

Malachi 3:6-12, Leviticus 27:30-34: Tithing and the Windows of Heaven

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[0 : 00] Kids are dismissed at this time for their children's program. For the rest of us, we have two scripture readings today. The first is Malachi chapter 3, verses 6 through 12.

And that can be found on page 802 of the Bibles provided in your seat. Again, the first scripture reading is going to be Malachi chapter 3, verses 6 through 12.

The second will be Leviticus 27, verses 30 to 34. Please stand for the reading of God's word. For I, the Lord, do not change.

Therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

But you say, how shall we return? Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, how have we robbed you and your tithes and contributions? You are cursed what a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.

[1 : 14] Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts. If I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

I will rebuke the devourer of you for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil. And your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts.

Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts. And now Leviticus chapter 27, which can be found on page 107.

Leviticus 27, verses 30 to 34. 4. Every tide of the land, whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord.

If a man wishes to redeem some of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it. And every tide of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord.

[2 : 18] One shall not differentiate between good or bad, neither shall he make a substitute for it. And if he does substitute for it, then both it and the substitute shall be holy. It shall not be redeemed.

These are the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. My name is John.

I'm one of the pastors here. I want to welcome you to Holy Trinity. Glad that you're here. We're going to talk about money today, so I encourage you to fasten your seatbelt and fasten your wallet firmly to yourself.

So, I've been preaching at Holy Trinity for 11 and a half years, which is how old Holy Trinity is, as far as the south side campus. And this is the first sermon that I'm preaching on money.

I have an elder who will continuously say, When are you guys going to preach a sermon on money? Okay? And what I'd like you to do is send an email to this guy. I'll give his email address later.

[3 : 22] Let him know that we actually did preach a sermon on money. And we should have more. I would say it's actually a weakness in our teaching. Because Jesus talked more about money and possessions than he talked about anything else.

Fifteen percent of his teaching was on money and possessions. He talked more about money and possessions than he did about heaven and hell. Which people talk all the time about.

But he talked about money and possessions. So, we're in a little series here. Let's see if the logo is still behind me. You can see this actually on the blue line. And I don't know if you've seen this sign. We just happened to snap it.

Snap the shot. It just seemed like it worked really well for this series. We're going to be talking about generous joy. And the idea is really simple over the next three weeks.

Is that God loves generosity. He loves generosity. But more than that, he actually loves joyful generosity. He loves it when people give not grudgingly, but give joyfully.

[4 : 23] Last week, you heard a sermon on, if you were here, on treasures in your hearts. And this week, we're going to be talking about tithing and the windows of heaven.

That's an image from this passage. And then next week, the message is going to be on the pattern of generosity. There's some funky math that happens in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

And I'll show you that there, where these people who are incredibly poor are very joyful and give with overwhelming generosity. I'll show you that to you next week.

But today, we're going to talk about tithing and the windows of heaven. Just two questions. So you don't lose your way, and so I don't lose my way. One, what is tithing? And two, should we do it?

That is, should people who say they're followers of Jesus tithe? That's what we're going to answer today. Let's pray. Ask for God's help. Father in heaven, thank you for this day.

[5 : 23] And we acknowledge to you that our hearts are not always generous. And we pray that you'd open them up to your word. Lord, speak to us from your word by the power of your Holy Spirit.

And we pray that through the generosity of this church, hundreds of lives would be changed, thousands of lives would be changed, that our city would be healed, that people would be sent to far places and to near places, to Divine Avenue and Western Avenue, to share the goodness of who Christ is, that more sites in the city of Chicago would be opened, that you would use the outpouring of the generosity of your people to touch many lives.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Just one caveat before we begin. Back in September, our church, when it looked at the previous year, was about 7% ahead of the previous year in giving, which was great last September.

The only problem is that we had set a budget that needed to be 37% of the previous year. And so we called, I called a little time of prayer on four Mondays, asked people to fast and pray.

Just want to update you and let you know that as of last Sunday, our church, in a recession, through God's generosity, is now 50% ahead of where we were a year ago.

