
  3. But **deceivers** of every stripe and color are **accursed creatures** in the sight of God.
  4. Liars are accursed and so are hypocrites, who say the right things, but their actions or bodies say something else.
  5. *“The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*
  6. *“Cursed be the deceiver”* because Jehovah is the great King.
  7. Even redeemed Gentiles know that God is omniscient, knowing the truth.
  8. The Lord can read between the lines; He can hear the message which is hidden behind deceitful actions.
  9. He knows what is in the heart of both the priest and the people of Israel.
- G. The lesson at this point divides into two sections and there are instructions here for us in both of them.

## II. When we speak, we have the responsibility to communicate the truth accurately.

- A. There are people whose words are difficult to trust; you can't be sure whether or not they are joking or telling you the truth.
1. And in some cases those people are inclined to profess their honesty before completing their statement.
  2. *“Okay, now I'm telling you truth; believe me when I say...”*
  3. The Lord Jesus dealt with this subject in His Sermon on the Mount.
    - a. *“Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths...”*
    - b. *“But I say unto you...”*
    - c. *“Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”*
  4. Then **James** reiterated the Lord's words, saying in **5:12**: *“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”*
  5. **Above all things...** this is really important; this is critical to your Christian testimony, *“let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay.”*
  6. In fact, don't forget, anything less will bring you into God's condemnation.
- B. What many people forget is that not only must our words accurately reflect our hearts, but so must the non-verbal parts of our communication.
1. When you come to the House of God, what does your expression and posture tell onlookers?
  2. (Forgive me for repeating this point from our last message.)
  3. Across the street and directly in front of the doors to our building is a very busy coffee drive-through.
    - a. At any given time, especially in the mornings, there may be eight or ten cars lined up there.
    - b. I might be totally mistaken, but I picture some of those people, as they await their turn, looking at me as Judy and I walk into our building
    - c. And I have asked myself several times, *“What do they see when as they watch me?”*
    - d. *“Do they see someone excited about the opportunity to worship and to preach the Word?”*
    - e. You may doubt me, so I'll declare this to be an honest statement: I quite often deliberately throw my shoulders back and stand tall, as I enter the house of God.
    - f. I want to tell those coffee addicts with money to spare, that I love the Lord's church, and it's with joy and I am entering these doors.

- C. Similarly, when we leave the building after a service, even if the message has been a poor one, does our expression tell the world that *"it has been good for me to be in the house of God?"*
1. Is there a smile or a frown on your face? Are you avoiding the other members as you go out?
  2. Are you running out? Are you trying to get away as quickly as possible?
- D. I have had people preface some sort of criticism by saying, *"Pastor, we love you."*
1. It's always *"WE love you,"* never *"I love you."* *"Thou knowest that I love thee."*
  2. And then the next sentence spills out, proving the introduction to be false.
  3. We have had members who wouldn't look at me, as I preached, because in their hearts there was no love at all despite the verbal professions to the contrary.
  4. What sort of message do we share by not showing any genuine interest in the message being preached?
  5. Your body language can say, *"This sermon stinks."*
- E. Okay, it's your habit to pray over your food, to say grace, to offer some thanksgiving for your meal.
1. And now you are in Wendy's with a salad in front of you, & you reach over to hold your companion's hand.
  2. Is your prayer a whisper so no one else in the restaurant can hear? Is it quick; is it perfunctory?
  3. Or do you actually pray? *"If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?"*
- F. Sometimes in this text, God seems to be addressing Israel, and at other times only the priests.
1. But they blend together, because if the priests had stood their ground and refused the lame sacrifice, at least some of the people would have gone home and brought worthy animals the next time.
  2. Those priests, by accepting unworthy sacrifices, were saying, *"The Table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible."*
  3. And at other times the people were saying that God's altar is not worthy of the best of my flock.
  4. Our actions tell stories, and sometimes those unspoken messages are more honest than our words.
- G. A second lesson, and the one more closely aligned with the text is:

### III. God is more aware of our real message than our neighbors are, and perhaps even more than we are.

- A. In a slightly different context the Lord said to Samuel in regard to Saul,
1. *"Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature;*
  2. *because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth;*
  3. *for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."*
- B. I knew a preacher years ago, who pastored in the community just south of us in Denver.
1. The man could really preach; he was dynamic; he was emotional; he was an orator.
    - a. When I went off to university, the church I attended, in Fort Collins asked this man to come & to speak.
    - b. He was loquacious; he knew all the right words, and he knew the buttons to push to get our response.
  2. But a few months later his church blew up, and he disappeared with all the money in the treasury.
  3. Then a few years after that he reemerged as a charismatic TV evangelist.
  4. *"Look not on his countenance, or the height of his stature, because I have refused him."*
  5. When God refuses a man, he is refused.
  6. That man was a hypocrite, and eventually his actions exposed his heart.
- C. Why were the priests accepting lame, blind, sick animals for sacrifice?
1. It doesn't matter what excuse they might have made.
    - a. They might have said, *"The people of Israel are poor, and they can't give as their forefathers once did."*
    - b. They might have said, *"The sacrifice which this man brought last month was of excellent quality. I'll let this poor one go this time."*
    - c. They might have said, *"I'm just too tired to make a fuss about this today."*

2. Whatever they might have said to themselves, what the omniscient God heard was, *“Lord, we despise your name, and your altar.”*
- D. Were those priests being honest when they questioned God with: *“Wherein have we despised thy name?”*
  1. They may have been telling the truth, either because they weren’t thinking straight or they weren’t really examining their hearts.
  2. But that is something we all should ascribe to do – to examine our hearts.
  3. *I John 3:20: “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”*

#### **IV. Conclusion:**

- A. Among the points I am trying to make here are these:
  1. Make sure that your words match your countenance – your outward demeanor and appearance.
  2. Make sure that those words contain no deception – no lies; no misdirection; no hypocrisy.
  3. And make sure you realize that the Lord knows precisely what lays in the depth of your heart.
- B. *“Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”*