

## '7 Sermons you do not want to hear' no. 4

**Title:**            *'A Deacon's Testimony concerning Tithing'*

**Date:**            *17<sup>th</sup> April 2015*

**Scriptures:**    *Malachi 3:7-12 & Mark 12:41-44*

***Prayer for the message:*** Almighty God, may Your Word of old speak afresh today, bringing new vision, new faith and new commitment. Speak now, help us to listen. We pray with thanksgiving for Your Word in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### ***The Message - 'A Deacon's Testimony concerning Tithing'***

**We** return this morning to our sermon series, '**7 Sermons you don't want to hear**'. In the series so far we have covered, '**Forgiveness,**' '**Holiness and Reverence,**' and '**Reconciliation.**'

The sermon you don't want to hear today takes the form of a personal testimony and I pray it will inspire you all as well as challenge you all.

**When** God calls a person to preach His Word He calls us to preach the WHOLE of His Word - He does not want me preach only on the pleasant portions of Scripture; He wants me to preach all of the Bible - and in fact today is a good opportunity to share with you the verse of Scripture that the Lord laid on my heart as my **mandate** *if you like* for my ministry here in England; the Lord gave me these 2 verses of Scripture on my return to South Africa from an introductory visit to the Tamworth & Lichfield Circuit in 2012.

**From Matthew 7:13-14, 'Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with sure-fire, easy going formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life - to God - is vigorous and requires total attention.'**

**My** task from God is to ensure that those I minister to here in England enter the narrow gate and take the narrow way - it's lonely, and costly, it means we have to give up sin and worldliness BUT it is worth it, BECAUSE it is the only **way to life - to God!**

**So,** when a sermon is unpleasant to listen to *let alone* unpleasant to **do**, I can offer no apology, it is what God has tasked me to do.

With that brief explanation...

I wonder what the first change was that YOU made to your lifestyle, when you accepted Jesus Christ into your life to be your Lord and Saviour.

Well, the first change I made, was I began to **tithe** from my total income, not from my *take home money*, BUT from the total amount I earned. AND come October I will have ***brought the whole tenth of my income into the storehouse*** for 31 years!

And at one point in our married life that was extremely difficult to do, but I kept it up and God was faithful and He gave us our ***daily bread*** faithfully every day.

But my tithe is not all I have brought into the storehouse, every Sunday I also bring an offering - because we must understand that **tithing** is not the END of our giving to God, it is only the BEGINNING.

Hear again what God said in **Malachi 3 verse 8**, '***Will a man rob or defraud God? Yet you rob and defraud Me. But you say, 'in what way do we rob or defraud You?' You have withheld your tithes AND OFFERINGS.***'

From God's point of view I give my tithe to Him, I don't offer it to Him because it is His legal portion - it is not mine to factor into my budget, I must immediately give it to Him, and I do by electronic transfer every month, *but beyond that* I bring an offering every Sunday to put on the plate, *and beyond that* we give **alms** in the way of *Water Aid, Mission Aid and the Children's Society* AND monthly I also give, to an organisation that ministers in Israel to the Jewish people. No matter what monies come into our account whether a tax rebate, reimbursed expenses, or whatever a tithe or thanksgiving offering is given from out of them.

And I do this, and share this NOT for a *pat-on-the-back*, but because this is what God commands; and the wonderful thing about God's commands is that there is ALWAYS a promise involved in every commandment.

We usually think of commands as placing restrictions on us OR making demands on us, BUT the commands of God contain precious promises.

For instance, for our young people here this morning, listen to what the Lord promises if you keep His command to ***obey, honour and value as precious your parents, 'all maybe well with you and you may live long on the earth.'***

And look what God promises those who do not rob OR defraud Him but bring the whole tithe and offerings into His storehouse:

✚ God will pour out such a blessing we will not find room to contain it

- ✚ He will prevent the pests, the devourer from eating up anything that is yours
- ✚ And all the nations will look at us and say we are a blessed people and will recognise that God has truly blessed and prospered us.

This is the promise that God makes to those who *bring all the tithes, the whole tenth of their income into the storehouse* - those who bring *the whole tenth of their income into the storehouse* have the right to *put the Lord in remembrance of THIS promise (Isaiah 62:6)* if they are bringing *the whole tenth of their income into the storehouse* and God is not fulfilling His side, but ONLY if we are being obedient.

Proverbs 3:9-10 teaches us to *'Honour the LORD with your wealth, with the Firstfruits of all your crops; then and here's the promise, your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.'* The 'barns' and 'vats' are our material needs - all our material needs. They will be abundantly supplied and will overflow when we honour God with our wealth.

Notice we are to honour God by giving Him the **'FIRSTFRUITS'** the first and the best portion.

Notice something else, we either **honour** OR **dishonour** God with our money, there is no neutral ground.