[6 : 52] Our giving is 50% again higher than one year ago. That is because of God's generosity and actually because of all of your generosity and generosity of the other congregations.

So praise to God for that. Number one, what is tithing? Keep your Bible open to Malachi. Then we're going to look at Leviticus. And this sermon is going to go through a lot of texts.

So you do need your seatbelt on. Tithing. What is tithing? It simply means giving 10% of what your annual income is or what you've received back to God for God-ordained purposes.

Tithing is giving 10% of your annual income back to God for God-ordained purposes. The word tithe, actually, in Hebrew, means tenth.

So if you look down at the text there in verse 10, where it says tithe, it's literally tenth. So what the prophet Malachi is saying when he says bring the full tithe in, he's saying bring the full tenth in.

[7 : 56] In other words, don't bring 8% in. Don't bring 2% in. Bring 10% back to my storehouses. If you want to picture the storehouses, there was a storehouse in the temple, but there were also storehouses in what were called the Levitical cities.

There were places where people would bring their offerings and deposit them, and then that would be those food. The food would be distributed to the Levites, to the poor, to the sojourner, and to the widow.

What we're going to do now is I just want to show you a few things, make a few observations from this text about what tithing is in this context. Let's jump in. Tithing in this context is absolutely, first of all, absolutely expected by God.

Take a look at verse 9. God uses some pretty strong language in that verse. He says, if you start at verse 8, Will you rob God? And yet you are robbing me.

And you say, how have we robbed you? In your tithes and contributions you are cursed with a curse. There's a little bit of humor there, because it's almost like God is standing there with his hands wide open saying, You're robbing me.

[9 : 05] How can you be robbing me? Simple point. Tithing in this context was absolutely expected. It was a given. And it was especially a given because it was used to support those called the Levites, I'll show you this in a little bit, who did not farm on their own as well as the poor.

Simple observation that was expected. Next observation is, Tithing is an aspect of repentance. That is, it's a sign of, or the fruit of repentance.

Take a look at verse 7. Do you see there in verse 7 where it says, Return to me. The Hebrew for turn is actually repent. Now, God doesn't repent, but he can turn.

He can turn away from his people or towards his people. And so what he's saying here is, You have turned away from me. The nation of Israel was not obeying the Levitical tithe law.

They turned away in that. And he's saying, If you return to me, I will return to you. If you repent, I, in a sense, will change my mind and come back to you. So it's an aspect or fruit of repentance.

[10 : 18] It's a sign of humility. And a sign of obedience. So it is expected here. It's a mark of repentance here. Next observation in this context is that Tithing is based on a view of God's abundance.

There's a little book that's written by a guy named Randy Elkhorn. Some of you maybe have read this book. It's called The Treasure Principle. The second principle in the book is this.

I'm going to say this to you. A businessman in our downtown congregation told me the first time he read this, it made him very mad. He said he still doesn't really like it. This is a businessman speaking.

All money is God's. It's all his. None of it's yours. None of it's mine. It's all his. See, what happens with tithing is we think 90% is mine and 10% is God's, so I'll give it back to him.

That's not actually what tithing is doing. Tithing is saying 100% of it is yours. And just to keep my heart in check, I'm going to give 10% back to you to make sure that I'm acknowledging that to you.

[11 : 30] I want to show this to you in another place. If you turn to your left to Psalms, Psalm 24. I just want to show you one place where this principle comes through. Psalm 24 is on page 458 if you have those blue Bibles.

It says, The earth is the Lord. Psalm 24, verse 1. Tom's going to come up here and preach in a minute because I'm having trouble talking.

Psalm 24, verse 1 says, The earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof. What's that mean? This globe is God's and everything on the globe is God's.

They just built the tallest tower in the world, right? Costs near a billion to build. It's as tall as John Hancock. And the Sears Tower or the Willis Tower, something like that, stacked on top of each other, that's God's.

Read in the newspaper that the average, or this is actually on Wikipedia, we were talking about Abu Dhabi, the city in the United Arab Emirates. And we just started talking about oil.

[12 : 40] And what do you think the average income of a citizen of Abu Dhabi is? Call it out. \$17 million.

