

**2/5/23**

Sermon- Honoring The Lord's Wishes

Scripture- Malachi 3: 6-12, CTW- Ps 112: 1-9

Hymns- 470, 455, 437

Theme: Some people are hesitant to tithe, because they feel that they have too many financial obligations to spare anything. But, did you know that the Bible teaches that both our financial troubles and our daily trials will lessen or cease **if we do tithe?**

### **I. Introduction- Money Is a Very Frustrating Thing**

Money can be a very frustrating thing because you just never seem to have enough of it. Right? Comedian Bob Phillips says: "Money used to talk – then it whispered. Now it just sneaks off... Today a dollar saved is a quarter earned . . . the economy is terrible right now. At the beginning of the year, the politicians promised things would improve by the last quarter. Well, I'm down to my last quarter and they haven't improved."

How many of you can identify with what he's saying? Keep in mind that I'm just trying to lighten the mood with a bit of humor.

**A. Many of us feel like we are just scraping by and then the church** reminds us about the Christian duty to tithe. We feel like we can't make it if we spare a penny more, and so we don't give to the church. Did you know that "only about four-percent of professing Christians tithe?"

We may be afraid to give because we feel that our income is just too far spent and that we have way too many financial obligations to spare anything. For those who are self-employed, such as farmers, the government can take up to thirty percent of their annual income, if there are no tax deductions.

Giving an extra ten percent after losing nearly thirty percent can feel like you're being drained alive. I must admit that it takes a whole lot of faith for a person to tithe in a situation like this.

**B. More than likely, each of us has some money to spare, but we're afraid that once we've given it, then some emergency will arise and we'll wish we had it back.** From what we see each and every day of our life, it's no wonder we hold on to what little we have. It seems hard to make it. With both financial obligations and the daily trials, it appears to be true that when it rains it pours!

However, did you know that the **Bible tells us that both our financial troubles and our daily trials will lessen or even cease if we go ahead and give to the Lord as He asks us?** That's what God says in our passage of Scripture for today. If you're curious about how this is possible, then let's dig into God's Word!

## **II. Robbing God of Tithes and Offerings (vv. 7-9)**

**A. Malachi was written sometime after the Israelites were returning from the Babylonian exile of 587 B.C.** This book describes "a time when the hopes of the returned exiles had turned bitter. The people had become cynical and careless in their acts of worship." They were cynical because of the continued delay in the glorious future that God had promised them.

So, what was the heart of the problem? The Lord said in verse 7, that the people had not truly returned to Him. **He said, "Return to Me, and I will return to you."**

So, what was the main purpose of the Babylonian exile from which the people had just returned, and did the people learn their lesson that God tried to teach them? What evidence did God use to show the Israelites that they had gone astray from Him, and what did the people need to do in order to prove that they were truly ready to return to God?

**B. To answer the first question, the Lord allowed the Israelites to be taken into captivity because they had been worshipping and serving their own passions and desires, and they were bowing down to false gods and idols.** The Lord utilized the captivity as a means of purifying Israel. Many of the “rotten apples” – so to speak – died off; and others, in their time of trial, learned that they really needed to lean on God and **become totally dependent on Him.**

We see, however, that many people had not learned their lesson. Instead of looking to see what God was trying to teach them and moving ahead in faith, they were bitter because they had to endure such hardship.

Many people were holding a grudge against God, or they had failed to notice His provision and deliverance; therefore, they didn't see any real value in worshipping the Lord. They likely reasoned that it's pointless to worship a non-existent God.

So, instead of serving and worshipping the Lord, they continued to serve and worship the god of self. **They looked out only for “number one.”**

**C. How many of us feel and act like this? Life can be difficult at times. It appears we're faced with trials on every hand.** Some of the trials are the result of the “refiner's fire” of God, and some of the trials are from the opposition of the enemy, the devil. No matter the source, many of us get so fed up that we become angry with God and we blame it all on Him.

For some strange reason though, instead of turning to the One who's able to help us, we turn away from Him, and then we wonder why things aren't improving.

Then we become even angrier with God, and we enter a vicious and never-ending cycle of bitterness towards Him. Life continues to be difficult and all we do is continue to reject the One who's able to change all that. We then try to make it through life apart

from the Lord. We trust in our own provision instead of trusting God. It's senseless, but that's how it goes.

For the returning exiles, this rejection of God manifested in a refusal to give their tithes and offerings, and this is the evidence the Lord used against the people. Their heart was revealed by the way they handled their money.

**D. 1 Timothy 6:10 says, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."** We tend to feel that money makes the world go around, and that money puts a roof over our head and food on our plate.

When we stop trusting in the Lord, then money can become our god. Remember, though, that it was because the exiles served other gods that the Lord allowed trials to come into their life.

**1 Timothy 6:10** continues to say of those serving the god of money that, "some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." The truth is that if we serve another god, such as money, then this will result in a continuation of "many sorrows," or more trials, until we learn our lesson.

**E. Money is something that we pour our very life into obtaining, so in a sense, we idolize money.** However, if we surrender it over to the Lord – the One who is our true God – then we are thus surrendering our "very life" to the Lord; and all the effort we put into obtaining that money becomes as though we worked and did it all unto the Lord.

