

Will a Man Rob God?

(Malachi 3:8-12)

I. Introduction

- A. Professor told us to preach on certain topics when you first get to a new church.
1. Which topics? He suggested sermons on social drinking, divorce & giving.
 - a. Why? You want to preach those **before** you get to know people very well.
 - b. Once you know their situation, people assume you are preaching at them!
 - c. Well, I'm 28 years too late for that advice— but I'll still preach on giving.
 2. Preaching on giving has always been hard on me—several reasons for that
 - a. **First**, we do have regular “table talks” before contribution on the topic.
 - b. **Second**, I deplore the stereotype of a church “*always asking for money*”
 - c. **Third**, my salary comes from offering; there's a bit of conflict of interest.
 - d. **Fourth**, there's been no public outcry for more on topic (*except Thomas*)
- B. **Factoid:** The Bible says more about our use of money than we may realize.
1. Jesus taught more on money than any topic other than the kingdom of God.
 - a. About one third (1/3) of his parables are related to the use of money.
 - b. About 1-of-6 verses in teaching sections of Jesus mentions money!
 2. Every epistle except 2 John and Jude (only 13 & 25 vss) mention money.
 - a. There are long sections on giving in 2 Cor., Gal., Phil., 1 Tim and James.
 - b. You can't read the Bible very long before you run across a money section
 3. So even as we admit that this is hard for us— we do it because its Bible
- C. We just finished Jeremiah; today's message is from another prophet, Malachi
1. Malachi was the opposite of Jeremiah; Judah had become a different place.
 - a. After Babylonian captivity, Judah never again followed idol gods.
 - 1) Danger still there; he warns of marrying pagans (see [Mal 2:11-12](#))
 - 2) Warning quickly segues into section on marriage (see [Mal 2:13-16](#))
 - b. The idols were forgotten, Temple was rebuilt, and worship was restored
 2. Malachi couldn't use Jeremiah's old sermon outlines; they were outdated.
 - a. The most pervasive problems of the past had been faced and overcome.
 - b. There were still problems; Malachi begins and ends with Judah's giving
 3. Let's notice two points and two lesson from the pen of Malachi.

II. Will a Man Rob God: Two Basic Points

- A. **First**, failing to give properly is disrespectful to God (**Read: [Malachi 1:6-8](#)**)
1. The problem here was that people were offering defective sacrifices to God
 - a. Isn't a goat a goat? Even if its missing an ear or eye, it still burns?
 - b. It all burns on the altar. The part they ate tasted fine. What's big deal?
 2. Malachi says that their offering reflects how much they value God.
 - a. Wouldn't serve governor such a defective animal? (*Save it for preacher*)
 - b. The offering that they gave to God reflects on how much they honor Him
 3. God didn't need their animals, with or without ears-n-eyes (**[Psalm 50](#)**)
 - a. But what God did desire was for His people to value Him above all else.
 - b. Their offerings to God told something about how much they valued Him
 - 1) Isn't that the warning for our giving—God doesn't need our money
 - 2) But HOW we give is an indication of how much we value God.
- B. **Second**, failure to give cut them off from God's blessing (**Read: [Mal 3:8-12](#)**)
1. God's view of their failure to give was simple—"Will a man rob God?"
 - a. Theme runs through many old gangster movies—the "sting" gone bad
 - 1) Small time crook pulls a heist and finds he's ripped off the big boss
 - 2) Stealing with one thing, but stealing from the Godfather bad news
 - b. Judah had stolen, not from the Godfather, but from God... **really bad!**
 - c. Their attitude toward giving is an indication of attitude toward God!
 2. **Setting:** Judah was going through hard times as they rebuilt the nation.
 - a. They'd been in Jerusalem for a generation, but rebuilding was hard work
 - b. They used their struggle as justification for their failure to tithe/sacrifice
 - c. When you are struggling, it is just too hard to give anything (**[Mal 1:13](#)**)
'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD Almighty.
 3. Malachi suggests that there was a connection between tithing and struggle
 - a. They weren't just failing to give because of their economic woes
 - b. They were facing economic woes because they failed to tithe!
 - c. God issues them a challenge to test him, to try to out give Him (**[Mal 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 you will not have room enough for it
 4. **Point:** Not God makes us all rich— but we must see God in our finances!

