

**Your giving is who you are 2 or The Demand on Our Faith**  
**Harringay United Church-Baptist**  
**Sunday 25-10-2009**

**Text: Malachi 3:8-12**

**Introduction:**

I am concluding this short version of giving and stewardship messages and God willing a full version of five in the series in future.

I must begin this concluding series with gratitude and thanksgiving to God on your behalf because you are cheerful givers and you are giving generously too.

We are what we are today and doing what can do because you have been generous and faithful in your giving. Hence you are able to maintain a full time pastor, half time youth worker, tithing our earnings, engaging in mission with the wider church and other wonderful things we have been doing. I say well done to you all.

The question you may be asking is this, 'pastor, if we are doing well, why are you talking about giving again?' God is blessing you all and you need to respond by giving back to him.

Yes, you are right, you are doing well but you could do better and even best because he who ceases to be better ceases to be good. We cannot be complacent.

Proverbs 11:25 "The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself". NKJV

From today's text, God challenged the people about their failure to pay their tithe and offerings to His house (Temple).

**Difference between tithe and offerings**

**Tithe** is a tenth or 10% of all your earnings and it belongs to God hence He commanded it. That is, 10p from every pound and £10 from every hundred, the arithmetic is simple but when we do not want to obey it becomes difficult to understand it.

**Offerings** are the voluntary contributions towards God work and upkeep of the things that belong to God through His church. That is the one we collect every Sunday, for harvest, Christmas and other occasions when we make a call. No amount is specified in the Scripture and therefore no one should tell you how much to give but must be determined in your heart.

For both tithe and the offerings, willingness, cheerfulness and generosity are of utmost importance for them to be acceptable before God.

The longer we do not understand the principles and command of tithing and obey it the longer it takes us to get our blessing. Mark what I said, I did not say the longer it takes God to bless us but the longer it takes us to receive our blessing because we fail to meet the requirement of His blessing.

Obedience brings His blessing but before it turns to blessing God will always put a **demand on our faith** and that is why he commanded that we bring all tithes to His house.

When God puts demands on our faith it does not mean that He is tempting us, but He is teaching us the art of listening, comprehension and obedience and blessing.

## GENEROSITY ILLUSTRATIONS:

1. Solomon's 1000 burnt offerings 1 Kings 3:4-12 was a willing, cheerful and very generous offering to God and it was pleasing to Him hence God asked Solomon what he wanted and God gave him all and even what he did not ask. Hallelujah.
2. Anne Keegan's article "Blue Christmas" was a collection of Christmas stories told by Chicago police officers. One was the story of George White.

George lived in a rented room at the YMCA. He had one set of clothes, shoes wrapped with rubber bands to keep the soles from flopping, and a threadbare black overcoat. He spent his mornings napping in an old metal chair by the heater in the back of the 18th District office.

Two officers, Kitowski and Mitch, took an interest in the old man, occasionally slipping him a few bucks. They found out that Billy the Greek over at the G&W grill gave him a hot breakfast every morning, no charge.

The two policemen and their families decided to have George as their guest for Christmas dinner. They gave him presents, which he unwrapped carefully.

As they drove him back to the Y, George asked, "Are these presents really mine to keep?" They assured him they were. "Then we must stop at the G&W before I go home," he said. With that, George began rewrapping his presents.

When they walked into the restaurant, Billy the Greek was there as always. "You been good to me, Billy," said George. "Now I can be good to you. Merry Christmas." George gave all his presents away on the spot.

Generosity is natural when a grateful attitude prevails.

*Chicago Tribune Magazine (12/24/95)*

### **Example of Demand on faith**

1. Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac - Genesis 22. Abraham got his son back and a whole nation from Him
2. The widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:8-16 was another classical example and the best one. When God placed a demand on her faith out of her last meal and last card she obeyed God and the story ended thus: 15 "So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. 16 The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah". NKJV

Something common and special to the two examples was their willingness to obey God and their generosity towards God.

