

WHAT IS THE TITHE AND IS IT STILL FOR TODAY?

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Malachi 3:10 (NRSV) ~ ¹⁰ *Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.*

Luke 6:38 (NRSV) ~ ³⁸ *give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.*

2 Corinthians 9:6 (NRSV) ~ ⁶ *The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

When Don Chamberlain asked me to give a meditation about Stewardship, I started to do some research and I said to Pastor Ruth that I hope that it will not be too long. She said “will it be 5 minutes ... 7 minutes?” I said probably. Then she said “could it be 10 or 15 minutes? Would you give the message?” I know that she is really busy with Katelyn being off, working on *Church Life*, and the “Letter to the Church” 100 years from now so if she had confidence that I could do this, I would try.

I am going to start with 3 quotes.

DR. SEUSS: *“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. ‘It’s not’.”*

CHARLES DICKENS: *“No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it to anyone else.”*

WINSTON CHURCHILL: *“We make a LIVING by what we get, but we make a LIFE by what we give.”*

I thought it would be interesting to see what other religions believe about giving.

HINDUS believe that charity or dana is important. They believe that helping others is helping Brahman. They believe that all living things have a piece of Brahman within them. Dana means giving, and Hindu’s concept of Dana is helping others without expecting something in return. They also believe that protecting the environment and looking after animals and people are important. Giving brings a greater awareness of God’s power in the world and the givers are uplifted to a purer spiritual consciousness, and abundance naturally floods into their lives.

Giving or Dana is also an essential BUDDHIST practice. It is about generosity, openness, and our capacity to embrace others with compassion and love. Buddhists believe that we exist with all of life. Our gifts can be in the form of giving money, or time, or sharing the gifts we have to offer.

There is a kind of vegetable in Vietnam called he (“hey”). It belongs to the onion family and looks like a scallion, and it is very good in soup. The more you cut the “hey” plants at the base, the more they grow. If you don’t cut them, they won’t grow very much. But if you cut them often, right at the base of the stalk, they grow bigger and bigger. This is also true of the practice of Dana. If you give and continue to give, you become richer and richer all the time, richer in terms of happiness and well-being. This may seem strange, but it is always true. (The above was taken from the *Practice of Generosity* by Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation)

For the MUSLIMS Zakat is the obligatory yearly alms of 2.5% of one’s surplus wealth. Zakat means purity. It is a means of purifying one’s wealth. Sadaqah means charity and implicates giving away goods and funds for the sake of God, demonstrating one’s faithfulness and manifesting into reality one’s belief in the Resurrection and the afterlife. (Taken from Zakat Foundation of America.)

THE BAHAI FAITH, founded by Baha-u-lah, came after Islam. It started in Tihran where Bahaulah was persecuted and exiled to Israel. The Universal House of Justice, the governing body of the Bahai Faith, is on Mt Carmel. As many of you know, after growing up as a Christian, I was a member of the Bahai Faith just before I joined FCC of Murray. Bahai’s giving was called Haquaqalah. It was complicated. You are required to give 19% of what is left after all your bills and obligations were met. Once a year, I always tried to calculate at tax time.

There are books written about Haquaqualah. The money was sent to the Universal House of Justice. The money was used to keep up the buildings and Shrines on Mt Carmel and also given to those in need all over the world. I did the best I could and it made me think about the purchases I made all year. Were they necessary? Were they taking away what would be given to the poor?

When I joined FCC and went back to tithing, it was much easier. Every month 1/10th went to the church and additional offerings to outreach.

MALACHI 3:10 says: “Bring a full tithe into the storehouse says the Lord of Hosts; see if I will not pour open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.”

I have found this to be true. When I give my tithe to the church I always have enough to pay my bills and enough to give an offering. A time in my life when I had nothing I did not tithe what little I had and I never had enough. But always when I tithed, even when I had very little, I always had enough to pay bills. It just doesn't rain down. I had the opportunity to take a couple of full time jobs for a while and then was blessed to find a full time job which paid enough.