III. Conclusion

- A. But this is only the OT, right? We are not really commanded to tithe, are we?
1. No, our command is to give “*as we have been prospered*” (**1 Cor 16:2**)
 - a. Unlike the OT system, there is no fixed amount specified by Christ
 - b. But there is certainly not a relaxing in the NT for the need to give
 - 1) How we give still says something about how we value God.
 - 2) Since the 10% tithe is stressed in OT, it is starting point for giving.
 2. Actually, there were two different tithes for two different purposes in OT
 - a. One went to the Levites who had no land of their own (**Num 18:25ff**)
 - b. The other was used as a worship festival before the Lord (**Deut 14:22ff**)
 - c. Sacrifices and giving alms to the poor were in addition to both tithes
 3. The Jews probably gave 35% **before** the taxes were collected by king
- B. The question is, “Do we have to give 10%?” No, it is OK for us to give more!
1. If we give as we’ve been blessed, why would we think that would be less?
 - a. Jesus intensified God’s expectations; He did not relax them! *Right?*
 - b. For example, Jesus says some pretty hard things in Sermon on Mount
 - 1) “*But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother...*” (**5:22**)
 - 2) “*But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully...*” (**5:28**)
 - 3) “*But I tell you... If someone strikes you on the right cheek...*” (**5:39**)
 - c. So what precisely makes us think Jesus wants our giving to be easier?
 2. I think “*Give as you’ve been prospered*” is harder than the 10% tithe.
 - a. I would prefer for restaurants would to just print the tip on the bill.
 - 1) I hate deciding if the service was good enough for 15% or 20% tip
 - 2) I hate doing the math to figure the 15% or 20%! (*10% was easier*)
 - b. Girls will say, “*She was good; give her lot!*” (Generous with my money)
 - c. It is a lot easier if they tell me the bill so I don’t have to figure anything.
 3. Would it be easier if God just sent us a bill (*Some churches will do that*)
 - a. Telling us to give as we have been prospered forces us to reflect?
 - b. How has God prospered me week? What if I count my many blessings?
 - c. Is my awareness of my blessings reflected in the way that I give?
 4. Come to think, Jesus does set an amount in the widow’s mite—*give it all!*

- C. As we end this morning, let's revisit our dual message of Malachi on giving
1. **First**, how much you give says something about how we value God
 - a. When we refuse to take giving seriously, we don't take God seriously
 - b. Suppose I bought a new car, computer, boat, cell phone & golf clubs
 - 1) Then I told Lynn we can't afford for her to get a new pair of shoes
 - 2) Will she take that personally? Will she think I value myself over her?
 - c. Does God take it personally when we get stuff for us and failing to give
 - 1) How often do we go out to eat? To movies? Go on vacations?
 - 2) What do we spend on ringtones for cell phone? Golf? Scrapbook?
 - d. I'm not condemning any of those, but how do they balance with giving?
 - e. What does our giving say about how much we value God and others?
 2. **Second**, there's a connection between what we give and we're blessed.
 - a. God was plain when speaking to Israel here, "*Test me on this!*"
 - b. They struggled in rebuilding their country because God was not first!
 - c. Does that a bit like the "Health and Wealth" theology we hear on TV?
 - 1) If you give enough, God will make you healthy and wealthy?
 - 2) No, the Bible has many, many examples of faithful people suffering
 - d. God blesses us in many ways—financial blessings are one small part
 - 1) But Malachi's point here to Israel is plain and it is powerful.
 - 2) Neglect God, and you will not FULLY prosper in any ways He wishes
- D. George Whitfield, along with Wesley's led a spiritual revival in England
1. Whitfield was known for his eloquent speaking and deep voice
 - a. He the guy that would make ladies swoon to hear him say "*Mesopotamia*"
 - b. I've had that happen—fall asleep and swoon are the same, right?
 2. Whitfield was noted for generosity— "*no need of a purse because he gave*"
 - a. One minister took note of his giving and said, "*He is quite mad*"
 - b. Bishop responded, "*If so, I hope he bites everyone and drives them mad*"
 3. In contrast, I ran across this sad statistic—suppose we all lost our jobs...
 - a. Suppose we went on welfare and then tithed on the amount we received
 - b. According to one source, our church giving would increase over 30%!
 - c. If we don't our priorities straight, God may get our attention like this!
- E. God is all about giving—that is the message of the cross. Will we learn lesson?