

## GIVING

A small-town baker bought his butter from a local farmer. After weighing his butter, he concluded the farmer had been reducing the amount in the packages but charging the same. Therefore, the baker accused the farmer of fraud. In court the judge asked the farmer, "Do you have measuring weights?" "No sir," replied the farmer. "How then do you manage to weigh the butter that you sell?" The farmer answered, "When the baker began buying his butter from me, I thought I'd better get my bread from him. I have been using his 1-pound loaf as the weight for the butter I sell. If the weight of the butter is wrong, he has only himself to blame."

Why do I tell you that story? In life we usually receive back what we first give. If you give joy and peace and love that is often what you receive back.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

I want to talk with you today about the principle of giving and receiving. You have probably heard the old expression before that you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. The bible says that God so loved the world that he GAVE... Our God is a giving God. Jesus modeled this for us when he walked the earth. He gave all He had for us and He expects us to model His love by giving to others. This verse that we read says 3 important truths about giving and receiving.

### 1. The TEST – give

The verse that we have read this morning starts with the word GIVE. It is used in the imperative, meaning that it is something that is expected of us. Giving is like love in that it is not optional. Jesus expects us to give.

Mat 6:2-4 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 honored by men. I tell you the truth, 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.

Jesus does not say here IF you give. He says twice WHEN you give. It is an expectation.

Here in Canada, we live in a democracy. The word means 'rule of the people', as opposed to aristocracy which means 'rule of the elite'. In a democracy, everyone gets a say. Everyone gets a voice in what happens. As believers in Jesus, we are part of the Kingdom of God. A Kingdom is run differently than a democracy. There is no parliament, no representatives. There is no election. There is only the King, and he controls the Kingdom. He makes the rules, and when those rules are broken the King has the power to enforce those rules. Again, this is the concept of lordship. I say that because, as people, we generally do not like to be told what to do. Especially with our money.

One time a skeptic said to a preacher, "I can't stand this Christianity business. All I ever hear from you Christians is give, give, give." The preacher thought a minute and said, "That's about the best description of Christianity I have ever heard!"

Of course, we are sensitive to this because this has been abused in the past. However, it is still true.

Mal 3:8-10 Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse -- the whole nation of you -- because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

Sometimes Christians get swept up in a debate over whether the tithe is still something that God expects of us today. For me, that is not the real question. The real question is whether the promise that we just read in Malachi still applies to us today? I do not find a passage in the New Testament that has rescinded this promise. Just as I have found no New Testament passage that ever rescinded God's rainbow promise about a flood. Do you believe God will never destroy the earth by water again? How do you know? Your confidence is based on the promise found in Genesis 9.

This promise does not have to be restated in the New Testament in order to be valid today. There are many promises that we find in the book of Proverbs. Here is one of them;

Pro 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Do you believe that promise to us still applies to us today? This promise about guidance did not have to be restated. So, if it does not have to be restated then what about 3 verses later where it says;

Pro 3:9-10 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

This is also a promise. God's promises in regard to tithing are no different than His promises about guidance. Our decision to give 10% of our income back to God reflects our reliance on him as the source of all our blessings. This kind of faith pleases the Lord and brings abundant blessing.

I don't want us to fall prey to legalistic righteousness and require the New Testament to command us to tithe before we use this simple measure as a generosity standard. We could miss many of God's richest blessings if we refuse to take him at his word. Both biblical principles and practical experiences demonstrate the power of tithing in a Christian's life. Since God's word repeatedly uses the sowing and reaping illustration to encourage giving back to him, it's a powerful exercise to see what will happen when we take him at his word and tithe as a starting point for giving. What will we reap?

Jesus taught his followers to live by a higher standard than the one given in the Old Testament. Obviously, we too, want to please him and be faithful to his call. Jesus contrasted the requirements of the Law with the plan for his followers. Which is the higher standard, the Law of Moses or the way of Christ?

OT: Do not murder - NT: Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer.

OT: Do not commit adultery - NT: Anyone who lusts commits adultery in his heart.

OT: Do not swear falsely by God's name - NT: Do not swear at all.

OT: The entire tithe will be holy to the Lord - NT: Give generously as you are able.

An exhaustive study of Scripture reveals this often-overlooked truth: The way of Jesus always calls for greater faithfulness and commitment than was required in the Old Testament. Can giving possibly be an exception?

It follows clearly that no one who wants to be faithful to God would ever think of doing less than the Old Testament believers. So why do we then do less when it comes to giving?

Jesus told us to give. It is a test to see if we really trust Him. It is a test of our faith. Paul understood this when he wrote to the church in Corinth;

2Co 8:8-9 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Paul says that giving is a test of the sincerity of our love. It is not commanded, because then it would not be from the heart but out of blind duty. It is expected. It should be a part of the life of every Christian. God's standard for us is generosity. His expectation is that we give. It is a test. A test of whether or not we are connected to Christ.

At the beginning of the lockdown, I came in to the church in Brampton one morning and saw a drone sitting in the middle of our parking lot. It was just sitting there. I waited all day to see if someone would come and claim it, but no one did. So, I just put it in my office. This particular model of drone has an issue with it. If it is flying and goes beyond the range of its controller, it just keeps on going. Without someone telling it what to do, it just does its own thing. It keeps going until it runs out of power and then has to make an emergency landing.

