

Opening Heaven's Windows Malachi 3:7-12

Introduction:

Our Lord's plan to finance and support the work of His church is a simple one.

By the faithful tithes and offerings of His people, the work of God is to be supported.

God never intended for the work of the church to be supported in any other way.

- To use raffles,
- bazaars,
- bingo,
- and the like is not in His plan.

Nor does God desire for the church to go into the world begging.

The Lord is not pleased with high pressure campaigns and . . .

He is not pleased with other cleverly designed schemes to raise money for His Church.

His simple plan is for His people to give a minimum of a tithe to support His work.

You see – Now understand with me - This is the beginning place of Christian stewardship.

The fact that Jesus stood by the treasury of the temple as recorded in Mark 12:14-44 and watched people bring and put in their money into the offering plates, indicates that He is interested in what they gave, and how they gave it.

The subject of money is a touchy one for some people in the church, but it should not be.

One of the biggest indictments against the church is what we hear, "They're always asking for money!"

We, as committed Christian believers, should be eager to know God's method for our giving and be eager to obey God in this area.

God has given us many wonderful promises, which, by the way, depends on our obedience in this area.

You see as we worship God and become obedient to God in our giving, we will begin to see His blessing of provision for our material needs in a wonderful way.

Anyone who is serious about following the Lord must take giving to Him and His Work seriously.

There are three reasons why some do not tithe.

- 1) The first is that they have never been taught to tithe. Because of the way some people react, many preachers never approach the subject.

But we do not do our people a favor by neglecting this teaching.

- 2) The second reason people do not tithe is that they misunderstand the place of tithing in the Bible.
 - a. Some do not think that it is for today.
 - b. But this is a misunderstanding of the principle of tithing as God's plan for giving.
 - c. I suspect the real reason they object is that they do not want to tithe anyway.

Frank Hubbard has said, "When a fellow says, 'It ain't the money but the principle of the thing,' it's the money."

And Frank Hubbard is right.

Do you really believe that you are glorifying God by not tithing?

- 3) The third reason that people do not tithe is because they refuse to do so.

But some people refuse to tithe, no matter what you say, or what God says.

I trust that you are not in this category.

If you are you may want to look closely at your life.

If you do I believe that you will see the hand of God's judgment on your life.

You see, God will not be mocked.

Many people are living lives filled with tragic events;

Events which cause them not only financial suffering, but emotional suffering as well.

They are suffering, because as Christians, they refuse to give God His tithe.

They, in the words of our text today, have been, "***cursed with a curse.***"

May God give you repentance today if you are in this category of those who refuse to tithe.

O.S. Hawkins said, "**The principle hindrance to the advancement of the kingdom of God is greed. It is the chief obstacle to heaven sent revival. It's seems that when the back of greed is broken, the human spirit soars into regions of unselfishness. I believe that it is safe to say there can be no continuous revival without 'hilarious' giving. And I fear no contradiction:**

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wherever there is 'hilarious' giving there will soon be revival!"

I. Why Should We Give?

We need to give because God is the owner of all that we possess.

Everything that we have is a gift from God.

- Our life,
- our health,
- our mate,
- our children, and
- all our material and monetary blessings are from Him.

So when we give to God we are acknowledging His ownership and lordship over every area of our lives.

This was the idea of the bringing of the first fruits in Old Testament times.

By giving God the first of all our increase, we declare that He is Lord over it all.

You see, we are accountable to God for how we use the material possessions which He has entrusted to our care.

We are stewards of what we possess, We are not owners.

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Our possessions have merely been entrusted to us for our use.

All that we have really belongs to God.

How we use what God has entrusted to us is the responsibility of stewardship.

I Corinthians 4:2 says, "***It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.***"

The Second thing I want you to know is –

B. We also need to give because God has commanded us to give.

In Malachi 3:10 it says, "***Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse . . .***"

Another passage of Scripture is Leviticus 27:30, which says, "***. . . All the tithe . . . is the Lords; it is holy unto the Lord.***"

It is clear that God has commanded tithing, that is, giving one-tenth of all your income to the Lord.

God accuses the people of robbing Him.

When they asked Him how, He said, "***In tithes and offerings.***"

Then He commanded the people to bring all the tithes into the storehouse, which was His house.

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The purpose was that there would be sufficiency in God's house.

Jesus also spoke of tithing, in **Matthew 23:23** and **Luke 11:42**.

These are parallel passages dealing with the legalistic Pharisees who were interested only in external appearances. Look at Matthew's account:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others." (Matthew 23:23)

Jesus rebuked the legalistic Pharisees for being so exceedingly careful in tithing even the most minute possession, while they neglected the weightier aspects of the law;

- justice,
- mercy and
- faithfulness.

Jesus had numerous encounters with the legalistic Pharisees, and in these encounters He was always quick to point out those things that were merely outward ceremony without spiritual value.

His rebuke for their attitude towards healing on the Sabbath is but one example.

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If there was ever a place where Jesus could have abolished tithing, this would have been it.

Jesus was never reluctant to point out bad practices of religious men.

He could have pointed out with one word, the error of tithing if He wished to.

But He did not.

Rather than abolish the tithe, He affirmed it.

He reminded these Pharisees that it was not an either/or proposition, but a both/and practice.

He made a point of saying that they ought not to leave tithing undone, but to do it in the context of justice, mercy and faithfulness.

They were to show mercy *and* tithe.

