

Let's make this personal – I want you to get out your sermon notes and **write down one thing, other than God, that you're passionate about.** Preferably something you're very passionate about. Take a couple minutes.

Okay, we'll come back to it.

What do we do when passion dies?

It's something that happens to everyone.

Maybe you're here today and – you've lost passion.

In a sense, we know how it happens – **boredom**, burnout, or discouragement.

Yet it creeps up on us and often catches us by surprise.

Author and passion researcher, Gregg Levoy says that

**"...losing interest in the world is purely optional. And detrimental. Passion is a survival issue, because your attachment to life depends on your interest in it--your sense of curiosity and enthusiasm, gratitude and reverence, participation."**

The focus for us today is a little different. If losing our interest in the world is a survival issue – what do we do when we lose our interest in God? What happens when the passion for faith fades? Most importantly – how do we cultivate a life of passionate worship and devotion to God?

A deeper look and a better understanding of The Lord's Prayer will answer some of these questions for us.

**"Our Father, Who Art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name."**

There's a place in the Old Testament where God claims to be a Heavenly Father who deserves to have his name hallowed. It happens throughout the Book of Malachi. Which Jesus quotes several times – so we know He's familiar with this book and I have no doubt that what's said in this book is reflected in the Lord's Prayer. I'm excited to show you that.

When Malachi writes – the temple has been rebuilt for almost a century and by this time - the people's enthusiasm for worship was waning and almost nonexistent.

What's happening? Boredom & discouragement & burnout.

The Israelites have lost their passion for the thing that matters most.

And so the book of Malachi is an imagined dialogue between God and His hardened people. God delivers this message to Israel through the prophet Malachi – the Jews considered him to be the last prophet until the Messiah. **Take a look at Malachi 1:6 (ESV)**

**"6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'"**

Do you see the Lord's prayer there? God says He's a Father. He says He's the Lord of the heaven's armies (In other words, he's a heavenly Father), and he says "you despise my name." In other words, you profane it, you treat it as "common" and not as "holy." You don't hallow my name.

**A heavenly Father who wants his name to be hallowed.**

And the Israelites ask, "How can you say that we profane your name?"

And this is what God says

**Look at verse 8.**

8 When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty.

**Look at verse 13.**

<sup>13</sup>You say, 'It's too hard to serve the LORD,' and you turn up your noses at my commands," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. "Think of it! Animals that are stolen and crippled and sick are being presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these?" asks the LORD.

God says at one point that he wishes someone would lock the door to his temple. He doesn't want to be worshipped this way. He'd rather not be worshipped at all than to have people come who are burdened by it. He says at another point that He wants to take the dung from the animals being sacrificed and rub it on the priests' faces.

You know what this teaches us about God? **God doesn't just deserve our best love – He knows He deserves it.** He wants our best love. He demands our best love. He's serious about it. He's insulted when we give Him less than our best love. Anything less than our best fails to properly acknowledge who God is and what He rightfully deserves. It profanes His name.

God says – you wouldn't serve this meat to an honored guest, why are you giving it to me?

How the Israelites got here teaches us something critical about passion.

And here it is –

**Passion is cultivated at the level of gesture and moment.**

That comes from Gregg Levoy. Passion is cultivated at the level of gesture and moment. It's not about having an extreme makeover. It's not about hitting the lottery. It's not about having a Damascus road experience. You don't need to travel across the country in order to find yourself - passion is cultivated at the level of gesture and moment.

You see the Israelites didn't wake up one day and say, "I think we'll stop sacrificing our best animals and start using our worst instead." This was a gradual turn of events.

So consider these two scenarios – Sunday morning. I wake up as late as possible in order to get as much sleep as possible. I get ready for church, I'm running a little late but I'm gonna stop at starbucks on the way because I need a little pick me up and I deserve to treat myself for doing something I don't much

feel like doing. I get to church 20 minutes late. I sit out in the lobby. Maybe I have a few conversations with people as they pass by.

OR consider this. Sunday morning. I wake up early. I start my morning with prayer. I ask God to use me as I participate in the life of the Church. I ask Him to point out opportunities. I greet others and look for opportunities to encourage them in the faith. I come into the sanctuary early to quiet my heart. I pick a seat close to the front, I sing my heart out, and I take notes during the sermon.