The average citizen makes \$17 million a year, which is somewhere right in your range, right? Exactly. All of that's God's, though, according to Psalm 24.

Actually, another businessman, after I preached, said, it's funny that you mention this book, because I read it a couple months ago, The Treasure Principle, and he said, the thing that hit home to me the most was the same principle, all money is God's except the way that he understood it was, the principle goes on to say, you are God's money manager.

That's what you do. You might not think of yourself as a money manager, but you are a money manager. This guy actually does manage money. You are a money manager, and you manage God's money. So it's a different way of thinking about money.

We usually think about, all the money in my pocket is mine. All the money in your pocket, in your bank account, is God's. And you manage it for him and invest it for him.

[13 : 48] Tithing is based on a view of God's abundance. I just want to show you that in this passage. Flip back to Malachi if you turned away from Malachi. It's based on a view of God's abundance.

Look at verse 10. Verse 10, God basically says, hey, bring the full tithe, all of the 10% into my storehouse, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you. And then he goes on and says, and pour down a blessing until there is no need.

Most of us, many people do not tithe because we think, well, if I give 10% away, then I will have 10% less. And that is good American math.

Nice job. Well done. But what God is saying here is, no, no, no. I will then bless you. I will make up for that 10%. That's what he's saying in this text. We have a scarcity mentality often that there's only a fixed amount of wealth in the world and wealth that's available to God.

But God is like the Fed and can print money for you, right? He will do that. I'm just teasing. This is not a sermon on prosperity theology, if you feel me starting to move that way.

[14 : 59] Actually, my wife and I put a little bit in an envelope and prayed for a BMW and got one. I'm just kidding. Okay, that was a joke. But bad theology, incorrect theology, doesn't mean that we should swing the opposite direction and lose the teaching of the text, which is that God has enough.

That's what he's saying. I have enough. I can open the storehouses of heaven and bless you. We don't usually think that way. John D. Rockefeller, one of the first, a great, the man who was in charge of Standard Oil and was one of the first billionaires, somebody asked him, how much is enough for you?

What was his answer? One more dollar, right? One more dollar. Always one more dollar. Sometimes that's how we think with giving. We think, I'll give once I have X number of dollars.

The concept of tithing reverses that. It says, no, no, no. If you make a tiny bit or you make a lot, give just this much away. 10%.

So it's expected here. It's a mark of repentance here. It's based on a view of God's abundance here. And tithing is rewarded by God's provision and noticeable blessing. Look at verse 12 again.

[16:18] Then all the nations, that is, the people of every ethnicity, will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

And actually, what happened in the New Testament is exactly this. People started noticing the generosity of the people in the early church and said, God must be with you.

There's a place, there's a moment in church history in about 346 A.D. where a Roman emperor named Julius was a pagan emperor.

He was actually the nephew of Constantine. And he was trying to return the Roman Empire to paganism. And part of his argument on how to do that had to do with looking at the Christians.

And he wrote this letter to another pagan friend. And he was using Christians as a model, an exemplary model, of how pagans should act.

[17:19] The way that he referred to Christians was he called them atheists. Strange. But to a person who believes in the whole pantheon of gods and thinks that Jesus is just a man, he was calling people to believe in this pantheon of gods.

It would seem like atheists. So I'm going to read to you just part of a letter that he wrote in order to try to return the Roman Empire to paganism. But he picks up on the Christians' generosity.

He says, Why do we not observe that it is there, that is the Christians, benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead, and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done the most to increase atheism?

Atheism among the pantheon. When the impious Galileans support not only their own poor, but ours as well, all men see that people lack aid from us.

In other words, he's saying, Look at these Christians. The Christians take care of their own poor as well as the pagan poor. And everybody realizes that there's something to that gospel message because of it.

[18:25] It's part of what Malachi is saying here. The nations will call you blessed. Let me see that. We're going to look at the New Testament in just a minute when we come to the question of should we actually tithe. There's another church father that I want to quote to you who wrote just a little bit before that, a guy named Justin Martyr, who was born in 100 A.D., died in 165, wrote something called an apology.

