

Ye have robbed me in tithes and offerings

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Preacher: Rev Donald Lamont

[0 : 00] Turn with me now for a little time to meditate in a portion we have read from the Word of God, the prophecies of Malachi, and the third chapter, reading again from the eighth verse.

Lill a man rob God, yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even his whole nation.

Bring me all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house. And prove me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

It is on this exceedingly somber note that the last of the Old Testament prophets closes, brings his prophecy to a close.

He indeed speaks confidently and consolingly to the true and devoted followers of the Lord. In the closing words of this chapter, then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, and so on.

[1 : 28] But they are nevertheless to remember, although he does speak to them so comfortingly and so consolingly, they are nevertheless to remember that matters are far from being well in their midst.

They are among those, they form part of the body, who have robbed God, and brought much displeasure to him, and aroused his righteous indignation, so that instead of being blessed, they are living under his curse.

He had cursed with a curse. And may I add that, what curse is more awesome, than living in a situation where the heavens are as brass, and the earth is as iron, where there is no word from the Lord, where his indignation burns like a flame, and where there is little or no apparent concern that such a situation should obtain.

And this may well be the kind of situation that we find ourselves in. Now that I say, it doesn't seem to have been so very different to the day in which we ourselves are living.

There was a form of godliness, but very little it would seem of the power of godliness, and the power of true vital religion. There was apparently a great emphasis on material pursuits, on worldliness, the knocking down of barns, and the building of greater ones, the erecting of sealed houses, and the pursuit of the luxurious life, all the things that we are accustomed to seeing in our own day.

[3 : 18] This is the only conclusion that can be drawn from the fact that they willfully withheld from God what was his proper due, and what he required of their hands.

It is difficult to precise, to do it precisely, the time when this book, this prophecy was written, but the general consensus of opinion seems to be that it was written some three to four hundred years before the coming of New Testament times, before the appearance of John the Baptist, the very last, so to speak, of the Old Testament prophets.

During this long period, therefore, there was no open vision in the Church of God. The prophetic ministry had, in large measure, ceased. God still had his people, it is evident, from the, when we come to the beginning of New Testament times, his people were still there, and they were waiting for him.

But there was no prophetic ministry, as there had been, right down through the years. God had withdrawn this privilege and this blessing from them.

And so during those many years, there was a veritable cloud hanging over the Church and the cause of God. And it would appear to us that Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, who has left a prophecy with us, gives us an insight into conditions prevailing in his own day, the conditions which continued until the coming of better times.

[5 : 06] We notice, first of all, the accusation which God levels here against his people. And the accusation is that they have robbed him. You have, ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

The book, as you see, is written in the form of a dialogue. God is accusing his people of behaving in a certain, improper way. And sadly, his people are refuting what God is saying to them.

This is a form that the dialogue takes. Wherein have we robbed thee? They are refusing to accept the accusation, the proper accusation that God confronts them with.

And God specifies here very particularly wherein his people had robbed him, wherein he had been robbed by them. that is, in tithes and in offerings.

Ye have robbed me in tithes and in offerings. Now the tithe was the, as you know, the general principle which the Lord Moses laid down for the maintenance of true religion, or to use that term that is known to ourselves and common among ourselves, for the maintenance of gospel ordinances.

[6 : 27] The Lord Moses, as you know, laid down this general principle by which the cause of true religion in Israel was to be maintained. A tenth of what the Lord had blessed them with was to be brought back and offered to the Lord.

We know, of course, that this simple and beautiful principle was much abused latterly by complex additions as we see from the Talmud, we have only but to read those enactments, those human enactments to realize how this beautiful principle was much abused.

But originally, it was an excellent and practical principle of operation. The very earliest time we see it was when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek when he returned from the slaughter of the king. So it seems to have been in operation from the very commencement of history, although it is given a practical effect in the law of Moses. And then the offerings, of course, were to form the basis of the tithe or tenth and were drawn from the flocks and the increase of their fields.

And the general principle that has followed in this respect was that the best was offered to God. The very finest was given to him of their increase.

[8 : 04] In the past, as we read through the early books of the Old Testament, again and again, we find these words emphasized that what was offered had to be without blemish.

