

G'day Church Family

This morning [evening] we're continuing our series on the OT book of Malachi (the last book of OT)

It would be great to have your Bibles turned to Malachi chapter 3 beginning at verse 6 and we're going through to verse 15

There's the usual sermon outline, in your bulletin, if you'd like to jot down notes. Let me pray for God's help and understanding. Let's pray...

Intro

First up - a question for us to think about...

When we think about giving to God (if we think about such things)

When we think about giving to God - with our time - our money - our energy - our work...

[PowerPoint 1a-Q]

What reservations or questions go through our mind that might make us hesitate in giving to God or make us hold back from giving to God?

(pause)

Questions like:

[PowerPoint 1b-Qs]

- Can I afford it?
- Will there be enough left for me?
- Will what I give be used wisely?
- Will God bless me for giving?

And so on...

(pause)

The 2 commodities that people value highly these days -are their **money** and their **time** - their **bank balance** - and their **diary/calendar**

When it comes to our time and our money?

[PowerPoint 1c-Robbing?]

Are we robbing God?

After all - everything we have - we only have - because God has blessed us with it - in the first place

Which brings us to our passage from Malachi 3:6-15...

Robbing God - In Tithing (3:6-12)

[PowerPoint 2a-unchanging]

Israel learnt a golden truth about God in v6 - God doesn't change - He's consistent - always faithful - always loving

And it's good thing that He doesn't change - because He could have destroyed them by now!

[PowerPoint 2b-history]

Israel's has a history in v7 - from way back - of turning away from God's rules - but God has been very very patient with them!

Yes - He's disciplined them - but He's stuck with them

If it were us - and someone continually let us down and hurt us - eventually we would say - we've had a gutful with this relationship - that's it - no more! But

God is long suffering with Israel - and with us

[PowerPoint 2c-return]

So God calls them to return to Him - in v7 He says - return to me and I will return to you

It's a call to repent and turn back to God

Malachi's style - still in v7 - is to imagine what Israel - would say to God - "How are we to return?"

[PowerPoint 2d-charge of robbery]

God explains how they should return to them by specifically **charging** them - that they have robbed Him

I've only ever been robbed once in my life - I was mugged in London - the injustice of it really affected me - how dare they rob me!

That's what God's saying - how dare Israel rob the Creator of the Universe

How have they robbed Him - in v8?

In their tithes and their offerings

Their giving to God and their care for their fellow people -reflected how important God and others were to them - and the answer was - **not very**

Their giving of tithes and offerings was a thermometer of their heart towards God

The offerings they were supposed to bring to God - were animal sacrifices to make amends for their sin and to thank God - but as we saw a couple of weeks ago - the offerings they made - were often diseased or disabled animals - they gave God their second best - not their best

[PowerPoint 2e-tithe]

Tithes [which means a tenth] - they were supposed to give God a tenth of their crops and their animals

The idea was to give God the best of their crops and animals and bring them to the storehouse (as in v10) for the common good of the nation

Basically putting God first

There were a number of reasons for tithing

- To support the Levite - priests - as they had no land or animals of their own (Num 18:21-24)
- To support the running of God's temple (Num 18:21-24)
- To support widows, orphans, refugees and poor (Deut 14:28-29)
- And to fellowship with the Lord and to learn to fear/revere Him (Deut 14:22-29)

So tithing was designed so that Israel could lovingly worship God and lovingly support their people

And - so that the nations around Israel - as it says in v12 - would go - **WOW!** - look how blessed Israel all - and look how they look after their people - we should be like this

[PowerPoint 3a-Curse]

But Israel have not been tithing as God specified - they've been robbing God

So God says in v9 - the whole nation is under a curse

Israel would be familiar with the concept of blessings and curses - it's in

Deuteronomy 28 - which basically says:

Israel will be blessed if they obey God

And they will be cursed if they disobey God

[PowerPoint 3b-try me]

But notice God still gives them a second chance in v10

He says - bring the whole tithe - the whole 10%

Try Me! God says!

See if I don't bless you in v10 - I'll open the floodgates of Heaven and shower you with blessings if you bring the whole tithe

And see v11 - God will protect their crops if they only obey Him!

In the Old Testament - under the Old Covenant

Blessings and curses were national

And Israel could see the blessings from God - physically - in bumper crops, healthy animals and victories in battles against their neighbours

And they could see the curses from God physically too - when crops failed and battles were lost!

[PowerPoint 3c-proprosperity]

A word of caution here -

This passage from Malachi is often misused today

In the form of a Prosperity Gospel

It goes along the lines - if you give to God - usually in the form of giving to a church - and usually giving your money - then God will bless you - with lots of money, a better job, a better house and better car etc. etc.

That's a false Gospel and a false teaching!

In the OT - Blessings and curses are national

Individually good people might be blessed or they might suffer - like Job did

Individually the wicked might seem to prosper as the Psalmist sometimes wrote
(Ps 10; 73:3)

But blessings and curses in the Old Testament are national - because Israel is supposed to be obedient to God and to be a light to other nations -to attract them to see how blessed they are by God

[PowerPoint 3d-New]

Today we're under the New Covenant of Jesus

Jesus death and resurrection has fixed sin and death once and for all - with His perfect sacrifice - so no more sacrifices like the OT are required

But there does need to be a response from us

We are to respond to God's love in Jesus - we're not working our way to Heaven - Jesus has done that - we're responding to God's unchanging love by

By loving God and loving others

New Covenant in Jesus

Under the New Covenant of Jesus

[PowerPoint 4a-John 9]

- Jesus tells us there's not a one-to-one relationship with curses - for sin and disobedience - the blind man of John 9 is not blind because of his sin!