Overtime, which person will be more passionate for God and which will be less?

Passion is cultivated at the gesture level. You see it in those scenarios, don't you? **Every choice you make is an opportunity for passion or apathy.** So Jesus says – Pray like this. “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven. Hallowed be thy name.” Why? Because every gesture matters.

But what if – I'm not a passionate person? What if that's just not in my DNA... What if I didn't fill in the blank at the top of my sermon notes?

Well, one of the things that I think we need to get right about ourselves is that **our souls love to love.** John Piper once referred to his heart as a desire factory and I think that's Biblically true for all of us.

**Tim Keller** said once that “Your soul is two empty arms. Your soul is an utterly empty heart and you must run after things in order to fill that. ‘I can't help it’ says the soul, ‘I must run after it.’ Your soul needs love. Your soul needs rapture. Your soul needs passion.”

And listen maybe you don't resonate with that – maybe you feel like you're just not a passionate person. Your soul doesn't really burn. You're not quite sure about all this.

First of all, interestingly enough one of the Seven Deadly Sins – Sloth is actually not laziness but it's sluggishness of the soul (not the body). It's this idea that there's nothing out there worth suffering for. But I want you to see something – a slothful person has a desire.

#### **Proverbs 21:25**

<sup>25</sup>The desire of the sluggard kills him,  
for his hands refuse to labor.

See that? The sluggard has desires. What do the slothful desire? They desire comfort. They desire not to suffer. And what happens? Because they've allowed *those* desires to rule – it will eventually ruin them.

If you feel like you're not a passionate person – it's probably because you're passionate about comfort.

When you read the book of Malachi we see the things that **we're prone to love.**

- **We're prone to love convenience**

The Israelites are trying to make sure that their sacrifices don't cost them anything. You see the irony in that? They want to sacrifice without it having to be a sacrifice. They don't want their worship to cost them so they give God their scraps.

- **We're prone to love reputation.**

The Israelites want to do the bare minimum but why? – why do they sacrifice at all? Why do they show up for worship? They want others to see. That’s the same reason that they’d offer better meals to their governor than to their God – they want to be seen by men and they don’t want the finger pointed at them.

- We’re prone to love our own way

In Malachi 2 we read that the men of Israel are divorcing their wives, leaving them for women who follow other gods, and in the process the children of Israel are suffering. You could say other things about this – that’s more than just loving our own way but when we see that Israel doesn’t tithe, that Israel doesn’t worship the way they were asked, that Israel doesn’t teach what it was told to teach – I think one of the overarching themes here is that we’re prone to love our own way.

- And we’re prone to love our religion

Malachi says that these same men cover God’s altar with tears and cry out, “Why doesn’t the Lord accept my worship?” Look – they’re still religious. They’re still worshipping. They’re still expecting God to answer them simply because they go through the external motions.

I want you to consider something – comfort, convenience, reputation, control, and religion – one word that you can use to sum up all of these loves is – security. And consider this – our need for security kills passion.

Why don’t we start that blog? We don’t we start that business? Why don’t we invent that product? Why don’t we pursue that career? Why don’t we ask him out? Why don’t we go to that party? Why don’t we share the gospel? Security! We want to protect ourselves. Our need for security is a passion killer. The antidote for security is risk.

### **Passion is cultivated when we take risks.**

Gregg Levoy says,

“Passion is in the risk. In the willingness to step from the sidelines onto the playing field.”

The Israelites are playing it safe. They’re sacrificing animals that are worthless to them. They’re withholding their tithe, they’re living like the world, and they’re living according to what they can see. They’re not taking any chances. Faith is a risk, isn’t it? Is God real? Will worshipping Him and following Him pan out? Will trusting in Him really work? Will the mana still show up tomorrow morning? Will my crops really be okay if I Sabbath? The pursuit of security will kill your passion. Time and time again.

And so what does God do? He tells the Israelites to test Him – to take risks. (Malachi 3:10)

<sup>10</sup> Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

So maybe you’re wondering – why should I risk my security to be passionate about God? And here’s my answer: Only God Can be trusted with the love that only He deserves

Look at **Malachi 1 verse 2**. It's God's first words to the Israelites. It's what he opens with. I love the NLT here. "I have always loved you."

No one can say that about you the way that God can say it about you. Even before the world came into being He has always loved you.

