

# “Sacrificial Giving”

November 12, 2017

**Our Savior’s Way  
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM  
Pastor Bill Mann**

Today I want to talk about one of the greatest promises of God in the Bible. It is a promise found at the end of the Old Testament--in Malachi 3:10. And it’s a promise connected to a command. God says, “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 windows of heaven and pour out on you so much blessing that you will not have room enough to receive it.” What is the command?—Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. What’s the promise?—God’s going to “throw open the windows of heaven and pour out on you so much blessing that you will not have room enough to receive it.”

Here is a true story a Lutheran pastor up in Michigan told me. It’s a story about a man named Mike. Mike was a member of the church. One Sunday the pastor’s sermon was on sacrificial giving. At the end of the sermon the ushers took up an offering and the only money Mike had in his wallet was a \$50 bill. That \$50 was supposed to buy a week’s worth of groceries for Mike, his wife, and their five children. But in an act of faith, Mike put the \$50 into the offering plate. Then after the service was over the family went out into the parking lot to go home. Within minutes they joyfully returned to the sanctuary and surrounded the pastor. They took the pastor by the arm and asked him to come outside and see their miracle. They walked out into the parking lot and there was their minivan completely filled with bags of groceries. Happy for the family, the pastor said, “Someone has given

you a great blessing!” “You don’t understand, pastor,” replied Mike. “Before the service, I made sure that all the windows were rolled up and all the doors were locked. I have the only key. So, it must have been the Lord!” “Well, Mike,” the pastor said, “you’re right—God promises to pour out His blessings on the person who trusts him.” Later, the pastor told me, “Mike had no family in the area and no one in the congregation ever took responsibility for what happened.” God says, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse and see if I will not throw open the windows of heaven and pour out on you so much blessing that you will not have room enough to receive it.”

There’s a story in the New Testament about a poor widow woman who gave everything she had to God. Jesus used her giving as an example to teach us how to give. *Video*

If you look at the average American, this is how their giving stacks up. 86% of Americans give less than 2% of their income away. But the Bible gives us this standard of giving—the **Tithe**—that’s 10%-- “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse,” The Bible tells us that everything we have already belongs to God. Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.” It all belongs to God. He has given it to us and He challenges us to give a percentage back to Him. Imagine what would happen if instead of just 2% we were all giving the tithe—10%. People would be blessed. We would be blessed. “Test me in this,” says the Lord. “Bring the whole tithe and see if I will not throw open the windows of heaven for you.” “Test me in this.” Do you realize that this is the only place in the Bible where God invites us to put Him to the test—here in this area of giving? You tell me, why would we not take God at His word? Why not put Him to the test?

There’s a funny story about two men who were shipwrecked on a desert island. One man paced back and forth, worried and scared—the other man sat sunning himself without a care in the world. The first man said to the second man, “We’re on a desert island. Aren’t you afraid that we’re going die here?” No,” said the second man. “I make

\$150,000 a year and tithe faithfully to my church every week. I know my Pastor will find me!”

The people behind us just sold their house and moved to North Carolina. They had lived next door a little over 20 years—just like us. Before they moved they had to get rid of stuff—truckloads of stuff. And, to be honest, some of their stuff ended up in our garage so now it’s my stuff. We live in this consumer-oriented society where stuff is so important. A recent survey of teenagers found that materialism among young people has grown to record levels. I guess we shouldn’t be surprised. Birthday parties, Christmas—we love to give our kid’s stuff. We love to see their excitement. We want to make them happy. But does all that stuff make us happy? I like what one of the Beatles—John Lennon—said, “When I was five years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down ‘happy’. They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life.”

In a letter to the Philippian Church, the Apostle Paul talked about the secret to happiness. In Philippians 4:11 Paul says, “I have learned the secret of being content in whatever situation I find myself.” Paul did not want his fellow believers to think that his happiness depended on whether or not he had stuff. He had nothing. He was in jail when he wrote these words. But still he was content. He was happy. Because Paul found his joy in his relationship with Jesus. Paul knew that God would provide for all his needs. There is a story about an elderly man who was watching his new neighbors move in one day. Truckload after truckload arrived at the house dropping off shiny new appliances and expensive furniture and every kind of electrical gadget. The old man called over the fence to his new neighbors, “Welcome to the neighborhood. If there’s anything you need, just let me know and I will teach you how to live without it.” Are there things that we can live without? There’s a difference between needs and wants. And we don’t need more stuff. What we need is Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to this earth to give his life away. He gave his life on the cross so that he could save the world from sin. I think it was Corrie Ten Boom who said, “The measure of life is not its duration, but its donation.” Jesus gave his life for you. Jesus lived on this earth only 33 years. But his death and resurrection have transformed the lives of millions of believers. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16). If you know nothing about the Bible—start here. If you know everything about the Bible—return here. Because of Jesus, you can have a relationship with your heavenly Father that will last forever.

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is really a “Thank You Note.” Paul writes (v. 18): “the gifts you sent are a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.” Someone once said that there are three types of givers—a flint, a sponge, or a honey comb. A flint you have to hammer and pound and all you get is chips and sparks. A sponge you have to squeeze. But a honeycomb just overflows with sweetness. I wonder if this isn’t an analogy we can apply to our own lives? Sometimes God has to knock us around a bit to get some reaction. Sometimes He has to apply pressure to our lives to get us to respond to Him. But then we come to the place we understand the goodness and grace of God and our hearts just overflow with love for God and for one another.

There is a primitive tribe that lives in the jungles of South America. Anthropologists have learned that the most important role in the tribe is the “keeper of the flame.” Fire is precious in the rain forest. And the person who feeds the flame and keeps the fire alive—his role is vital. As we give financially to God’s work, we become keepers of the flame. You become a keeper of the flame. You support missionaries and help spread the Gospel message. You feed the hungry and help meet people’s needs. You help people grow spiritually through our small groups and Christian education programs. You enable this Church—Our Savior’s Way—to shine as God’s light in the world.