It had to be the very best. This is constantly being brought before the people that the animal that was presented to God had to be of the very finest, of the very best.

And so then, he is accusing them here of robbing him. This is the complaint that God brings before them of robbing him in tithes and in offerings.

You ask how? How were they robbing him? In what direction was his planning expression in their behavior, in their exercises? Well, for one thing, it is clear that they presented polluted bread as the first truth of their increase, that which was inferior, that which was probably worthless in the marketplace.

In chapter 1 of this prophecy at verse 7, we read, Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar and say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible.

[9 : 25] In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible. You see, the table of the Lord or the cause of true religion was the least of their consideration.

It was the least of their concern. If there was anything left over, after every personal demand had been made, then it could be given to the temple.

Or if it was no use to take to the marketplace, then it could be thrown on the altar. But so contemptible was the cause of true religion, that this is the way in which they presented the offerings, the best, what were supposed to be the best offerings, from their first fruits.

They presented polluted bread. You see, they went through the form of being religious, and of ostensibly giving God what the law lay down.

But God was seen in quite a different light. They robbed him because they polluted, they offered polluted bread. And they also offered blemished sacrifices.

[10 : 38] Instead of what was the very best and the private, that which was blemished, that which was marred, that which was broken. Again, in that first chapter of the prophecy at verse 8, will he be his words, and if he offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?

And if he offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now, unto the governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? The original principle of the best for God was forgotten. It was reversed, and instead for the slightly worthless and valueless to themselves was offered to him. Is it then surprising that God should accuse them of having robbed him?

Is it surprising that he should speak to them through his servant in his way, you have robbed me, even his whole nation? He's not accusing them of having offered out from their religious exercises. Oh, not, not at all. They had all the trillions of their religion. But the vital element in what they were presenting to God was absent from what they were giving.

[11 : 54] and saw the curse of God rested upon them. And the curse of God would continue to rest upon them so long as they would act as they were doing.

And so, after having said before them the situation as he saw it, after having presented them with how things were, he, after the severity of these words, you have robbed God unless you are cursed with a curse even his whole nation.

He long goes on to command, bring ye all the tithers to the storehouse and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts. In other words, put into practice the true principles of the law.

And until you put into practice the true principles of my word, you needn't expect a blessing and no blessing will come upon you and the favour of God will never come near to your door.

First of all, bring all the tithers into the storehouse and prove me and then the windows of heaven will be opened and I will pour out a blessing upon you that there must not be no man to receive it.

[13 : 14] But I say, has this any practical application for ourselves in the day and in the age in which we live? Surely you say this was a pastoral society and it cannot be applicable for a society such as we live in, for an industrial society such as we know.

My dear friend, remember, the principles of the scriptures are unalterable in every age. We have to remember the principle that was to govern their religion, that was to govern their worship of God and their giving to God and the same principle governs the way in which we are to approach Him and the way in which we are to bring our tithers to God and their belief that it is because these principles are overlooked or forgotten or neglected or trampled underfoot, it is because these very principles are not being observed by us that God is withholding His blessing from our midst.

Bring ye all the tithers into a storehouse and prove me now herewith if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing. Now, in relation to ourselves, what does it imply? What does this imply and suppose? This reference to the tithe to which the prophet of which a prophet is speaking here.

What does it demand of us? Bring ye all the tithers into the storehouse. Well, I would suggest that it means one or two things for the people of God.

[15 : 04] It means for one thing, surely, that you have to tithe your time. I ask you, my friend, as I ask myself, what do you do with every 24 hours that God gives you each day?

How many minutes of those 24 hours are set aside for the actual pursuit of spiritual concern? How many? Or, are not simply left to chance so far as you are concerned?

If there are a few moments left over after every other conceivable duty has been attended to, then you say, I will sit down and take up the word of God, the book of God, and I will give some attention to it.

And even then, even then, just as you are opening that book, there can slide into your mind some other duty, some other secular duty, and so the book of God is again placed down until that duty is accomplished.

And so you give the dregs of the 24 hours to the God who has given you those 24 hours. Bring ye all the tithes, all the tithes, into the store.

[16 : 22] You are to tithe your time, for time is the most precious deposit. And if you do not tithe your time, then this is what will happen. The dregs will be given to God of the day.

when you are utterly wasted and incapable of rendering anything meaningful in a spiritual sense to him.