When God blesses you it is not for you to keep, but to share with other people and the moment they hear about your blessing even the ones that have not spoken to you for the past 20 years will come to you because God's favour is on you. And you must not turn them away because it is for their sake that you are blessed. Favour is coming your way soon and at this credit crunch time God will bring his unprecedented blessing.

Your blessing will not come until you have passed the test of demand God places on your faith like that of Abraham and the widow of Zarephath. Today God puts a demand of faith on your tithe, what are you going to do about it?

No one has ever regretted it when they obeyed God and give cheerfully, willingly and generously too. It brings joy to one's heart; it brings peace to one's mind and increases one's saving in heaven.

### **Why must we give?**

Dr R.T. Kendall in his book 'the Gift of Giving' suggested few reasons why we must give.

1. **It is Biblical.** This is the weightiest of all reasons because God commanded that the tithe belong to Him. Leviticus 27:30 'And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord'. NKJV

Leviticus 27:32 'And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord'. NKJV

It is not an Old Testament command but also New Testament as Jesus re-affirmed tithe in Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42. If God commanded it then as true children of God we must obey it and any excuse is disobedience and it is not a good testimony. The God who gives life to live, power and strength to get wealth (Deut. 8:18) and he who owns silver and gold (Haggai 2:8) and all the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10) demands that we give Him our tithes and offerings.

2. **Because of what it does to the work of God on earth.** Malachi 3:10 "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house". NKJV. Let me say something here, your local Church is God's storehouse, hence your tithe should go in there. Offerings should be for any other ministries. Failure to do this is depleting God's storehouse hence the church will be impoverished because of our action. And this is the plight of many churches today and it is disgraceful that they are unable to do what they are called to do because they are crippled financially.

If we take tithing seriously as worship, God honours us but leaves us destitute of life and blessing if we don't. What we do here on earth determines our reward in heaven, so whatever we can give here from our life, time, gifts, body and money is for ourselves in heaven.

If you are here and have not received Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, please consider it now and you will not regret taking the most important decision of your life.

3. **Because of what it will do for God in heaven.** Whatever we do for anyone in life is credited for us in heaven and it gladdens God. Abraham obeyed God by offering Isaac to Him and it pleased God. Solomon offered 1000 burnt offerings to God and it pleased Him.

If you want God to be pleased with you, obey Him by giving cheerfully and generously and He will smile on you. James said faith without work is dead, obedience by giving is part of the work and that is what Abraham did and James referred to it in his letter in chapter 2:18-26.

If we love God, we will obey and give to Him because He first loves us and gave His one and only son for us. There is nothing we can give Him that will match the gift He gave us.

We too love the children that obey us and care for us, that is God's attribute in us and therefore we must endeavour to love and please Him.

4. **Because of what it does to us (the giver).** Obeying God by giving our life, body time, gift and tithe and offerings, commands God's blessing.

Genesis 22:16-18

16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son 17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." NKJV

And in Malachi 3:10b 'And try 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 such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.

The only place God says we should try or test Him is in our tithing and offering and it is because He wants us to be assured of His promise.

We are just like a child that you gave a packet of biscuits and later you ask him to give you few from it and he now hides it behind his back. And after some minutes, sleep catches him and the whole packet of biscuit slips off his hands. It is interesting but that is the way those people who finds it difficult to obey God on giving. It robs them of the joy, peace, spiritual and material blessings.

### **Conclusion:**

There is overwhelming support of God's blessing on givers in the Bible and even in our lives we can see what God is doing. The law of sowing and reaping is applicable in everyday of our lives. Whatever we sow we will reap and what goes round comes round.

If unbelievers practice this very well, trying to justify that their giving makes them good people and acceptable to God and we know that is not true. They only think like that because they feel good when they give. The believers must do better and we shall experience spiritual and material blessings when we give God what belongs to Him and our fellow people.

Remember that in order to experience God's abundance we must give. And whatever we want to give, we must give it willingly, cheerfully and generously too and God will bless us more than our imagination.

Be a willing, cheerful and generous giver that is your Father's nature and demand.