And just listen to the practice of the church in Rome. He says, In the early church, people noticed that and called the church blessing.

That's kind of what Malachi is speaking of here in verse 12. Then all the nations, that is, people of every ethnicity, will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

Turn over to this other passage, Leviticus, that we just read, Leviticus 27. I just want to make a couple other observations from the Old Testament about what tithing is here.

If you look at verse 30 there, it says, Every tithe of the land that is a tenth, whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's.

[19 : 58] Again, everything belongs to God. And this tenth is given to God. This is an agrarian society. So those who worked on the land would bring a portion of what they made. And then it says, It is holy to the Lord.

That means it is set aside for the Lord. The basic idea would be, in our context, is make \$10,000 in a month, then \$1,000 goes to God.

If you make \$100,000 in a year, then \$10,000 goes to God. That's the basic math. If you have ten years of corn, one year of corn goes to God. It's actually, some of you may have been in a third world context where this actually happens.

And I would challenge you guys next week to bring watermelon and corn forward, okay, and put it in that little bag that's just on fire. When I was in Africa about five years ago, we went to upcountry. And in the upcountry outside of Nairobi, in Kenya, in this little, really humble church and church building, they say, Now we're going to take our tithes and offerings.

They pass a little bag just like we did. And then these people start coming from the back, stacking up corn. They're bringing up bags of vegetables and melon and avocados and all kinds of things like that.

[21 : 09] It was very cool to see it. But it was a fulfillment of this concept, bringing the first fruits. The concept of first fruit is the first check goes to God.

The first ear of corn goes to God. That's the way it works. And it's part of devotion to God. Now, if you really don't like what I'm saying and it ticks you off a little bit, and you're not a follower of Jesus, then don't worry about what I just said.

Get your life straight with Jesus first, okay? If you're not a person who's following Jesus, the first thing you need to do is come under his reign and his rule. This is for people who follow Jesus already.

So the tithing comes from the first of what you make. And then the purpose of tithing was to provide, as I already alluded to, for those who did not provide for themselves.

Tom is an accountant and would really like to be making his own money. But the New Testament teaches, Galatians 6, 6, that those who receive the word ought to share all things with those who teach the word.

[22 : 19] All things. After church, he gets to drive your suburban home. All right? This evening, I'm teasing. If he does ask you about that, then come and see me, okay? One of the groups of people in the Old Testament that are cared for are called Levites.

They're the people who led other people into worship. If you turn to the right a little bit, just to the next book, Leviticus chapter 18. You'll see this there. I'm going to show you a couple other texts here in the Old Testament.

Numbers 18, verse 20. God speaks to Aaron and says to him, You shall have no inheritance in the land.

That is, you're not to farm. For I am your portion and your inheritance. And then God says, verse 21, To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance.

In return for the service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting. And actually, Levites were to tithe as well. They would tithe the tenth of the tenth. They were to give whatever they received.

[23 : 21] They also were to give some of it. This is picked up in the New Testament. 1 Timothy 5.17 says that those who preach and teach, and particularly those who labor well at it, should be worthy of double honor or payment.

But is it just the Levites? Is it just God's workers who should be provided for from it in the Old Testament? The answer is no. It's also the widow, the sojourner, and the orphan.

All of those who cannot, in one sense, provide for themselves. Part of the reason why part of our tithe to Holy Trinity, a portion of it always goes to help those who are poor.

Our elders passed a motion about four or five years ago that said, Whatever comes into us, we are going to take a portion of that and use it for Hope for Chicago towards ministry to the poor so that we mobilize people to go and serve the poor.

Deuteronomy 14.29 says, And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, that's the refugee, and the fatherless, that's the orphan, and the widow who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you and all of the work of your hands that you do.

[24 : 35] Actually, it all adds up because there's actually three tithes in the Old Testament. One's a Levitical tithe, which we just looked at. It's 10%. Another is called the Festival Tithe, which would actually go so that everyone can have a feast together.

And another tithe is called the Triennial or Charity Tithe that goes to help what I just read, the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner. Add those up, somebody who can do math, it was 10% plus 10% plus 10% every three years, which is 3.33%.

