

Sermon Outline for FBC Sep. 15, 2019

“Store up or give the first fruits?”

Today the message is entitled “Store up or give the first fruits?”

Recently it came to my attention that some of you did not understand tithing. My hope is that you will go away knowing more about this important act of worship. There are many ideas out there on the concept of stewardship and tithing. This is what God has taught me over the years – check it out for yourselves and let God show you what He wants you to do.

First, we look at what it means to store up, first fruits and to tithe.

To Store up: to gather and lay up, to heap up, to keep a lot of something so that you can use it later. Many animals store up food for the winter.

Pica’s do just that.....

Next is “First Fruits.”

God tells Moses that the people must give the first fruits to God.

Leviticus 23: 9-14 NIV

9 The Lord said to Moses,

10 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest.

11 He is to wave the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.

12 On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the Lord a lamb a year old without defect,

13 together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah[7 lbs or 3.2 kg] of the fine flour mixed with oil—an offering made to the Lord by fire, a pleasing aroma—and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin[1 Qt or 1litre] of wine.

14 You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

Halley's Bible Handbook sums this up with a one liner, "Lesson: Make God First in Life." ¹

Webster's New World Dictionary gives us this definition of Tithe "A tenth of one's income paid to the church." ²

The question arises – is that gross or net income and how much – answer is -ask God! Tithing is between you and God. The amount is between 1% and 100% - whatever God directs you to do. No one else has any reason to be involved.

Another question comes up – do I have to tithe? Not tithing brings its own issues.

Halley's Bible handbook states: "Thus, in Malachi's time, the Jews had been home from Babylon about 100 years, cured, by the Captivity, of their Idolatry, but prone to neglect the House of God. The priests had become lax and degenerate, sacrifices were inferior. Tithes were neglected... Withholding tithes is called 'robbing God'; for by the Mosaic constitution the tithe was God's property, to which the donor had no more right than he had to another man's property. Note God's promise of prosperity to faithful tithers, and the challenge to test Him on the promise." ³

Malachi 3: 7-12 NIV

7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'

"In tithes and offerings.

9 You are under a curse—the whole nation of you —because you are robbing me.

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the

¹ Halley's Bible Handbook, Pg. 140

² Webster's New World Dictionary, Pg.627

³ Halley's Bible Handbook, Pgs. 384, 385

floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough to store it.

11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the Lord Almighty.

12 “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

How do we deal with this concept of first fruits and tithing in today’s world? We go to the book of Hebrews where this is explained for us.

Hebrews 7: 17-27 NIV

17 For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” [referencing Psalm 110: 4]

18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless

19 (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

20 And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath,

21 but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him:

“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever.’” [Psalm 110:4]

22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;

24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

26 Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

We no longer need to give sacrifices as Jesus gave the ultimate and final sacrifice – Himself for us.

The concept of giving the first fruits to God still applies, so that God can store them up to use when needed.

Remember, it was the first of everything, so that means our income, energy, time, family, and possessions.

Are you giving a percentage of those items listed to God, daily?

Do you store up or give your first fruits? Today is a great day to start following what God wants you to do, to receive all the blessings God promises when we give joyfully to Him.

Bibliography:

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