

### Get Serious. About Tithing. – Mal 3:7-12

Get serious about tithing is the message this morning

It's been over 2 years since I last preached a full message on tithing

Despite the fact that it's a key SD necessary to train ourselves for godliness – I tried to talk myself out of it . . .

Because I recognized long ago that when it comes to giving in the church, it doesn't matter what I say, or how I say it, or when I say it – someone is going to take offense I don't relish that thought

Tithing is a touchy issue because *we love our money*

We chaff against anybody/everybody who tells us what to do with it, including God

Worse yet, far too many are living a life of secret disobedience when it comes to tithing

And you can't handle the conviction that comes with it when you're confronted with what God says about it – so you get mad

You know what God wants you to do, but you're not doing it, and you're miserable because of it; especially when the subject comes up

Despite that, I'm compelled to preach it because it's in the Word, and because I know from own experience and that of countless others, it's critical to training yourself for G If you don't get tithing right, you'll have a hard time getting anything right, SD's included

Apparently, a lot of people don't – don't get tithing right

According to a Barna poll of born again believers, only 6% of them tithe (Barna)

I don't think that's the case in our church; I think we're far better than that

But even if we're 10 times better, even if 60% of us tithe – that still leaves 40% who don't Even if 80% of us tithe – still leaves 20% adults who call Harvest their home, who don't

So whatever the percentage is, I'm just going to say it straight

I'm going to tell you what the Bible says and how it applies to you

And let you battle it out with the HS if you take offense

But my hope is that the vast majority of you who *do* need to make a change in this area of your life, will humble yourself and do it

Take the step of faith and train yourself for godliness in this respect

If you're not *giving* according to God's word – not *living* according to God's Word

For the rest of you who *are* faithfully tithing, I trust this will encourage you and bolster you and make your joy complete

Turn to **Mal 3:7-12** – you know how you have imaginary conversations with people in your head, especially when you're mad at them?

That's kind of like this passage – God is not happy with his people

Aches for his relationship with them to be fully restored; Mixture of ache and anger

So he has a little conversation with them where he represents both sides

Recorded by Mal so that we wouldn't make the same mistake (read it)

6 – transition vs; because God judges the wicked, we won't be consumed; only 1 problem

As clear as I can summarize v7-9 . . .

**Stop withholding your money from God (v7-9)**

Some of you are doing exactly what your parents did

You're being disobedient just like they were . . .

Perpetuating generational sin because the apple doesn't fall far from the tree (read v7)

But in spite of that there's mercy – *return to me and I'll return to you*

I go to church every week; I have my devotions; I drop a few dollars in the offering when

I have it; What do you mean, "return to you?"

8a – Are you kidding? You're *stealing* from me; You're robbing me; That's what I mean

We still play the dumb card with, "how are we robbing you?"

8b – you're withholding your money from me; you're not giving all that I require

If that's you, you gotta stop; Stop withholding your money from God because . . .

• **He considers it robbery** (8)

**Prov 3:9** – *Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce*

Give God a portion, a tithe, of *all* your income, *first*, off the top

And do so regularly

Paul says in **1 Cor 16:2**, referring to a special collection –

*On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.*

Paul was taking a special offering

If this applies to a special offering, it certainly applies to a regular one

If you're not honoring the Lord by giving him a portion of your income off the top . . .

If you're not doing so consistently, week in and week out . . .

You're a spiritual felon; You're robbing God . . .

• Withholding money that's **not yours anyway**

**Job 41:11** – *Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.*

Any exemptions to that? God owns it all; And gave it to you in the first place

**1 Chron 29:12,14** (David's prayer) – *Both riches and honor come from you . . . For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.*

God owns everything you have in your possession

He gave it to you, and he gave you the ability to make it

So who are *you* to withhold it from *him*?

Stop withholding your money from God because he considers it robbery; it's not yours anyway; and . . .

• **You're heaping trouble on yourself**

Some of you cast about in life; You have no peace; You're in turmoil up to your neck

Constantly searching for something you can't find

A lack of contentment reigns; Deal with the same issues over and over again

Your joy, if it exists at all, is fleeting . . . And you wonder why

I'll tell you why – it's because *you're cursed with a curse* (9)

Not talking about some voodoo thing

I'm talking about the fact that not only is God withholding his blessing in your life because you're withholding your money from him . . .

But he's inflicting *hardship* on you to win your obedience and allegiance

*Return to me and I'll return to you*, God says (7)

You can't expect to withhold your money and avoid God's discipline  
You're heaping trouble on yourself, and . . .

- **You defeat your purpose**

I understand that by withholding your tithe, you're not *trying* to rob him  
That's not your intent  
You're just trying to get ahead; to stay afloat

But what you're doing is following the recipe for suffering want

**Prov 11:24** – *One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.*

You defeat your purpose of having enough by withholding your money from God  
Counter intuitive, but true

So the question is *not* – “How much of my money should I give to God?”

The question is – “How much of God's money should I keep for myself?”

The answer to that question is found in v10 (read it – 10a); In other words . . .

**Give a tenth of your income to your church (v10a)**

At a minimum, give 10% and keep 90

And give it to the place you call home; The place where you're fed and ministered to  
The place where you serve; Your primary place of fellowship and community

10a – the *storehouse* was a room connected to the side of the *temple*, used to store the  
tithes that people gave – the grain, oil, money

So God was saying – bring your tithes to the *temple* . . .