So scholars say that it's actually about 23.3% is what the tithe was. You thought it was bad living in Chicago where you get 10.5%, 11% where it keeps going up.

For them, actually, if you add in the gleaning where they were supposed to leave corn and grain by the way for the poor, it's about 25%. It's not even just 10%.

It's about 25% in the Old Testament. So what's a tithe? A tithe is specifically a 10% gift that is expected.

[25 : 47] It's a sign of repentance. It's based on God's abundance. And it brings God's further blessing. And it goes for His preordained work, particularly for those who are trying to move the kingdom forward and for the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner.

So that's what is a tithe. Next question is, should we tithe? Should Chicagoans who are trying to follow Jesus today tithe, give one-tenth of what they make to God, knowing that it's all His?

Be very careful and say, my conviction, my conviction is yes. But I say conviction and not commandment. And I'll show you that next week.

Because we don't actually live under the law anymore. You're released from the law. You're free. You're set free from having to obey the law.

So it's my own conviction that we should, but it's not a commandment. Paul says this later. He says, I'm not making this commandment to you, but I'm trying to show you the love of the Macedonian church, which gave an extraordinary generosity.

[27 : 01] My own view is, as the richest 2% of the people in the world who have received the Holy Spirit, who have responded to God's grace, that we should, yes, at least give 10% back to God's work.

Actually, I believe in what's called a graduated tithe, which means that you give 10%, but over your lifetime, as you're able to make more and more, you fix your expenses and increase the amount that you're able to give.

The guy I used to work for, a guy named Kent Hughes, a preacher, said he used to believe, that's what he believes in. He talks about this in a book called Set Apart, which has to do with holiness.

And in this book, he talks about one of his seminary professors who used the graduated tithe, began giving 10%, then 15%, and then soon, as a seminary professor, was giving 30% of his tithe away.

I read a biography about two years ago of a guy who founded one of the Presbyterian denominations, gave 10%. Every year in faith, he would increase it until he was giving about 90% of his income away.

[28 : 12] I think he was making seven figures, though, so I'm just teasing. But he was using this concept of a graduated tithe and continuing to increase it. But I want to step back for a second and turn to Malachi and show you a difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

So go back to page 802 to Malachi if you've turned from there. And I want to show you how there's a reversal from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

In Malachi, God says, Test me, thereby put me to the test. Verse 10, Bring the full tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house, and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

What's the idea there? You obey, and God blesses. That's the idea in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, it's flipped. It's not you obey, and therefore God blesses you.

It's God has blessed you, and therefore you obey. It's the reverse. That's what grace is. Grace gives you freely something which you do not deserve, blesses you beyond measure.

[29 : 30] Put it in this context, God has already opened the windows of heaven for you. He looked down upon the little ants that are Chicagoans scurrying all over the place and said, I'm going to send my son to that group of people.

So Jesus, who's the richest person who could ever exist, dwelling with all splendor and glory, was born naked, having nothing, the ruler of the universe, and grew up as this little boy running through the streets of Galilee and Nazareth, and then was anointed with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit came down upon him and blessed him, and the father said, This is my son. Listen to him. With him I'm well pleased. And he began teaching, saying, The kingdom of God is at hand. It's breaking in. My kingdom is coming.

He began repeatedly saying, I must suffer and go to Jerusalem, be crucified, and on the third day rise again. And he did. He rose again. On the cross, he hangs naked.

He has absolutely nothing. He's standing there so that he's fully exposed. Not one possession in the world. Earlier he says, The foxes have holes.

[30 : 46] The birds of the air have nests. The Son of Man has no place to lay his head. 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9 says, He who was rich became poor, so that we who are poor might become rich.

The reason for giving in the New Testament is not so that God will somehow give you a BMW. It's because he's already given you all things in the person of Jesus Christ.

Actually, the principle in the New Testament is not tithing. It's radical generosity. It's over-the-top generosity. Here's the interesting thing, and I want to be really clear about this.

