

Sunday Morning Message

October 1, 2023

Title – “Robbing God”

Text – Malachi 3:6 - 12

Congregational Reading – Malachi 3:8 - 12

Introduction

Introduction (1:1)

Malachi is the last voice of the Old Testament, and the last prophet before John the Baptist (whom he foretold of in 3:1) to declare the coming Messiah. The name Malachi means “my messenger” and comes from the same word translated messenger in Malachi 2:7, and 3:1, which is also the same word for angel throughout the Old Testament.

The Book of Malachi was written around 430 BC, after the time of Haggai and Zechariah; and, near the time of Nehemiah (or slightly after). Haggai wrote before the temple was completed, Zechariah wrote during the completion of the temple, and Malachi writes about a completed temple. (See 1:10, 3:1, 3:10) Not much is known about this messenger of God, but his message is remarkable.

Malachi writes during the time of restoration, and though he reminds the people of God of God’s love for them, he also rebukes them for the many abuses that have crept back into their nation, including:

- 1 The priests had become lax and degenerate.
- 2 They were offering defective sacrifices on the altar.
- 3 Divorce was becoming more common.
- 4 People were neglecting tithes and offerings.

The Book opens with a declaration of God’s love for Israel and closes with a reminder to remember the Law of Moses. The Book divides into seven main sections.

Malachi writes with an interesting style. He introduces each section of the Book with a declaration that is followed by a question by the people, which demonstrates their lack of understanding and disagreement of God’s declaration. Basically, the format is this: “God says, ..., but you say,”

I. A Declaration of God’s Love for Israel (1:2 – 5)

- II. A Denunciation of the Priests (1:6 – 2:9)
- III. A Denunciation of Idolatry and Divorce (2:10 – 16)
- IV. A Declaration of Coming Judgment and a Call to Repentance (2:17 – 3:7)
- V. A Denunciation of Their Giving Practice (3:8 – 12)
- VI. A Differentiation between the Righteous and the Wicked (3:13 – 4:3)
- VII. A Direction to Obey the Law of Moses (4:4 – 4:6)

The section that we are focusing on today is:

V. A Denunciation of Their Giving Practice (3:8 – 12) – *Robbing God*

We transition into the next section on tithing from vs. 6 – 7, from the previous section where God admonishes the people of Israel to return unto Him and calls them to repentance.

"6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. 7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?" (Malachi 3:6-7)

You will notice that God states that He will return to them if they return to Him. This is like what James said:

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." (James 4:8)

"8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith 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. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts." (Malachi 3:8-12)

Malachi now rebukes the people for “robbing God” by withholding their tithes and offerings.

In reality, Israel was commanded by the Old Testament Law to give more than just a tithe:

The offerings in Israel were the first fruits, not less than one-sixtieth of the corn, wine, and oil. (Deuteronomy 18:3 - 4):

"3 And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. 4 The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him." (Deuteronomy 18:3-4)

There were several kinds of tithes:

- (1) the tenth of the remainder after the first fruits were taken, this amount going to Levites for their livelihood (Leviticus 27:30–33);
- (2) the tenth paid by Levites to the priests (Numbers 18:26–28);
- (3) the second tenth paid by the congregation for the needs of the Levites and their own families at the tabernacle (Deuteronomy 12:18); and
- (4) another tithe every third year for the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28–29).¹

General Principles Regarding Tithing

1. The Tithe Predates the Law. (Genesis 14:18 – 20; Genesis 28:18 – 22)

"18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all." (Genesis 14:18-20)

"18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. 20 And Jacob vowed 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 raiment to put on, 21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: 22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." (Genesis 28:18-22)

¹ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible Commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 1021). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

2. The Law Commanded the Tithe. (Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 14:22 – 28)

"30 And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD." (Leviticus 27:30)

"22 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. 23 And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. 24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: 25 Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: 26 And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, 27 And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee. 28 At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates:"
(Deuteronomy 14:22-28)

3. The Lord Jesus Recognized the Tithe as Right. (Matthew 23:23)

"23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matthew 23:23)

4. The tithe was to be Given to the Storehouse (the temple).

Today, God's storehouse is the New Testament church. A tithe is a good place to start for the New Testament Christian. However, we are not under the Old Testament Law. We are under grace. Some people call what we give today "grace giving."

In the Old Testament, offerings were voluntary contributions given over and above the tithe. Someone has said that you really do not start giving until you are giving offerings. Offerings prove the "sincerity of our love" (2 Corinthians 8:8).

"8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love." (2 Corinthians 8:8)

Note – this is the only time that God asks us to “prove” Him or put Him to the test.

God said that if the people would put him first (Matthew 6:33; Luke 6:38) then He would not only open the windows of provision, but He would also protect what He had already provided from the devourer who eats up the provisions given to us by God. The result of this will be that other nations would see that God’s hand was upon them.

Turn a few pages back to Haggai. This story perfectly illustrates the principles taught by Haggai about giving. The people that came back to the land after their captivity in Persia had started to build the Temple, but then got discouraged due to some opposition, and distracted because of their own houses and farms, and they put the building of God’s House on the back burner. They weren’t putting God first and as a result they lost the blessings of God.

Read Haggai 1:1 – 13; 2:15 - 19

Conclusion - Principles for Grace Giving

1. Give Carefully

Pray about what God wants you to give. My wife and I started out with the tithe, but we have increased to giving to over and above the tithe as we have grown in the Lord.

2. Give Cheerfully

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

If you are giving what God has told you to give, then you know that He is going to bless you and meet all your needs. You know that you can trust Him to take care of your family.

3. Give Copiously (Generously)

God will eventually bring you to the place where you are giving way more than you can do humanly speaking. It will not make any sense from a economic perspective, yet God will cause your money to stretch far enough that you can give that way.

4. Give Consistently

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in

store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

5. Give Confidently

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6:38)

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

6. Give Clandestinely (Privately)

"1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." (Matthew 6:1-4)

The bottom line is this: if you truly love the Lord, you are going to give back to Him. Everything that you have now and everything you will have in the future comes from Him. You would be very wise to recognize that.

Illustrate – Cary Schmidt's French Fry illustration.