Bring ye all the tithes, you are to tithe your time. And surely it means also that you are to tithe your energies. How are you expending your energy?

What are you expending your energy on? How are you allocating your energy? during the 24 hours? There are some of course, we know this and we know that excessive demands are made upon them in their home perhaps.

Demands that are unavoidable and I am sure the good Lord of all the earth knows this. He knows the situation in which all of us are placed. But are there not Christians among us here who work themselves to the very bond in secular pursuits so that when the Lord's day comes round they are too exhausted to attend to the means of grace?

[17 : 40] And that's for the prayer meetings. That is another question. They could never dream of attending to these matters. So much, so great are their energies dissipated in pursuing in pursuing the things of time and of sense.

Is this the way in which you are giving of the energies that God has given to you for his own glory and for his own honor, bringing all the tithe into the storehouse.

How much of the energy that you have is devoted in the course of truth and in the course of the gospel? And of course also you are to tithe your earnings.

There is no question about this, bringing all the tithe into the storehouse. It was in connection with this in particular that the prophet, that God by the prophet was speaking to his people here in the Old Testament.

The tithe or the tithes which they were commanded by the law of God to bring and to offer unto God. My friend, let me be brutally frank with you and I ask you to be honest with yourself before God.

[18 : 56] Have you ever related soberly? Have you ever cornered on that? We're not giving to the Lord.

I repeat the question. Have you ever related soberly and rationally what you are earning week by week with what you are giving to the Lord?

Do you simply not want to think about it? Do you simply not want to know? If I were to suggest to you that a tenth of what the Lord has blessed you with would be a reasonable return, I dare say that that you would think me almost out of my mind.

I was in a house not very long ago and there was reference made to a family who were acting on this biblical principle of the tenth of what God gave them returned to the Lord and the reference that was made to them was derogatory in the extreme. They must be out of their minds. Well if that is being out of one's mind I for one would accept that for myself.

It is because I believe the people of God within our bounds have not recognized the scripturalness of this principle that we find ourselves in the spiritual morass that we are now in as a church. And if the people of God recognize that they owe this to God not by way of just justifying them or honoring themselves in any way but that they owe it to him as his people. There will be no need to make special appeals for hospital equipment in India. That would have been installed 20-30 years ago. And to the shame and dishonor of the church that such things are left as they are. And it is because the blame must be brought down to our own doorsteps we are neglecting, we are overlooking, we are passing by principles of truth. And because we are, God's blessing is being withheld. And if we regard the scriptural principle then there will be no need for assessing congregation such as the such as is being done now. There will be no need for it. Now if we would know the blessedness of the windows of heaven being opened and God pouring out a blessing upon us so that there will be not room enough to receive it. Certain things must be true. For one thing there must be a recognition of having robbed God of his true rights, of his due. A recognition of us having robbed God. This as you see was absent in the particular instance here before us. Wherein have we robbed thee? This is a way in which they responded to God's claim that they had robbed him. Wherein have we robbed thee? They were justifying themselves, they were trying at least to justify themselves. They were indignant that they should be accused of having robbed God. Oh yes there is nothing easier than to find ground for self-justification. There is no difficulty for finding ground for justifying yourself.

[22 : 44] My circumstances you will say are in quite a different category to the circumstances of the next person. My friend I plead with you before God look squarely at yourself in the light of scripture and in the light of the principles of the word of God. The principles that ought to govern your entire conduct.

bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse. And if we are true and honest before God that is not one of us in his presence but we'll have to make this recognition to Hashem that we have robbed God and consequently are under the curse of God. We are not having the blessing of God, the blessing that we are praying for. But the blessing that we are not prepared to sacrifice for. And if we would know the blessedness of the windows of heaven being opened and God pouring out a blessing upon us so that there would not be room enough to receive it. There must be true soul exercise before God in relation to the in relation to the whole man and the place which the whole man occupies before God and his cause.

