

Intro: I remember when Darlene and I were trying to buy our first house here in Annapolis. Church small,

- Renting...trying to save money for our down payment.
- For over a year I remember writing our monthly rent: thinking two things every single time a passage and
 1. There is more equity in a home GONE FOREVER! If that was a mortgage payment...Equity GONE
 2. If I didn't give a tithe to the church...I could save more! Cut what I give in half...I could afford to save!

2 Cor 9:7 Says *"God loves a cheerful giver!"* I was giving...but I was not a cheerful giver! Gave grudgingly...gave out of obedience...Gave because I knew I should...not because I wanted to!

A couple of years go by...I'm not making any headway...Church stepped up said "We will loan you down payment" So I started looking...Called Gary Pyles...developer of Riva Trace Community, one who gave the church the first property we had, asked him if he had anything in my price range...Across from Church. Gary...that is so far out of my price range...Cant: Go look...I went...looked...Treasurer worked it out...

Now, I had read Malachi before...heard sermons...knew what it said...but God taught me a lesson that day: The day I signed the papers on my house...I had INSTANT equity probably 10 times anything I could ever save!

READ PASSAGE Malachi 3:10-12

1. Lets Start With A Biblical Overview Of Giving.

- A. Chart: 3 Parts: Before The Law: OT Levitical Law Jesus/NT
- B. Definitions: Tithes: Offerings

2. Question: Is The Tithe Valid Today?

Here is the question...and it really is a GOOD one! Is the Tithe still valid...since OT is fulfilled. We are not under the OT Law...Should we still tithe? If so...how much? 33%?

I believe and teach, as do most conservative evangelicals (not all) that the tithe is still valid for two reasons

- a. It preceded the OT law...the 10% from Melchizedek was long before the Law as given to Moses.
- b. Jesus endorsed it! Talking with the Pharisees one day and says this:
Mt 23:23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices-- mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law-- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."

3. The Challenge God Makes About Tithing.

Mal 3:10-12

- Notice who it is written to!
God's people, not everyone in general.
Applic: *If you are here...and you are checking out spiritual things, and you are not yet a follower of Jesus, this really isn't for you! God, our church, me...none of us are expecting you to give, much less tithe! "Family Stuff"*
If you are here...and you don't yet have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ...What God wants for you...what our church wants for you...what I want for you...is that you give Him your heart! Not your money!
- Storehouse tithing: For Family: Giving is a choice we make to give to our place of worship to support the work of God in that place. I believe that the bible teaches that you give your tithe to your local place of worship, local church, and then as you choose to give more, any free will offerings you add to that...for a special need: *Year End Giving; Church in Mexico, Missionaries that we support, Benevolence ministries...*
The tithe goes to the work of the church, then offerings go to other things as you and God decide.
- Test Me In This! Lit = *Put me to the test!* Examine Me, See if I DO what I promise to do! This is the ONLY place in the entire bible that we are told to test God! No where else does God say, try me and see if I do what I promise to do!
Applic: *I have been doing this almost 35 years: In that time I have NEVER heard anyone say, I tried it. It Didn't work! But, to a person, every single one I have ever known has said...God did exactly what He said, and MORE*

4. The Blessing God Promises:

- Open : Lit could be translated: Break out the windows of heaven
- Pour Out so much You cannot store it! Open heaven and dump blessings on your head!
- Blessings: Notice: Not ALWAYS financial! This is not *"Sow a seed of faith and get 100X more"*: NOT TRUE!
 - A. Sometimes financial: Not always a 1 to 1 Money in Money out kind of promise
 - B. Sometimes it is PROTECTION that PROVIDES for you!
Prevent Pests/ Keep Harvest Good/ Not let the fruit fall before it is ripe (NO SQUASH BEETLES!) CAR OIL
 - C. Give you a Testimony: So much blessing in your life that everyone around you will see it and marvel!

5. A Plan For Giving Based On This Passage:

- Start with the Heart: Get your heart right! (We talked about that last week) Heart not right: WASTE MONEY
- Start with where you are:
 - A. If you can tithe today: Do it...Stretch Yourself! (Make changes if you need to...Do it...Never Easy)
 - B. Make a Plan: Give Intentionally and consistently
 - C. If you have gotten yourself so deep in debt, or your situation is dire, impossible:
Start where you are...and Grow! 2 Cor 8:12: *"If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable, according to what one has, not according to what he does not have!"*
Applic: There is NOT an angel in heaven with a green visor and a tally book! (God looks at heart!)
 - D. Grow in your giving: If you are at 5 dollars...and that's literally all...stretch to 6!
If you are at 20...Go to 30...Do what you can...and trust God to bless it!
If you are tithing...plan to grow in your giving!
2 Cor 8:7: *"Just as you excel in everything, see that you grow in the grace of giving."* (FLOWER)

CONCL: Remember the story of buying my house I opened with? Fast forward 25...years...Things were REALLY rough at church, finances were tight...hadn't had a raise in years, daughter home from college managing store at Arundel Mills, I was waiting for her to get home...fell asleep on couch...phone beside me: She walked in woke me up: Dad...I've been calling you! Left Arundel Mills, got on freeway, large thump...oil light came on...I just drove home...parked engine smells REALLY bad...now it wont start!

She was upset...I was upset...she went to bed...I was sitting on couch...exhausted...doing numbers in my head...how much does a new engine cost...where are we going to get the money...As I sat there...looking around...so upset...spirit of God spoke...look around...I have taken care of you in the past...I will take care of you now.

I went upstairs...told my daughter...don't worry...You have spent the last 25 years in a house I could NEVER afford...God provided...go to sleep...don't worry...It will be OK.

Next day, got up...called Ed Thomas...Member and owner of large garage...he came, picked it up...towed to shop...called me...said, Pastor...it's not good. Mechanic checked it out...no oil plug in car! Not a single drop of oil. He's going to get one and put some oil in it...but...It doesn't look good!

Called an hour later...said Pastor, come get your car...ready to go! Put in plug...filled it up...started up...fine. Ed, no way that is possible. She drove that car 20- miles on freeway. Check the compression on the cylinders. Already did...they are fine...checked every one. All I can tell you is this...there is an angel out there somewhere this morning with a black ring around his thumb going OUCH...that hurts!

Here is what I want you to remember... WHEN YOU HONOR GOD WITH YOUR GIVING...HE HONORS HIS WORD!
Here is my challenge to you...I have issued it before...half a dozen times in over 30 years. Try God...put Him to the test. Tithe for a YEAR...if when you get to the end of the year He hasn't kept His promise...let me know. We will write you a check for every penny you gave. We will look at your offering statement...fully reimburse you. No questions.

If you are here...and you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus: Here is what I want you to know. God doesn't want your money...He wants your heart. You can forget about all of that Not for you. His people... He wants YOU!