Jesus told us that it is important that we stay connected to the vine. He is the vine; we are the branches. If we rely on Him, we will flourish. If we become disconnected, we wither and die. Without God's control in our lives, we just do our own thing until we crash. God says GIVE. It is a test.

## 2. The TREASURE – and it will be given to you

When we give, Jesus says that we will then also receive. The verse continues;

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap...

Notice that it says here that when we give, we do not simply receive back WHAT we give, we get back MORE than we give. This is the principle of multiplication. One of the truths of planting and harvesting is that you reap more than what you sow. Farmers could not make a living if there was no increase - if they only got from the ground what they put into it.

Matt 12:8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop -- a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

If you sow a seed, you receive back many times more seeds than you plant. I like the picture of popcorn. You pour a little cup full of kernels into the pan, but then when it starts to pop it grows and overflows the container. A little cup of kernels makes a huge bag of popcorn. When we give, God takes what we have given and multiplies it.

God says to us "Test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." The blessings just spill out. There is so much of it that you do not know what to do with it.

When the girls were little, we stayed one weekend at a bed and breakfast. It was bath time, so one of them was in the tub with the bubble bath. They realized it was a water jet tub so they turned it on. The bubbles started to multiply and soon the whole room was filled with bubbles. That is what happens when we give. God multiplies it so that we do not even have room for the increase.

I could give so many different testimonies of this, and I am sure that there are people listening to this that could also testify to it. That they trusted God and he was able to take what they gave and multiply it. Not in ways that they could even understand.

In the book of Deuteronomy, God spoke through Moses to the nation of Israel to review with them everything that had happened and everything they had been told. He was giving them a choice. They could choose to obey or disobey, to be blessed or to be cursed. To demonstrate this point in a very clear way He instructed the people when they entered the Promised Land to take part in a ceremony of decision. The people would stand between the 2 mountains (Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal) and hear the choices and then make a decision – to be blessed if they obeyed or cursed if they disobeyed.

When Israel entered the promised land they faced their first 2 cities – Jerico and Ai. These 2 cities showed very clearly the difference between blessings and curses. Against the large and fortified city of Jericho they obeyed the Lord and they had a great victory. Against the small and undefended city of Ai they disobeyed through Achan's sin and were defeated. Then they arrived in Shechem.

Deut 28:1 If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: 3 You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. 4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock--the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. 5 Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. 6 You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. 7 The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. 8 The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.

Obedience to the Lord means blessing. We receive an abundance and produce more than expected. Giving is a test that results in treasure.

### 3. The TRUTH – with the measure you use

The verse ends by saying, “For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” That means that we get to decide the blessing. One of my favorite verses in the bible is the story of the widow's oil found in 2 Kings 4:1. Basically, Elisha tells the widow to collect as many empty jars as possible. When she starts pouring out the oil it kept flowing until the last jar was filled, and then it stopped. God filled according to her faith. If she brought 5 jars, there would be 5 jars of oil. If she brought 5000 jars, there would be 5000 jars of oil. The blessing was tied to the faith of the one being blessed.

This is another basic truth about sowing and reaping. The more you plant, the more you harvest.

2 Cor 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

If you plant two fields of corn you will produce more than if you plant one field of corn. That is just common sense. Likewise, in relation to giving, the more you give the more you get. When you give, you sow seed and it produces a crop. Am I saying that if you start tithing that you are going to instantly become rich and never have another problem in your life. No. What I am saying is that you cannot out give God! If you provide Him with the seed, He can bring a harvest in your life and in the life of His church.

Any fool knows how many seeds there are in an apple, but only God knows how many apples there are in a seed -- Robert Schuller

These principles apply to giving financially, but they also are true in giving of your gifts and time. God blesses what we give.

Bob McKuen tells of a time he took his son over to McDonalds and he bought him super-size French fries. He said driving back home those things smelled so good in the car. He reached over and took one little French fry out of his son's French fries and I ate it. The son got upset. He said, "Dad you can't have any. These are my fries!" Immediately he had three thoughts.

First, he thought this child has forgotten that I am the source of all fries. I brought him here, I made the order, I paid for the order, I handed them to him, I'm driving him back home. He would not have any fries if it weren't for me.

The second thing he thought was that his child did not realize that he could take them away in a second if he wanted to. He had the power to do so. On the other hand he could buy him an entire truckload of fries if he wanted to because he had the power to do either.

The third thing he realized is that he didn't need his son's fries. He could easily have got some for himself. He just wanted his son to learn to be unselfish.

Those three lessons are how God wants you to learn to be generous with other people. God says I want you to remember that I am the source of everything you've got. You would have nothing without Me. Two, God could take everything away from us in a second or He could double it just like that because He has the power. Three, God says, I don't need your fries. I don't need your money. I'm not poor. I just want you to learn to be unselfish. I want you to learn to be generous. I want you to learn and I want to develop your faith.

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Giving is a test. It results in treasure and is rooted in the truth that God is able to multiply whatever we give Him for His glory.