

Post-Exile Prophets
ROBBING GOD
Wednesday, October 8
Reading: Malachi 3:6-12

Malachi 3:10 *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."*

God had just listed the sins of His people that deserved judgment (3:5). This was nothing new! The entire history of Israel has been one of disobedience and rebellion. There is not a consecutive 100-year period where the nation was completely faithful. But God is a God of mercy and thus He did not destroy them as their sins deserved. Instead, He called them to "Return to Me." This is the call of all the prophets. It is the primary word they all used for repentance. If they would return to God in repentance, He would return to them with blessings.

But their question in response to God's call, reveals the self-righteous and callous hearts of the people. They saw no need to return to the Lord. Despite their defiled sacrifices, unfaithful marriages, and lack of justice, they believed they were just fine. God now gives them another example of their disobedience: their neglect of tithes and offerings. God had command the people to give a tenth of everything back to Him in worship. These tithes and offerings would support the priests and the work of the temple, as well as provide for the poor, the widows, and the orphans.

The charge against them is that they have robbed God by not giving Him what He rightly deserved. Everything we have comes from God and His people give back as an act of worship and thankfulness. If they wanted God to open His storehouse of blessing, they first needed to open theirs. God challenged them to "Test Me in this." If they would simply honor God with their giving as they should, He would "open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." God pictures His blessing in agricultural terms. He will send plentiful rain and prevent the pests from devouring the crops. His blessing will be so evident that the nations will notice it and honor God's people.

When we selfishly refuse to give back to God, we rob Him of what He deserves. We are also robbing ourselves of the blessings God gives to those who honor Him with their time, talent, and treasure. Some people argue that the tithe (10%) is never mentioned in the New Testament and thus does not apply to the church. I had a professor in seminary who put it well: "If you don't believe in giving a tithe because you think it is asking TOO LITTLE or you, you have caught the spirit of the New Testament."

The New Testament instructs us to give sacrificially, generously, and with a cheerful heart (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Just as Malachi's book promises God's blessings on those who give, so Paul also reminds us that:

God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work...Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness (2 Corinthians 9:8, 10)

How are you giving your time, talent, and treasure to the Lord?