The New Testament does not command you to tithe. Jesus doesn't. The apostles don't. It's a matter of freedom. But this is sort of like, if you were to ask a professional flute player, a flautist, if they still, like imagine an 8-year-old trying to learn scales, okay?

This 8-year-old comes up and meets this professional flautist and says, do you still play scales three times a week for 20 minutes a day? And the professional flautist would say, you don't understand, okay?

[31 : 58] I practice seven hours a day. I don't just do scales, right? That's the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Tithing in the Old Testament is like just playing scales. In the New Testament, it's like, no, your whole life becomes worship.

It's radical generosity. It's like asking a professional football player, do you still do lat pull-downs? Three times a week? He's like, you don't understand. My whole life is geared towards becoming a weapon on the battlefield of professional football.

Of course I do that and I do 50 other things, right? In the New Testament, the whole life, not just 10%, is given out and poured out for God.

It's called radical generosity. Acts 2, 42-47, the new church that is just birthed there through the power of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of Peter, what do they do?

They're selling all their possessions and giving it to anyone who has need, right? The apostles don't go, uh, uh, uh, too much. Sorry. You sold that piece of property, but you gave me 80% of your income.

[33 : 05] I need to give you 70% back. That's not what they were doing. Generosity is actually part of the fuel that moves the gospel forward. It says in Acts 2, 42-47, verse 47, it says, And the Lord was adding to their number daily those who were being saved.

They had a radical kind of community. So now I'm messing with you, okay? Because I'm calling Holy Trinity, I'm calling Christians to a more radical generosity than me.

not just this idea of, oh, I'll keep 90% back and give 10% to God, but something more radical. John Wesley used to say, make as much as you can, spend as little as you can, and give away as much as you can.

And the guy actually made a lot of money at various times in his life, but he would always only have just a little bit in his pocket. The principle in the New Testament is radical generosity.

Here's a way that Randy Elkhorn, the guy who wrote Treasure Principle, talks about it. Tithing is like training wheels for generosity. It helps you get on the path towards generosity.

[34 : 21] It's not the ceiling, it's the floor. It's not the finish line, it's the start line. So should we tithe? Well, yeah, it would be a good idea for us to tithe.

But it's just the beginning of generosity. It's if you need training wheels, then put on those training wheels and begin tithing. I say this as a person who, with my wife, 22 years ago said, let's do that.

Let's just always give 10%, give 10% to the church, and then give some to missions beyond that. Again, that's a conviction, that's not a rule, that's not a commandment. You're under grace, but Christ died for you and gave all things for you.

Radical generosity was taught by Jesus. Remember the rich, young ruler? Comes to Jesus, what must I do to be saved? Jesus says, how are you doing on the commandments? He says, I'm doing pretty good, except he left out one commandment, which was covetousness.

Forgot to mention that one, and Jesus says to him, look, sell everything you have and give it to the poor. He didn't say, Jesus believed in radical generosity. He didn't say, sell everything you have and give 10% to the poor.

[35 : 31] That's not what he said, because the principle is radical generosity. Remember the widow's mite and what happens in Mark chapter 12, a poor widow comes. She's got two small copper coins.

She puts them in. They equal one penny. And Jesus says, that woman, says to the disciples, just way out gave all of you, because she put in, out of her poverty, and you all, we all are putting in, out of our abundance.

It's teaching. It doesn't teach tithing. It teaches, it models radical generosity. Remember that short fire plug guy named Zacchaeus? Climbs up in a tree, wants to see Jesus, looking for him.

Jesus says, hey man, I'm coming to your house today. Let's go. There was a party for the neighborhood. Jesus shares the gospel with him, the gospel of the kingdom.

He repents. And what does he say? He says, okay, half of my wealth, half of everything I have, I'm going to give away to the poor. Half of it. Jesus says, too much, not just 10%.

[36 : 32] What are you talking about, dude? You're out of your mind. 90% is yours. No, half of my money. That needs to happen on LaSalle Street a lot. Okay? It needs to happen in the high rises of the city of Chicago.

Okay? A little bit later, to Zacchaeus, Jesus says, hey, I have come to seek and save the lost. In this context, really wealthy people who could give away half of their income to the poor.