Do you remember the story of Jacob's ladder? In Genesis 28:16-22, Jacob, after his visionary dream of Jacob's Ladder and receiving a blessing from God, promises God a tenth: ***“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.’ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel.***

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you'."

I imagine Jacob gave 1/10th of his herd to God. How he did this I do not know – maybe to build the city of Bethel. I didn't have time to research it.

Jacob took a stone maybe like this [*show stone from Kum-Ba-Ya*] only a little bigger for a pillow. I hope that he put some cloth on top or it would be a very hard pillow --- he poured oil over it.

*Here is a stone from Kum-Ba-Ya. A few years ago at Family Camp Pastor Ruth told us to look for a rock and she built the church service around the rocks. This rock can represent our church. I am pouring *Frankincense oil over it to bless our church. We are so blessed to have this beautiful church. Some say the church is the people, not the building– but we are a church family and just as a family, we need a home. And as our families take care of their homes, we need to take care of our church home. This beautiful building is our church home.

Christians are called to be in community with others, not live our lives in isolation.

Just look around at our beautiful church: the stained glass windows, the lovely sanctuary, our special Pipe Organ and Piano. The Parlor, the Fellowship Hall, Worship and Wonder, SS rooms. This beautiful church is in our care for now and for Christians to gather for years to come. It is our duty to give 10% of what we receive to the care of our church and our Staff.

We have a wonderful Pastor who not only gives us spiritual guidance but is always there in times of sickness and grief. She plans programs and is interested in our lives. She is always looking for ways to include all members of our family in activities and duties. I always say I am so happy to be here because Pastor Ruth lets me do what I want. Actually that is not right. She has helped me to have confidence to do the things that I really want to do. I remember long before I was an Elder, I was going to visit Phyllis Duckworth one Sunday afternoon and Pastor asked: "Would you take communion to her?" I said I cannot do that, and she said of course you can. I will get you the words of institution and elements and off she went. And I went to Phyllis feeling unworthy but grateful that Pastor had confidence in me.

We have a dedicated and talented Minister of Music who provides music for us week after week. We have a custodian to keep our church clean. Our organ is serviced every 6 months and our piano is tuned regularly. Our Administrative Assistant does all the office work that keeps things working smoothly. Our custodian keeps our church clean. But just like at home, in addition to paying the bills we still need to take care of our church home and all of you are really good about that. Dan McKeel and the men in the Disciples Men's Fellowship make sure everything in church is working properly and the outside is kept beautiful. The Women in the Christian Women's Fellowship keep the kitchen in working order and clean. Both reach out to the others in our church family and the community. I could go on and on. When we all work together it makes us feel like we belong.

As a church family here at FCC we help each other over and above our tithes and offerings and attending church. I know that each one of you reach out to other members in one way or another. It is one thing that I love about our church.

You also reach out to others in the community.

Luke 6:38 says: ***“Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”***

Taken from “God Promises to Benefit You for Tithing”

New Covenant Freedom

In the Old Covenant tithing was required. That’s no longer the case for us as part of the New Covenant because we are free from the curse of the law. Therefore there is no punishment associated with not tithing. Instead, when we choose to tithe from our own free will, it releases God to be able to actively act on our behalf in two very specific ways. He can then open up additional heavenly blessings into our lives and our finances. And He can act on our behalf to prohibit the devourer from wasting away our finances.

You absolutely do not have to tithe. God will still love you just as much whether you tithe or not.

But now that you know the benefits God promises if you do tithe, why would you not want to enjoy those extra blessings?

I am going to end with II Cor. 9:6-8: ***“The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”***

Closing Prayer:

Our most loving God, Thank you for this beautiful church and for this caring church family,

We are so grateful to you for bringing us together here in the Sanctuary, on zoom and on Facebook.

Bless us and help us to care for our church, each other. and the world.

Give us generous hearts to give our offerings freely in addition to our tithes. We care about your children all over the world.

And may we always give with cheerful hearts.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.