

# Living Generously | Malachi 1 & 3

Sunday, February 21, 2016

## Intro

- Living generously series
- We're going to cover a lot of ground today
- Dollar Tree
- I'm so glad the elders asked us to teach on this
  - Me and Katie have been tremendously blessed by implementing biblical financial principles; I'll tell you more about that later
  - And...

## Jesus' Statements on Money

- Jesus talked about money a lot
- "You can't serve both God and money."
- 16/38 parables are about finances; 42%
- In the gospels, 1/10 verses is about money (288 total)
- The irony is: Jesus doesn't want our money; he wants our hearts
- "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21
- "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45 — Giving is central to being a Christ-like person
- **This is not just a series on finances...this is a series on discipleship.**
- "That church just wants my money." Two responses...
  - Please sympathize with us; Jesus gave us no other choice. He talked about it a lot so we have to in order to be faithful
  - Being upset with a church for talking about money is like being upset with the mailman for delivering a letter you don't like. He didn't write it, he just delivered it. He doesn't write the mail, he's just faithful in delivering it.
- Today we're looking at Malachi

## Background on Malachi

- Last book in the OT; one of the minor prophets
- There are several issues in Israel
  - Two of the major problems in the book deal with the offerings that are being brought (or NOT being brought) to God
  - That's why it's important for us to look at during this series
- It's a dialogue between God and the people

## Malachi 1:2-14 | Summarize

- No one's off the hook in Malachi; the first problem addressed is with the priests
- **Vs. 10 — God is so displeased he doesn't want them to worship.**

- Vs. 7-8 — They're breaking the law by offering flawed sacrifices
  - Lev. 1:3, 10
  - Lev. 22:17-23
  - **What is the heart of this law?** You don't bring leftovers to God. You bring your best.
    - Principle of first fruits; **illustrate this!**
    - Budgeting — You make the decision on what offering you'll bring to God first; You take it off the top

### Malachi 3:6-12

#### Bring

- Notice this: God says, "*Bring* the whole tithe." He doesn't say, "Give."
- You'll see this all over the OT
- **Why?** This is an important principle: Everything belongs to God. The Israelites didn't give a tithe because it was already God's. They brought their tithes
  - Psalm 24:1 — "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it..."
  - Job 41:11 — "Everything under heaven belongs to me."
- So, God says, "*Bring* the whole tithe."

#### Tithe

- Vs. 8-9 — They're breaking the law by not tithing
  - Lev. 27:30
- **Should Christians tithe?**
  - There's no NT command to tithe
  - Many Christians say, "We don't tithe. That's the old law."
  - I fear we dismiss the OT too easily
  - Think about these words from Paul...
    - "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 — **Paul was referring to the OT**
  - **I can't find anything in the NT that suggests our standard of generosity should be less than the OT**
  - In fact, Jesus raises the standard over and over again
    - **21** "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder,[a] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' **22** But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister[b][c] will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,'[d] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." Matthew 5:21-22
      - He does this numerous times in Matthew 5
  - **So, should Christians tithe?** God has lavished his grace on us in Christ. If anything, grace should motivate us to be more generous than the OT standard.
  - My opinion: tithing is a good baseline
    - I'm not legalistic...you can give 11%, 15%, or 20%
    - You can go to heaven if you don't tithe
    - You can go to hell if you do (Matthew 23)

- Having this understanding is huge for wrestling with what God says next

### *You're Robbing Me*

- "...you are robbing me..."
- The Israelites are robbing God by not bring him tithes
- ***Is it possible to rob God today?***
  - Our story
    - Several years ago we had a lot of debt: student loans, consumer credit card debt, medical debt
    - I was doing a poor job leading in this area
    - I had to repeatedly say "no" to giving opportunities.
    - **I was robbing God.**
      - **When I purchased things I didn't need with money I didn't have because I couldn't tell myself no — and continued to tell God no — while continually bringing less than my best to God, I concluded...I was robbing God.**
    - It's not about intention
  - Some facts
    - 10-25% of a congregation tithes
    - 33-50% of church members give nothing
    - According to the IRS — avg. filer pays 10x more a year in interest on debt than they give to charity
- ***Is it possible to rob God today?***
  - Only you can answer that.
  - But, it's probably a lot more possible than we might realize.
  - I know I've been guilty of robbing God before.
- From here, there's a shift...

### *You'll Prosper*

- Vs. 10-12
- ***Why will you prosper if you give generously?***
  - Health and wealth gospel — "If you're faithful, you'll be rich."
  - Biblical teaching — "If you're generous, you'll be blessed."
    - "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
  - Practical
    - Generous people are promoted
    - Generous people experience better marriages
    - Generous people make better parents and grandparents
- Take a step of faith on this...

### *Test Me*

- God says, "Test me on this."
- Everything has led up to this...
  - You have a lot to think about
- Are you still not sure? Test God on this. Give generously. See if you aren't blessed.