In this particular instance before us their exercise of soul was spurious and formal and hypocritical. They found spiritual exercises a drudgery and a burden something that had to be done. And the sooner it was done and the sooner it was over with then the happier they would be. And so God says to them in chapter 2 at verse 17 you have wearied me with your works. They meant nothing to him. Their pretense was a mockery. It was revolting in the eyes of a holy God. There was no true exercise of soul as they entered into the presence of God. It was hypocritical. It was formal. It was unacceptable to him. And so if we would know the blessedness of the windows of heaven being opened and God pouring out a blessing upon us as there must be this truthful exercise of soul before him.

And remember too that if we would know this blessedness to which reference is made here then there must be correct and precise conduct as in the presence of God. Not that the precision of our conduct or the correctness of our of our behavior will ever or can ever form the basis for our acceptance. Of course that cannot be. But that anything else anything else but correctness and precision of conduct is unthinkable for a man of God.

[25 : 41] Precision with behavior in all the affairs of life and living ought to come as naturally from the man of faith as water bubbles out of the brook because good works are a necessary concomitant of faith. Holiness should flow from a holy man.

And so there must be correct and precise conduct not because it will justify us but because it is what ought to be the case.

And so if we would know the blessedness of the windows of heaven being opened and God pouring out a blessing that there be not women have to receive it there must be this behavior this conduct in the presence of God.

God. And there must also be expectancy before God that he will do what he says. True expectancy as we come into his presence.

How often do we come without this expectancy of faith? How often do we come before him without looking to him or really expecting that he will bless us?

[27 : 05] But if faith is an exercise as it should be then we will expect him to do what he says because he cannot deny himself because he is God. It is not without good reason that God says that verse 6 I am the Lord I change not.

Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. He will my friend open the windows of heaven. He will come down so that the mountains will flow down at his presence. He will come again and have mercy upon us and subdue our iniquities and cast our sins into the depths of the sea.

But not until we have ceased robbing him. For until then we are under the curse of God. And we are not in the enjoyment of his blessing.

And remember that we will give the evidence of this when we bring all the tithes into the storehouse and prove him now herewith. We will do it when each one of us gets down to the business of looking at himself, looking at ourselves.

In the light of God's word. In the light of the principles of his word. And seeking to know, not only to know but to do what those principles demand.

[28 : 28] And until then, we shall continue with the doleful condition in which we find ourselves. All of us are in this situation.

And so my friends, bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse. Look at yourself, I ask you. As I ask myself, look at yourself. At the entire man. The mental, the physical, the spiritual.

For God deals with the whole man. We may be meeting your commitments in one direction and yet flouting them in two directions.

If we are, we might as well not meet them at all. We are to look at the whole man in the light of the demands that God makes upon us.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse. It is not on the basis of having done this that we are to be justified. But the fact remains that until his people have regard to the principles that he has laid down.

[29 : 33] And until his people practice these principles. They will continue in their doleful and dusk state of mind and of spirit. We shall go on from one crisis to another.

It is futile for us to pray for revival. To beseege God that he would descend upon us in the power of the gospel. These things will be of no avail.

If we are willfully neglecting the principles of his word. Turning aside from them. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse. Prove me now herewith.
Sayeth the Lord of hosts. If I will not open you the windows of heaven. And pour you out a blessing. So that there shall not be room enough to receive it.
May God enable us by his grace. To look squarely and truthfully and honestly at ourselves. And to pray that he would scrutinize us.
[30 : 32] Search me oh God. And know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me. Any way that is contrary to the demands of thy word.
And lead me in the way everlasting. May the Lord add his blessing to our meditation in his word. Shall we pray? O Lord our God.
We confess. That we. Along with thy people of old. Rob thee. Of thy just dues. We are doing this every day we live.
And we pray thee to have mercy upon us. And we beseech thee to deliver us from such an evil course. And cause us oh God to look again at ourselves in the light of thy word.
In the light of thy word. And in the light of the principles enunciated for us in thy word. That we may seek to return to these first principles. And be governed by them.
[31 : 39] O Lord in thy mercy deal with us. Look upon us not as we are. But look upon us in the face of thy beloved. And turn unto us thy countenance.
On us mercy have. And turn us unto thee. In penitence. In faith. And in your obedience. Bless to us thy word of truth.
Seal it to our hearts and consciences with power. Continue with us as we continue before thee. And lift upon us the light of thy face. And cleanse us from all sin.
In Jesus name. Amen.