

# Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

**Date** : 24 Jul 2022

**Sermon Title** : Test Me!

**Speaker** : Rev Shannon Chan

**Text** : Malachi 3:6-12

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Some people may feel like the church is always asking for money. Although this passage may sound like that, the opening words to the people in Malachi 1 was, "God loves you". How we manage money is directly linked to our discipleship and so stewardship is a subject that needs to be considered. In fact, the Bible contains more verses about money and our resources than about heaven and hell combined. Out of the 38 parables told by Jesus, 16 of them touched on the subject of money, There are less than 300 verses on prayer, less than 500 on faith, yet there are 2000 plus verses on wealth and possessions. It thus seems therefore that how we deal with finances in general and what we give in particular are a big deal to God.

For us, we may need to relearn or rethink the truth that Martin Luther recognized – "There are 3 conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, mind and the purse/wallet." Something we need to bear in mind as we look at this subject of giving is that - we do not give in order to get, we give because of what we have already been given.

## **Two insights from Malachi 3:6-12:**

### **1. The curse in robbing God (Malchi 3:6-9)**

God is making a fifth charge against the people after four other charges made in the earlier chapters of Malachi. In this 5<sup>th</sup> charge, God says He does not change, waver or falter but the people did. He is faithful even when they were fickle and unfaithful.

- God rebuked the people as a whole for their rebellious neglect of giving the full tithe.
- The tithe was a command given in the law and it means a "tenth". Today, we commonly think of the tithe as 10%.

God was calling the people to return to Him but instead of returning wholeheartedly, they denied that they had a problem or had gone away from God. (Mal 3:7, *NLT*) They did not think that they had gone away or left and did not recognise that they were guilty of sin. If they had not left, how then can they return, or repent when they had not sinned? But God saw the people's neglect to give the full tithe as an act of robbery.

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- Right worship includes not robbing God by bringing the full tithe as an offering.

When we tithe, we demonstrate who is Lord of our life. Is God Lord of our life or mammon our Lord? When we give our 10% tithes, it is a reminder that God is the Owner of everything that we have. Everything we possess belongs to God and we are mere stewards. God wants what our money represents. When giving to God, we are only taking our hand off what in the first place belongs to God.

*“When we let go of money, we are letting go of part of ourselves and part of our security... When we give money, we are releasing a little more of our egocentric selves and a little more of our false security....”*  
- Richard Foster

*“It is not so much what you have, but rather what has you that makes all the difference in the world.”*  
- Joe Stowell

## **2. The blessing of giving to God (Malachi 3:10-12)**

- The word “pour” (v.10) means “to make empty”.
- God declared that if the people were to trust Him with their giving, He would empty His bucket of blessings on them and they will barely be able to contain it.
- God would keep certain bad things from happening so as to protect the fruit of their labour.

The door to true blessing starts when we turn and return to God.

### **Two questions raised in the light of Jesus’ coming again:**

#### **A. Does God command Christians to tithe today?**

There are at least two schools of thoughts of polar extremes:

- a) You do not need to give at all because in the New Testament, there is no mention of tithing.
  - b) You need to give as it is God’s law.
- While we are no longer under law but grace, we should not forget the purpose of grace – we are to live for God and do what God wants us to do. Romans 8:4 tells us that Jesus came so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us not so that we could just altogether dismiss it.
  - Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:8 encourages Christians to follow the example of the believers in Philippi who gave not predicated on command but out of genuine love for the suffering believers in Jerusalem. To Apostle Paul compelled giving would not be a genuine act of love. Though he is encouraging them to give, he is not twisting their arm with the imperative of the law. In fact, he connects the gospel to generosity by reminding them of Jesus’ generosity – that though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor so that we by His poverty might

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become rich. Thus, Paul encourages Christian giving that is founded upon genuine love and generosity.

## **B. Does God command Christians to give an exacting amount of 10% of their income?**

When Jesus came, He was resetting the bar for certain things like adultery, where if one even looks at a woman with lust, he has committed adultery. I think it is the same with tithing. Jesus affirmed the Pharisees for giving their tithes when they asked him, but at the same time, He rejected their tithe because they had neglected the weightier things. Jesus emphasised that the intention and the heart is more important.

- It is no point giving if we grumble about giving 10% as tithe, being calculative in how much to give and being unrested, unhappy, griping to find loopholes to give less. We may get the letter of the law right but miss the spirit behind it. I believe Jesus resets the bar to far more than 10%.
- How much do I get to give? We have the privilege to give as much as we desire (or as little) but how you use God's money shows what you really think of God. Your giving is a thermometer of how much you truly love Him.

### 4 ways of living in relation to our income:

- (i) Living above our means – expenditure exceeds income and constantly in debt.
- (ii) Living at our means – easy come, easy go; spend all we earn without thinking of savings or rainy days.
- (iii) Living within our means – expenditure is prudent and save for a rainy day.
- (iv) Living below our means – deliberately simplify life to live below our means and do not spend even when we can afford. This allows us to give generously to worthy causes and the work of missions.

Robert Gilmore LeTourneau is one such person who lives below his means. While in the midst of financial difficulty with a debt of \$100,000 in the 1920s, he continued to give his tithes and offerings, trusting God with his money, family and life; knowing that God uses man's weakness to showcase His strength. As the inventor of the giant earthmoving equipment, Richard was known to live on 10% of his income and giving 90% away. "Test Me!" God said. As he remembered God's goodness and faithfulness, he gave out of the more that he had received and God blessed him with even more so that he can give even more for God's Kingdom to support God's work.

## **CONCLUSION**

Everything we have belongs to God. We are called to give out of what is actually His. Let us reflect on His great love and generosity in our giving so our hearts may be transformed to be like Jesus, who in genuine love, gave us 100% of Himself. May we trust God in our giving as He says, "Test Me!"

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## **A. Review Sermon Application**

***Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.***

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2a. Appoint someone to read Malachi 3:6-12 slowly.

- 2b. (i) Spend some time reflecting on this passage. What is God saying to you personally?
  - (ii) How will you respond to God's Word?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

3. In our giving, why is it important to bear in mind that “We do not give in order to get, we give because of what we have already been given.”?
  - a. What is one thing you are struggling with in giving to God His tithes and your offerings, at this point of your life?
  - b. How does knowing that “The door to true blessing starts when we turn and return to God” help you appropriate God’s promises in Malachi 3:10-12.
  
- 4a. How are you living in relation to your income? (Choose one of the 4 ways described) Are your savings for your security or God’s use?
- 4b. What is one change you can make to better give generously to worthy causes and the work of missions in genuine love? (Remember Mark 12:41-44)
- 4c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 4b. above in the following week(s), till your next meeting?

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## **C. Testimonies, Prayer and Action**

***Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.***

5. Share your testimony on how the Holy Spirit led you to generously help someone in need even though it meant sacrificing your own need, and how God blessed you through it.

OR

Give thanks to God for sending someone to support you generously in your times of need.

6. With a prayer partner, take time to pray for the concerns in 4b. and 4c. above, submitting to Him your fears and challenges in giving generously out of genuine love.

As a group, turn and return to God and spend some time seeking Him on how your group can give generously to His work so you may experience His promises in Malachi 3:10-12. Pray also for the Holy Spirit to be upon your group and the church so that we will give to God what is rightfully His with a sincere, cheerful and generous heart.

### Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Great Things – Phil Wickham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4CY3nf1Mvw>
2. Goodness of God – Bethel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3t6CdeiN1M>
3. Build My Life – Housefires <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85jPPvzRXzc>

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