Wouldn't that be beautiful in the city of Chicago? Wouldn't that change the city of Chicago? Really wealthy people who are investing half of their money. And then he says, as if that's not enough, he's still got half of his money.

Anybody that I defrauded, I'll give them four times what I owe. So, imagine him. Hey, I know, you know what, I kind of swindled you and you probably knew it, but let's work this out.

How about if I give you four times what I took from you? Deal. Here's what Jesus says about Zacchaeus at that moment. Today's salvation has come to your house. In other words, he says, you are saved, Zacchaeus.

[37 : 35] I know you're saved. Here's how I know you're saved. Because of what you're doing with your money. Right? Money, giving, radical generosity is a sign of repentance.

So, I am challenging you. I'm challenging you to examine your life. How much do you need to live on? How much can you give away?

Could you, could we be more radical in our generosity? Do you have a condo somewhere that you can sell and give, I'm teasing, okay?

But I'm teasing, I'm not give the Holy Trinity Church. Do you have, do you have something, my parents used to have a place up north in Door County. They sold it. Why? Because they heard a preacher say, how can anyone, can any of us own two homes?

And there are people all over the world who have none. In 1804, one billion people walked on the earth. Only one billion. Today, one billion people live in slums, urban slums across the world.

[38 : 43] We're the wealthiest people. I'm calling you to radical generosity. It could be uncomfortable, but I want to ask you, I'll just ask you, do you have training wheels on?

You give 10% God's work. We're going to see next week a little bit more how to do this. I want to motivate you by grace, not by guilt. That's how Paul does it next week.

We'll see that in a little bit. But it's by grace. Do you have training wheels on at this point? The key that we want to release for you, what we're seeking in you, is your joy and your maturity.

Paul says to the Philippians, I don't want your gifts. You keep giving me gifts. I don't really want your gifts. He says, you know what I want? I want the fruit that God brings to you because of it.

Holy Trinity doesn't really need your money. We don't need your money. And we don't really even, we don't want your money. I want you to keep your money. Except what we really want is for you to have open hands so that you're generously giving to God's kingdom.

[39 : 50] I'll close with a story about one of my best friends, a name of Pete, who was a pastor, now a pastor, but when he was in college, he was a weird radical guy, long hair.

This is, I went to college a long time ago. And he was asked, he's a guitarist, he's a very passionate guy. And he was asked by the president of the college that I went to, a small private liberal arts college, if he would close the Royal Investors Banquet in prayer.

So like all of the really wealthy people in this denomination were all there. So he said, sure, I will. So this is like the closing moment.

Please get out your checkbooks and begin to write your checks. And my buddy Pete gets up there to pray and grabs the microphone and goes, listen, we don't need any of your money. Okay? So you can put your checkbooks away right now.

God doesn't need your money. And then he prayed. So then the president gets up and he like tries to fix all of that and say, he didn't really mean what he said, but I love Peter for it.

[40 : 55] He's like Peter in the New Testament, right? But he's actually right. God doesn't need your money, but we need to be generous. To be the kind of followers of Jesus that he's called us to be.

To be more like Jesus. Jesus had nothing, gave everything away for us. How much should we give back?

Should we tithe? I would say at least, probably. But that's not a commandment. It's between you and God. But begin giving, free yourself to generosity, and see how he begins to change you to be more like the person of Jesus.

Jesus. So I did it, first sermon on money in 11 and a half years. Thanks for listening. Let's pray. Father in heaven, I thank you for your son Jesus who did empty himself of everything that he had.

He was totally devoted to you and I pray that this congregation, all of us, and scores more, would be 100% devoted to you and that our giving back to you of 10% or whatever it is that you ask each person here to give back to you, Lord, would be just the beginning.

[42 : 22] That you'd reshape us by the stirring, and I believe you are, God, stirring your Holy Spirit within our congregation, within our hearts, and within the city of Chicago to pour out this kind of radical generosity that begins healing our city, that begins reaching others for Christ, and begins building us into a family.

Take our lives and let them be consecrated, Lord, to you. We pray this in Christ's name. Thank you.