The first time the Bible speaks of love between God and man it speaks of God's love for man... not man's love for God. And the very first thing we're told about God's love is that it's unfailing.

There's nothing that you can worship – in other words, nothing that you can love the way that only God deserves to be loved – there's nothing that you can give your life to (other than God) that won't let you down or won't destroy you in the process if you do.

God has several analogies for idolatry but one the most applicable ones for our purpose today comes from **Jeremiah 2:27**

They say to wood, 'You are my father,'  
and to stone, 'You gave me birth.'  
They have turned their backs to me  
and not their faces;  
yet when they are in trouble, they say,  
'Come and save us!'

You see idolatry is anytime we take something and we say, "You're my Father" "You make me." Idolatry is anytime we say, "I'm nothing without you." "I'm nobody without you." Idolatry is anytime we find our identity or our worth or our value in something other than God. Anytime we do that – with something other than God – we either end up destroying ourselves, or we're left emptyhanded, or at the very least we settle for something much much less than what God has for us.

Look at the blank you filled in at the beginning of this message – if you don't know who you are without that thing – it's your idol. It's your father.

So God, in **Malachi 1:6** says, "Am I your Father?" In **Malachi 2:10** he says, "are we not all children of the same Father?"

What's God doing here? He's saying – think about who made you. Think about where your value comes from. Think about who you belong to. You don't belong to convenience. You don't belong to security. You don't belong to comfort. You're not to be mastered by fear. You're not to give your life to creation. You're not to hand your will over to sin.

**C.S. Lewis puts it this way:**

““It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

There's something else that I want you to hear because it's a great comfort to me when I give up my sin to God. Here it – follow me on this.

Every sin is a perversion of good. It's why sin is so deceitful and so easily justifiable – because almost always there's something good in it that we can hold onto as an excuse for why we're doing it.

But here's another truth – every good thing finds its perfect form in God. He's the source of all that's good.

And Here's what I'm getting at – if you give yourself completely to God – you won't ever miss out. Either in this life or in the next, you'll get what you want. Any good that you pursue in sin finds its most perfect form in God.

I don't care if it's a nicotine addiction or lust or pride or envy or sloth – whatever good those things have to offer, whatever sweetness they give you, whatever attraction they have – the good that's in those things is in God. You will not miss out.

**If you want to be passionate about God – know that He's the one passion that will never let you down,** that you can devote yourself to completely. He alone is worth your life's pursuit.

So what do we do?

### **Order your loves**

When your love is out of order, your lives will be out of order, and your community will be out of order.

That's what you get when you read Malachi. The worshipping community suffers. The family unit suffers. Even the land suffers.

**When your love is out of order, your lives will be out of order, and your community will be out of order.**

Augustine often compares sin to this concept of “disordered love” and in one place he says something like this:

**“You love God too little if you love** anything alongside God without loving God even more for it. You who are Love, you burn forever and are never quenched. Love, my God, help me burn. You command self control – give me what you command and command whatever you want.”

You see it's not that Christians can't have loves. It's not that you can't love your family. It's not that you can't love to create art, it's not that you can't love your job – it's that everything that you love has to be in line with God's will and it ought to cause you to love God more. So when you love art – love the source of Creativity and Creation all the more because of it. When you love family, love the one who calls Himself Father. When you love comfort – love the Comforter. When you love peace – Love the Prince of Peace. When you love pleasure – Love the one who created pleasure receptors. And never let lesser loves take the place of God.

**If you want to be passionate about God, order your loves.**

I want you to see what happens at the end of Malachi after this dialogue plays out.

3:16 “Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name.

3:17 They will be my people, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. On the day when I act in judgment, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child.”

God starts the dialogue in Malachi 1 by introducing himself as a loving father whose name is to be honored. He ends the dialogue by saying that He takes note of a remnant of people who honor his name and to them he will be a heavenly Father.

And that’s our last one –

### **Passionate people gather together**

Think about all the conferences and conventions there are for all of the passions there are – what do passionate people do? They get together. They learn from each other. They spur each other on.

When you’re passionately pursuing God with other people – God listens to what you’re talking about and He takes special note of it. Get together with your small groups this week and Hallow God’s name.

You see, when Jesus teaches us to pray – he’s teaching us to be this people that Malachi mentions. The type of people that gather together to seek their Heavenly Father and Hallow his name.