So in love I say to you, God does not want our tips, He deserves the best portion.

And scary thing is, *well at least it is for me*, our reading from **Mark 12** teaches us that Jesus Himself watches how we give. **Verse 41**, *'and Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and saw how the crowd was casting money into the treasury.'* Jesus considered it worthwhile to sit and watch what the people offered. I wonder if He is still watching how and what people - how **we** give?

Something else these verses teach us is that God measures what we give by what we keep for ourselves.

Even though the widow put in 2 of the smallest coins, she, in God's eyes gave the most because she had nothing left for herself.

And then how did God know that Israel had been robbing Him if He had not kept a record of their tithing?

In **Leviticus 27 verses 30 and 32** God says to the Israelites, *'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...and all the tithe of the herd or of the flock, whatever passes under the herdsman's staff, the tenth shall be holy to the Lord.'*

**A** 1000 or so years after giving this instruction the Lord, through His messenger tells the people He has in fact kept a record, and the record shows that the Israelites have been robbing Him. How? They ask. *You have withheld your tithes and offerings.* And as a result, *you are cursed with the curse, for you are robbing Me, even this whole nation.*

**J**esus sit and watches how we give. AND

**G**od is keeps a record. And according to **Romans 14:12** there will come a time when all of us, every Christian is going to have to give a financial accounting of ourselves to God.

**I** wonder if you are aware that this is the **ONLY** time in **Malachi 3:10** God says in His entire Word that we are allowed to *'test'* Him OR *prove Him now by it* - God says to test Him with our finances - test Him and see if He will do what He has promised - *I have*, and I can assure you He is faithful.

**Where** are we to bring *all the tithes? Into the storehouse that there may be food in My house...says the Lord Malachi 3:10.*

**A** *'storehouse'* is the place we get food to eat AND it is the place where we obtain seed to sow for a harvest in the future.

**As** Christians our *'storehouse'* is our church, St Martin's is our *'storehouse'* this is where we need to be bringing *the whole 10<sup>th</sup> of our income* and our **offerings**, for this is where we are fed with God's Word and where we receive seed to sow into the lives of others.

**And** why are we bringing our offerings and *the whole 10<sup>th</sup> of our income* into St Martin's so that **GOD'S WORK CAN CONTINUE FROM THIS PLACE**, God puts it this way in **Malachi 3:10**, *'that there may be food in MY house!'*

**The** common excuse I have heard for Christians NOT tithing is that the New Testament doesn't say we must tithe - *my response*, the New Testament doesn't say we mustn't tithe either.

**Also**, I just wonder if God sits on His throne in heaven and asks Jesus, seated on His right AND the Holy Spirit hovering, *'did I say that in the Old or New Testament, is it still relevant?'* In my Bible I make no distinction between the Old or the New Testament, in my Bibles I have either cut that dividing page out OR folded it back so there is no divide, it is one continuous book.

**God** says in **Psalm 89 verse 34** that He does not *alter the thing that is gone out of His lips.*

**And** of course we all realise that when Paul wrote to Timothy and said in **2Timothy 3:16**, *'Every Scripture is God-breathed, given by His inspiration*

*and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience and for training in righteousness/in holy living...* Paul was speaking about the Old Testament because the New Testament was still being lived never mind written.

But tithing can be found in the New Testament. In **Hebrews 6 verse 20** we are told that Jesus *has become, since His death, resurrection and ascension a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek*. We are first introduced to the *order of Melchizedek* in **Genesis** when Abraham gives a 10<sup>th</sup> of his plunder to *Melchizedek priest of the Most High God*, in **Genesis 14**.

The priesthood of **Melchizedek** is eternal because the one who is in the priesthood never dies. **The letter to the Hebrews** tells us that Jesus lives forever as a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek and as such receives the tithes of His people, receives our tithes.

**When** we set aside *Firstfruits*, the best portion - the whole tenth of our income and give it to Jesus, we are in fact acknowledging Him as our High Priest according to the priesthood of Melchizedek - we are honouring Him as our High Priest.

There is so much on the subject of **tithing** and **offerings** that I could share, but I end with the reason why **tithing** was the first thing I began to do when I invited Jesus Christ into my life to be my Lord and Saviour - Jesus says in **John 14:15** *'If you really love Me, you will keep, obey My commands.'*

### I REALLY LOVE JESUS

How about you?

How great is your love for God?

Your love for St Martin's?

Your love for the lost world?

How great is our willingness to sacrifice that others might come to know of the love, mercy, and grace of God?

**'Faithful God,**

**Teach us to step out in faith, trusting in Your Word,**

**Seeking Your will and offering our commitment,**

**And so may we recognise more fully the nearness of Your presence,**

**The truth of Your promises, the constancy of Your love**

**And the wonder of Your grace as we go out to love and serve You in the world. Amen.'**