

Malachi 3:7-12

We started studying the book of Malachi back on April 15. Immediately, when I announced that we would be going through Malachi I had people say, “so you are going to preach on giving?” Well, I hope we have seen that this book of Malachi is about much more than giving. It is about the Lord of Hosts! The God of Angel Armies.

We have been learning about that Lord of Hosts and how he relates to us, and we to him. Today, as we get to the passage on giving, we learn even more about this great God. We will see that *The Lord of Hosts mercifully calls us to return to Him, generously provides for us so that we can release to Him, and graciously pours out blessings that we can receive from Him so that we can show His glory to the nations.*

READ/Encourage prayer for themselves, each other, and me.

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## **I. Return to Me v7**

The Lord of Hosts tells this people, return to me.

1. But it gets even better.
2. He issues a promise with that command.
3. You return to me and I will return to you.
  - a. Zech 1:3 Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return to Me,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I may return to you,” says the LORD of hosts.
  - b. James 4:8-10 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Luke 15:11-24

1. Return to me and I will run to you!
2. Return to me and I will receive you to myself
3. Return to me and I will rejoice over you.

Return to me, and I will return to you.

1. This leads to the obvious question: “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’”
2. God, in essence says, I am glad you asked.

## **II. Release to Me v8-10a**

v8-9

God answers their question, “How shall we return?” With a question of His own.

1. Will a man rob God?
  - a. The obvious answer is No!
  - b. That would be absolutely ridiculous.
2. Yet, God says, you are doing it. You are robbing me.
3. How? Again, God says, I am glad you asked!

In tithes and offerings.

1. The word tithe is a translation of the Hebrew “tenth part” and obviously means “ten percent.”
2. The word offering is a more general term, specifying contributions for a sacred purpose.
  - a. There were various types of Old Testament offerings.
  - b. Five are listed in Leviticus 1-7
    1. the burnt offering
    2. the grain offering
    3. the fellowship or peace offering
    4. the sin offering,
    5. the guilt or trespass offering.<sup>1</sup>
3. By totaling every offering, the people gave roughly 23 percent.

These people were robbing God of the tithes and offerings that He expected of them.

1. Because they are robbing God, they are cursed with a curse
2. Not just the individuals, but the nation as a whole!

v10a

Remember...

1. God began this message with return to me and I will return to you.
2. How? God answers with the question: will a man rob God? You are.
3. But the goal is not to just rebuke the people....you are robbing me! It is to bring them to repentance. How can they repent?
4. In this specific case, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house.”

Bring the whole tithe. Release back to me what I have given to You.

1. Don't clench your hand. Open it!
2. The con trap where he closes his hand and can't pull it out.

God is saying, open your hand!

1. Give it all...not 10%, but the tithe and the offering...all 23%! Release it!
2. Well...that's Old Testament.
3. Ok. Let's go NT then.

The Jews that made up the first church knew about the tithe and the offerings.

1. In the parable of the pharisee and the publican, the Pharisee prays, “I give tithes of all I get!”
2. Matthew 23:23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.”
3. Matthew 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven
4. Out of those early Jews came the first church.

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<sup>1</sup> Holman OT Commentary 367

- a. Did they stand up and say, give us 10%? 23%
- b. Acts 2:44-45 *And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.*
- c. Acts 4:34-37 *For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales 35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. 36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), 37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*
- 5. This sounds a lot like what Jesus said to the rich young ruler doesn't it (Luke 18:18-23)?
- 6. Don't give me 10% or 23%...Give me it all.
  - a. **Please do not hear me criticizing the 10 percenters!**
  - b. But please do not hear me saying that 10% is the goal.
  - c. *Ten percent can be used as as guide for giving much like training wheels on a bicycle guide those learning to ride.*<sup>2</sup>

Grace never expects less; it always demands more...it is proven by much more

### III. Receive from Me v10b-11

God anticipated His people saying, we can't give that much. We can't just open our hand!

1. So God said, Test me.
2. See if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you a blessing until it overflows!
  - a. The words "windows of heaven" are the same ones used in Genesis 7:11 to describe when God opened the sky to release the floodwaters that covered the earth.
  - b. You open the resources I have given you up to me and I will bless and use and amaze!
  - c. I will rebuke the devourer and your money will go farther than it ever has before.
  - d. Try me. This is a promise
3. They thought, "we can't afford to give."
4. God corrects them. No, you can't afford not to give. Test me.

2 Corinthians 9:6-10 *Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 9 as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER." 10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness*

*The eternity of God reproaches a pursuit of the world, as preferring a momentary pleasure before an everlasting God; as though a temporal world could be a better supply than a God whose years never fail. How foolish is it to prefer a drop before the sea!*<sup>3</sup>

1. If you can't trust God with your dollar that is hear today and gone tomorrow
2. How can you honestly say you trust Him with your soul which will live forever?

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<sup>2</sup> Gallaty 253

<sup>3</sup> Charnock, the Existence and Attributes of God, page 304

*What a senseless thing would it be in a man to prefer the map of a kingdom, which the hand of a child can tear in pieces before the kingdom shadowed by it.<sup>4</sup>*

## **Conclusion v12**

The Lord of Hosts is magnified, praised, and feared because His people are blessed to be a blessing to the nations.

1. It is a cycle. We return to the Lord
2. We desire to release to the Lord what is His
3. In the end we receive more...so that we can release more to reach the nations with His gospel

The Lord of Hosts mercifully calls us to return to Him, generously provides for us so that we can release to Him, and graciously pours out blessings that we can receive from Him so that we can show His glory to the nations.

## **Questions for reflection:**

1. When you think about the commandment, “return to me” and the promise “and I will return to you,” how do our spending habits and our hearts relate?
2. Why do you think we rarely feel like giving, even when we have an abundance?
3. How do you think New Testament Christians should think about the tithe?
4. There are roughly 6000 unreached people groups and roughly 2000-3000 unreached unengaged people groups left on earth. If we had taken this view of giving in America 100 years ago to the present, how would those numbers potentially be different?
5. What was the most impactful part of the sermon to you?
6. How will you apply what you have learned from this message? In response to this message, I will

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<sup>4</sup> Charnock 305