To the primary place of ministry and spiritual nourishment

To your home base of community/fellowship

Today, on this side of the cross, that place is the church

Just like the *temple* was God's primary source of discipleship, and the launching pad for  
ministry in Mal's day . . .

So too, the *church* is God's primary source of discipleship, and the launching pad for  
ministry in ours

So when God says bring your tithe into the *storehouse*, the application for us is to give a  
tenth of our income to our local church

- A tenth, because that's what *tithe* means – see that explicitly in **Lev 27:32**

*Every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's  
staff, shall be holy to the LORD.*

Tithe and tenth are used interchangeably there

And it's to be *holy to the Lord* – set apart for his use; not yours

Why? *That there may be food in my house* God says (10a)

In Mal's day, ministry required food/sustenance/money – to lead, teach, and shepherd  
To do the work of ministry

The same is true today – our tithes are *necessary* in order to adequately provide spiritual  
food for the hungry, healing for the broken, good news for the lost, and bread for life  
Without the regular, consistent tithes of God's people, the church stagnates  
But with them, it flourishes and lives are changed for eternity

If you earn \$10, give 1; If you get a bonus, give a tenth

If you cash in a stock, tithe your gain

If you sell a piece of land/business, give a tenth of your profit to the church

*Bring your full tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house* God says

Give a tenth of your income to your church, and . . .

**Trust God to provide (v10b-12)**

Read v10 – this is God's explicit guarantee that he will be faithful to provide, when we're  
faithful to give

And he's so adamant about it, he says *put me to the test*

You won't find such language anywhere else in the Bible, on any other issue

God's like – “Go ahead, try me; Make my day . . . and I'll make yours”

Jesus made this same promise to provide in **Luke 6:38**

*Give, and it will be given to you . . . For with the measure you use it will be measured  
back to you.*

You give, and God will too; How you give determines how you get

Like Paul said in **2 Cor 9:6** – *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and  
whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

When you give like God wants, you can trust him to provide

Doesn't mean give a dollar, get a dollar – plenty of that garbage around

Nor do we give to *get* – that should *never* be our motive

Rather, these Scriptures mean – give God's way, and you'll reap God's blessing

Like the blessing of joy – *You will be a land of delight* (12)

And the blessing of having your needs met

10b – *I will . . . pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need*

11b – *Your vine in the field will not fail to bear*

God will use the work of your hands to provide for your needs

When you tithe, you can trust God to provide . . .

Including the discipline and desire to live on what remains

- And you can trust him to protect as well

11a – *I will rebuke the devourer for you* [render it powerless; of no effect], *so that it will  
not destroy the fruits of your soil*

That's protection

But does that mean you'll never get laid off, or never have a bad year in business? No

It means that as a whole, as a church, God will take care of us

That your bad year will be offset by the good year of another

That your need will be offset by the plenty of others

God will sustain you and supply your needs, if you trust him and give his way

Trust him to provide

- Some of you are hearing me, but you're thinking, “there's no way Pastor Rob – I can  
barely afford to pay my bills, let alone tithe; I just don't have the money”

That's not true – you *do* have the money

You've just chosen to spend it on yourself instead of on God

You've made lifestyle choices to satisfy *your* desires, instead of *God's* desires

After your mortgage, car loans, entertainment, clothing, credit cards – nothing left  
But that doesn't mean you don't have the money  
It just means you've chosen to spend it on yourself and not on God  
There's only one solution – change your lifestyle

You can't just choose a lifestyle that consumes all your income, and then say . . .  
“Oops, sorry God, I can't afford to tithe”; That's not an excuse  
If you need to downsize your home in order to tithe, downsize your home  
If you need to get a cheaper car, get a cheaper car; Go out less; Spend less

Choose a standard of living that's *below* your income, and tithe  
Better yet, tithe *first*, and trust God to *help* you live at a level below your income  
Apart from that, you'll *never* be able to afford it

### *Summary*

If you're a student or YA – start tithing now  
The patterns you establish now will influence and determine the course of your life later

If you're a young family – don't wait until you have “enough”  
If you don't develop the discipline to tithe now, chances are you never will  
It doesn't get any easier

If you're an empty nester or retiree – make generous giving one of the legacies you leave  
Invest heavily in the work of ministry  
Set the example for the rest of us, and make it one of the joys of the last third of your life  
to provide spiritually for those who come behind

No matter who you are, if you're wealth/income allows you to give more than 10% . . .  
Do so – keep what you need and give the rest away  
As God prompts or needs arise – give; As opp's present themselves – respond  
Because it's dangerous to think that we satisfy some obligation before the Lord by  
giving a tithe, when we could give far more

- We're already deep in to the 2008 budget, and starting the 2009 budget  
In my weaker moments I wish we could just leave everything just like it is  
Just ignore the needs of additional ministry and the compulsion of God to meet the  
opp's he gives us . . .  
And float along with no pressures, no financial worries, and no strain

But I can't  
I'm way too compelled to meet the growing needs of our existing ministries  
I'm way too compelled to take advantage of future opp's  
I'm way too compelled to spend and be spent for the cause of Christ  
I think you are too

And we will, if we get serious about tithing  
We will if we make it a part of our Plan for Godliness and **Always tithe**  
It's one of the SD's necessary to train yourself for godliness

Pray