When we're able to surrender our money to God then we're showing that we're worshipping Him alone instead of worshipping ourselves. We are showing that He is our sole provider, instead of trying to rely on our own efforts and money to meet our needs.

Letting go of our finances is placing our trust in God alone; and placing our trust in God is the lesson that we all need to learn before we can ever be useful to the Lord in His kingdom service.

When we learn to completely trust in God then our character will be exactly where it needs to be.

We will have learned many of the lessons that God intended for us to learn when we've given Him top priority over our finances. Therefore, those character-shaping trials that we've been enduring for so long will either decrease or cease altogether.

**F. We read here that we must prove our trust in God alone by surrendering unto Him our tithes and offerings.**

Since we need to be obedient in giving these things unto the Lord, then we need to understand what "tithes" and "offerings" are, right?

Did you know that "tithes" and "offerings" are two separate and different things? They really are, so let's briefly define them to know what God expects of us in our monetary stewardship.

**We see the "tithe" mentioned in Leviticus 27:30, which says, "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord."** In **Genesis 28:22**, Jacob promised the Lord, "All that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You." So, "the meaning of the word tithe is 'a tenth part.' Ten percent was to be given back to God and it was mandatory."

**III. There is a Twofold Blessing of Tithing (vv. 10-12)**

**A. The Lord tells us here to test Him and see whether He will provide when we give Him our tithes and offerings.**

When we learn to worship the Lord instead of money, and when we learn to trust in His provision instead of trusting in ourselves, then we'll receive a twofold blessing.

**The two parts of the blessing are: 1.) Heaven will be opened, and 2.) our enemies will be defeated.** In other words, our daily trials will lessen or even cease. God will first shower down abundance from heaven by meeting our financial needs. Then, the Lord will fight off the attacks waged against us

by our enemy, the devil; and He will also fight off the attacks that come from other people. If we give unto the Lord, then He will meet all our needs.

**B. Perry Haydon and Henry Ford found out through a little experiment that God would “open up the floodgates of heaven” when we tithe and give unto Him.** They tested God as He tells us to in this passage. Haydon was a Quaker and the experiment was his idea, but Ford found out about it and thought it was fascinating, and so he jumped in on it.

**Allow me to share the experiment:**

**1. These two men wanted to prove the principle of the tithe, and so they took 1 cubic inch of wheat kernels and planted it on a 4 x 8-foot plot of ground.** After one year this yielded 50 cubic inches of kernels. They then tithed 5 inches, or ten percent. What they tithed was the actual money made from selling the wheat. They then took the remaining 45 inches and planted it again.

**2. The next year they had a 55-fold increase and brought up 70 lbs. of wheat seed, tithed on 7 lbs. and then planted 63.** The next year they harvested 16 bushels and had to get a reaper and a thresher. They tithed on the 16 bushels and planted the rest, and then the next year they had 380 bushels. 1 cubic inch of wheat had grown to 817,000 cubic inches. Henry Ford then went and got a combine.

**3. They then planted those bushels, and the next year it took hundreds of acres to plant it all and it took 40 combines to bring in 72,150 bushels of wheat, worth well over a half million dollars today.** They then sold it to 250 farmers who agreed to tithe to their local church. And all those farmers took it and made millions of dollars to further the Lord’s kingdom.

There is a passage in Haggai, which elaborates on why God was led to chastise His people concerning their lack of giving.

**Haggai 1:9-11 states:** "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore, the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."

Money was needed to rebuild the temple, but the Lord said that the people spent all their money on themselves while the temple lay in ruins. Based on this passage from Haggai, we see that **"many people can't afford to give precisely because they are not giving."** Many of us reason that we can't afford to give to God, but we can't afford NOT to give.

**C. Whenever we tithe and present our offerings, God gives back in abundance. He doesn't do it as a reward, but He does it so that we will have a greater amount on which to give.** Jesus said in **Matthew 25:29**, "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance." Those who give in large amounts might see an increase in their income. Let me give you a couple of examples.

**A fellow named R. G. LeTourneau who invented earthmoving machines.** He gave away ninety percent of his income. But the money came in faster than he could give it away. LeTourneau said, 'I shovel it out and God shovels it back – but God has a bigger shovel'."

Jesus said in **Luke 6:38**: "Give, and it will be given to you: a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

#### **IV. We All Need to Spend Time to Reflect on This Matter.**

**A. What we've seen this morning is that many people are having difficulties in our life, possibly in a financial sense; and for this reason, we hold out on God.** We panic because of our struggles, and we try to solve our problems on our own, instead of trusting God to do so.

We depend on money to help us instead of God; and without really knowing it, we come to worship money. Whenever we fail to trust the Lord then the trials just keep on coming.

The way out of our difficulties is to prove our dependence on God by surrendering everything we own unto Him, especially our finances.

It's a great mystery in how giving what little we have can result in gaining more, but this is what God says will occur and we must trust Him that it will happen.

**B. In Verse 10 The Lord says simply, "Try Me now in this . . . and see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it"**

As I've already said, when we give our finances to God, we're showing the Lord that we are giving Him our very life.

Try Him in this and see if He will not open the heavens and shower down the blessing of eternal life on you. Try Him and see if He will not bless every area of your life.

I want to encourage you to give more of your life over to Jesus Christ this morning. Amen? Let Us Pray...