So don't let people tell us we are sick or have tragedies in our lives because of sin in our lives

[PowerPoint 4b-Cost]

- Jesus also tells us there is a cost in following Him

We're called to be prepared to give up stuff to follow Jesus

In Mark 10 - Peter's concerned about missing out for following Jesus

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this **present age**: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in **the age to come eternal life**. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Jesus is saying yes - following Him will cost us something

But there will be blessings in this present age

If we give up a home, or brothers, sisters, mothers or fathers - we get back hundred times

Now this doesn't mean if I sell my house - and give the money to God - that I'll then get an apartment in NY, a villa in Fiji and holiday home on the Gold Coast

Nor does it mean if I give up my mother - I'll get 100 mothers - or a 100 mother in-laws - one's enough [Sticker-mother in-law in the boot]

What Jesus is saying here - is that as part of a church family - we will have the blessings of 100 homes opened up for us to fellowship in - and

we'll have heaps of brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers in our church family - who will love us and care for us

That's the blessings - it's not necessarily a financial blessing!

AND NOTE - along with these blessings - Jesus says along with these blessing will be persecutions - that's why the Prosperity Gospel is false

The Apostle Paul's life is a fine example of why prosperity gospel is false - he had many tragic circumstances and he certainly wasn't rich - but look how he was blessed by planting churches and seeing God's kingdom grow!

Today - churches are often full of broken, hurting people - and the world is not amazed by Christian's wealth and prosperity - but they are amazed by their love and their hope

(pause)

So what about tithing today?

Do we give a tenth like in the OT?

Let's look at a couple of places in NT

- Rom 12 - tells us our whole life is a sacrifice to God - we serve God in our work, in our home life, in our friendships
- 1 Cor 16:2 - ²On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income
From this we deduce - regular weekly giving - in keeping with our income - but no percentage is given
- From our NT reading today = 2 Cor 9:6-15

- We get the principle of whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly - whoever sows generously reaps generously
- We get the principle of giving from the heart - without being reluctant or feeling compelled to do so
- We get the principle that God loves people who give cheerfully - not miserably
- And we get the principle - that a spirit of generosity - will be blessed by God and produce a harvest of righteousness. This will not necessarily be financially - but will be in seeing spiritual and numerical growth in our church, seeing people in our church growing in their love and knowledge of Jesus, and seeing new people become Christians

Here God's not just talking about the giving of money - but the giving of our whole selves - our time, our talents and our money

When new members enter into membership in our church - they are asked this question: *"Do you promise to give a fitting proportion of your time, talents and money for God's work in the world"*

- Then from Matt 6:1-4 - we get a further principle on giving

"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be

honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

So our giving of time, talents and money does not need to be showy so everyone sees - don't make a big performance of it - so we get a pat on the back from everyone

In fact Jesus suggests it should be anonymous - without us blowing our own trumpets

He uses the expression - the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing - another way of saying - do this giving in secret if possible or as quietly and with minimal fuss as possible - only God needs to know - and He'll reward us

[PowerPoint 5a-purpose]

So from all we've looked out - a 10th is not specified in the NT - there is in fact no limit - perhaps a tenth is a good starting point - but it depends on our circumstances and our hearts. And our giving is not just money - but time and talents to help and serve

So - what's the objectives of giving any way?

- To pay the preachers (1 Cor 9:14)
- To help widows (Acts 6:1-2; 1 Tim 5:16)
- To help those in need (2 Cor 8:14)

- To offer hospitality (Rom 12:3 and without grumbling 1 Peter 4:9)
- Matt 25:40 - "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me"
- Matt 25:45 - "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me"

[PowerPoint 5b-App]

Application:

In OT - it was all about rules

In NT - it's all about love and what love looks like

Are we robbing God?

By not giving of our time, talents or money?

Jesus gave His all for us?

Will we give our all in response?

(pause)

Robbing God - In Serving (3:13-15)

There's another charge in our Malachi passage

It's in vv13-15

[PowerPoint 6a-charge]

People are speaking harshly and rudely about God

Saying "that it doesn't pay to serve God - what do we ever get out of it?"

And saying that "evil doers prosper and God lets them get away with it"

[PowerPoint 6b-false]

These are false assumptions about God:

Heb 9:27 tells us Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

And 2 Cor 5:10 tell us - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

And what happens to evildoers is not our concern - it's God's business

Deut 32:35 says:

It is mine to avenge; I will repay

[PowerPoint 6c-gates]

The assumption of the evil prospering is a delusion

Jesus describes this evil way as a wide attractive gate

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Application - Are we falling for the delusion that the wide gate is the attractive gate - when in fact it is the evil way leading to destruction?

[PowerPoint 6d-serve]

The assumption that it is not worth serving the Lord is also wrong

The Apostle Paul says this in 1 Timothy 1:12-14

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

Once Apostle Paul became aware of the love and grace that God had given him, his response was to serve God faithfully.

Application - Are we serving in response to God's love shown to us in Jesus?
 Are we using the gifts God's has given us to serve God and to serve others?
 (pause)

Conclusion

We began by asking

What reservations do we have when we think about giving to God? What makes us hold back from giving to God?

Will we be blessed in our giving?

[PowerPoint 7-Conclusion]

What we need to realize is:

We have already been blessed - because of God's unchanging faithful love for us in sending Jesus to die for us

Has the love that Jesus showed on the cross - in purchasing our forgiveness and paying for our place in heaven - convinced us today - to respond by being

generous in the giving of our time, talents and money - in serving the Lord and serving others?

Remember we reap what we sow...

Let's pray...