He said clearly not to neglect tithing.

Jesus taught that we should tithe.

We should tithe because God has commanded us to give.

A. Furthermore we should give because of the great need.

The work of God in the church depends on the tithe.

Ministries being able to properly minister depends on the tithe and offerings of its people.

God has chosen to tie His work to the faithfulness of His people.

In order for the church to be blessed, and enabled to carry out His work, we must all tithe.

We are exhorted to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, "***that there may be food in my house.***"

Just think of what could be accomplished if everyone would just tithe.

Think of the support that could be given to missions.

Think of the extra money that would be available to local outreach.

Buildings could be refurbished and needed improvements made.

More money could be made available to the poor and hungry.

Money could be channeled to agencies and ministries that are worthy.

Money would be freed up to help struggling churches get on their feet.

New churches could be started, and the list could go on.

All this could happen in most churches if the people would just tithe.

Ten percent of all the incomes of the families in most churches would be more than meet these needs.

If all of God's people in every church would be faithful to bring forth God's tithe, there is no question that God's work would prosper everywhere.

The church would not only have enough money to pay basic operating expenses, the church would also have enough money to reach out world wide.

So whenever we present the Mission Moments on Sunday morning, we are gently allowing you to know the need around the world and what the Church of Nazarene is doing to try to reach that need.

God has called the church to be the Agent of the Kingdom on Earth.

He has charged the church with winning the world to Jesus and training Christian disciples.

And to do that great work it takes money.

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Finally, we should give because of the promises of God.

Our text in verse 10 says, **"Prove."** or **"Test me now in this,"** says the Lord of hosts, **"if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."**

This is the only place where the Lord says to prove or test Him in the whole Bible.

We have His permission to put Him to the test in this.

Do you believe Him?

Try Him out on this.

See if you can out give God.

Test Him.

He gives you the challenge.

Luke 6:38 says, **"Give and it will be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over."**

Proverbs 3:9-10 says, **"Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."**

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II Corinthians 9:6 says **"He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."**

God has committed Himself to bless you.

John Bunyon said, **"There was a man; some called him mad, the more he gave, the more he had."**

Friend - God will keep His promise to you, **if you will be faithful and obedient in the matter of giving.**

Perhaps the highest reason we should give is **because of our gratitude for all the Lord has done for us.**

He has blessed us beyond what we deserve. Because of all that He has done for us, we can give out of a heart full of love for Him.

We give because we want to.

This is the best and highest motivation for Christian giving.

We should give because we love Jesus.

It is not really a very large thing, considering what He did for us.

C.T. Studd, the famous missionary, said, "**If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.**"

So - What Should We Give?

The Bible is clear on this point. **The beginning point of Christian stewardship is the tithe.**

Paul says in Romans 11:16, "***For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.***"

Do you give carefully to the Lord?

Have you looked at your income and tithing records to be sure that you are giving at least a tenth?

You say, "That's legalistic." Well, let me ask you something. If your paycheck was short twenty dollars this week and your employer said, "Don't be so legalistic, it's only twenty dollars."

What would you think of that?

Do you want your employer to be careful in figuring your wages?

Then be careful in figuring your tithe to the Lord.

Tithing is an Old Testament word. But many other key words are as well. Words like "faith",

"atonement", "redemption", "righteousness", "sin", and the like, have their origin in the Old Testament, but not in the Law. Neither does tithing.

Paul almost echoes the words of our text in Malachi in I Corinthians 16:2, "*Upon the first day of the week, let everyone of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.*"

Let me emphasize however, that **the tithe is only a beginning place of Christian stewardship**, not an ending place.

In addition to tithes, there are offerings which are gifts over and above the tithes.

Some can give much more than a tithe because you are well able to do so.

We are to give as we have been prospered, it says in I Corinthians 16:2, and we are reminded in Luke 12:48 that to whom much has been given, much is required.

We should seek to grow in the grace of giving, just as we seek to grow in our knowledge of the Lord.

Where & When Should We Give?

To whom is the tithe due?

The simple answer is the Lord. We tithe to God. But how do we do that?

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Let's look at what Paul says in I Corinthians 16:2 again.

He says, *"Upon the first day of the week, let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."*

Two things are clear.

The first is the **when** of giving. It is to be on the first day of the week.

This is Sunday.

We worship on the first day, the day of Resurrection.

The Church calls it, "The Lord's Day."

Secondly, just as the when is clear, so also is the **where**.

Where are Christians to be on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day?

They are to be meeting together as the church on the Lord's Day.

In other words, tithing is an act of worship, and is to be included in our worship on Sunday.

The Church is the only human agency which Jesus established.

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All the work of the Kingdom begins with the local church.

When people move away from their commitment to the local church, they begin to move into dangerous territory.

I do not believe in ministries which do not have a strong commitment to the local church.

They are not biblical.

Jesus and the Twelve were not Jesus Christ Ministries Incorporated and His board of directors, they were the apostles who laid the foundation for the church of Jesus Christ which would be charged with all of the work of the Kingdom of God in the Earth today.

If there are ministries that need to be done, I believe that the church should be the one to do them.

The fact that many churches are not, is not so much a testimony to those who are, but a testimony against God's people who send their tithe away from the Church thereby making it anemic and weak.

If God's people would give God's way, then God's work could be carried out by God's organization, the local church.

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Remember, is the Church which the gates of hell shall not prevail against. It is the Church triumphant.