

**Sermon #17**

# **Giving and Tithing**

God is great and wonderful.

He is the ultimate Giver.

No good thing does He withhold.

He loves and gives to all.

God gives us free will,

and lets us choose whether or not to receive His gifts.

We can choose to receive, or choose to reject.

God loves us either way.

But if we don't receive His gifts,

we reject His love and are incomplete.

God is good. He is the Giver of all that is good.

Rejoice in His goodness!

At creation, God was the Giver and man the receiver.

God required nothing from Adam and Eve.

He gave them the garden and all of its plants and trees;

He gave them each other for companionship and reproduction;

He gave them authority over nature;

He gave them free will;

He gave them wisdom and instruction that, if followed,

would guarantee them a pleasant existence in the garden.

Even after Adam and Eve disregarded God's guidance and did

what He warned them not to do, He still made them clothes because they were ashamed of their nakedness.

He didn't stop giving just because they didn't do what He said.

God gave and gave and gave; He took nothing for Himself.

He required no offerings, no sacrifices, no tithes;

no church buildings, no religious duties.

In spite of God's love and goodness to man,

man became extremely corrupt.

They were self-centered and self-seeking at the expense of each other. Without some government, code and external pressure to control their behavior, God's beloved people were going to self-destruct.

So God continued to give.

Through Moses, He began the tedious and exasperating process of teaching the Israelites about Himself, so they could know their true identity and live according to it.

The people did not want to relate to God personally; they insisted on Moses being their intermediary.

They wanted priests and kings; they wanted to have ceremonial religious practices like they had seen practiced in Egypt.

Although God desired a personal relationship, with every person being a priest in God's kingdom, the people rejected this.

So God gave Moses instructions for setting up a ceremonial system that would satisfy the people's desire for this while directing them away from idolatry.

Properly set up and used, this system would teach people about the character of God and show them how to build good, healthy relationships with others so that their civilization would not self-destruct. This was for their protection and prosperity.

The law God gave to the people through Moses was not for God's sake, but for their sake.

It was a gift, **not** something He did to punish them and steal their joy. The provision for tithing was designed to teach reverence for God and to steer the people away from sacrificing to idols.

There was and is no such thing as "The Law of the Tithe" except in the mind of man. It would more accurately be called "The Gift of the Tithe."

When a man wants to hire a human pastor, priest or rabbi to do his religion for him, the law instructs him to give the tithe to the mediators. This compensates them for their labor.

Here is an excerpt from the Promised Land Law concerning the tithe:

<sup>22</sup>“You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. <sup>23</sup>And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. <sup>24</sup>But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry *the tithe*, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, <sup>25</sup>then you shall exchange *it* for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. <sup>26</sup>And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. <sup>27</sup>You shall not forsake the Levite who *is* within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.

<sup>28</sup>“At the end of *every* third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates. <sup>29</sup>And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.”

Deuteronomy 14

What does this sound like to you?

A legalistic duty or a wonderful gift?

Yet despite God’s wonderful gifts, the people still did not obey the law He had given to them for their own benefit. They continued on in their corruption and decay.

So God sent the ultimate Gift: the Messiah.

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, Lord and Teacher, only did what He saw the Father do and only said what He heard the Father say.

He showed us the image and likeness of God.

He clarified the meanings and intent of the law and the prophets, and then He fulfilled them.

And He gave His life as the ultimate and final sacrifice for sin.

We can look to Him to show us what and how to give.

In Christ there is no such thing as “The Law of the Tithe”.

God does not command or enforce a rule of tithing on those who follow Christ. He gives man the freedom to choose whether to give and to whom to give.

God is the Lord of the tithe, and He gives it to man as a gift, not as a burden.

But if you desire to tithe, and you have chosen Christ as your Shepherd, you probably should give the tithe to Christ, for He is the perfect mediator between man and God.

You may be wondering: “How do I give a tenth to Christ?”

Ask Him! He will show you clearly just what to do, and if you are open to His truth and guidance, you will see.

But say “No!” to the hucksters of legalistic religion and their lies and deceptions. They don’t even teach the truth.

As Jesus said, “**They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers.**”

Matthew 23:14

Christ fulfills the law, and His righteousness surpasses that of all human priests, pastors, rabbis, leaders, fathers, authorities.

A person who follows Christ will naturally harmonize with all good laws without even consciously trying.

Interestingly, Jesus did not command the people to pay tithes and offerings. He only mentioned the tithe when He was rebuking the religious leaders-- for putting so much emphasis on tithing; and for thinking that they were justified before God because they tithed.

Perhaps the reason that Jesus put so little emphasis on tithing is because He did not come to establish the law but to fulfill the law.

How did Jesus fulfill the law?

He taught *giving* rather than tithing.

Tithing is the beginning. Giving is the fulfillment.

Tithing is legalistic. Giving is love.

Tithing expects financial blessings in return.

Giving is blessed in the very act of giving.

Tithing is designed to help people come out of doubt, fear and greed.

Giving only happens after one has overcome doubt, fear and greed.

Tithing is the shadow; giving is the true image and likeness of God.

Tithing is imperfect; giving is perfect.

When the perfect comes, the imperfect disappears.

How, and to whom, did Jesus say to give?

He said to give secretly and to give to the poor.

He specifically said that if we give so that others know about it, we have received our reward in full. So, according to Jesus, if we tithe and make sure that others know about it, we are not necessarily going to be showered with blessings from God.

Jesus said to give to everyone who asks.

Note that He didn't say to give to every organization that asks, but to every ONE who asks. That implies a personal request from a real person in need, not a form letter or sales pitch.

It requires great love and faith in God to give to every person who asks.

Jesus also said to loan without expecting to be repaid.

This is another form of giving.

He promises that if we give, it will be given to us in the same measure.

If we give all we have, we receive all that He has.

If we give a little of what we have,  
we receive a little of what God has.

Consider what Jesus said to the rich young ruler:

**“If you want to be perfect, go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, then come follow Me, and you will have treasure in heaven.”**

Matthew 19:21

Notice that Jesus did not tell the man to give his money to the church or to the religious leaders. He told him to give it to the poor.

And neither did He tell the man to go join a church;  
He told him to “Come, follow Me.”

Since we claim to be a Christian church, I urge each of you to give your tithes and offerings to Christ. Transfer them to His account, and do with them whatever He says.

Be willing to give some or all to the poor, to widows, to foreigners, to ministers—to whomever He chooses to give it. Also be willing for you and your household to eat the tithe in his presence--in Spirit and truth--and rejoice, as He directs in *Deuteronomy* 14.

The next time you start to write a check to this church, stop.  
Instead of blindly giving it to this organization,  
give it over to God and do what He says to do with it, and rejoice!  
God is good!

“I, the Lord, do not change.  
I AM and always have been.  
I AM ageless, eternal and constant.  
I AM the Giver; your life is My gift to you.  
To enjoy your life, you must be like Me,  
for I made you in My image and likeness.  
So be a Giver like Me.

Whatever you give I will replace with something of greater value.  
Be like Me. Give.  
I AM the Lord your God, who brings you out of bondage into freedom.  
My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Do not let others weigh  
you down with perverted doctrines and teachings.  
Look to Me and listen to Me. I AM good.  
I AM also righteous, and I call you to share and give as I lead.  
But I do not call you to blindly hand over money to those who  
deceive you.

Listen to Me! Do what I say! I AM good!  
You will be greatly surprised!”