

**The Messiah Has Come**  
**Week 21**  
**Matthew 6:1-4; Malachi 3:8-10**  
**"The Heart Of The Giver"**

**Introduction**

**Sitting across from the temple treasury. He watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. Summoning His disciples, He said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had — all she had to live on."** **Mark 12:41-44**

In the Sermon on The Mount, we are learning that God looks upon the intent behind our actions with far more scrutiny than the actions themselves. In other words, He is concerned with our heart attitude as to why we do what we do, more than what we do. The Pharisees were excellent "rule keepers", as it were, but their hearts were very far from God, and Christ exposed their hypocrisy. For this reason, they wanted to be rid of Him so desperately that they were willing to go to great lengths to have Him crucified. He addressed this reality with His disciples the night before He went to the cross.

**If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse to their sin. The one who hates Me also hates My Father. If I had not done the works among them that no one else has done, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: They hated Me for no reason.** **John 15:22-25**

So, as we begin this next section of Christ's powerful Sermon on The Mount, we transition from the heart behind our actions to the very actions themselves. Beginning in Chapter 6, Jesus teaches us that our righteousness must be lived out in our every day lives as He speaks of giving, praying, fasting, acquiring wealth, and worry. To be pure in heart is to live out that purity in all that we say and do, which conversely means that it is very possible to do the right thing for the wrong reasons. But the pure within will also be pure without. As goes the inner motives so goes the outward actions.

The LORD is able to discern hypocrisy, even when no one else is able. Therefore, we must live in such a way as to be pleasing to Him, even if no one else is watching. One of my favorite old *Bible* commentators is the late J. Vernon McGee. And as I was reading his commentary on *Matthew* this week, a quote from him struck me as simple, and yet profound. He defined hypocrisy as follows:

*"May I say to you that giving is between you and God, and the very minute you get a third party involved, you don't get any credit in heaven."*

J. Vernon McGee  
 Commentary on Matthew's gospel 1983

So, in essence, everything we do should be done as unto The LORD and **Him alone**. As soon as we bring someone else into the equation in order to gain the approval of men, we have crossed the line into hypocrisy. And when you look at it in those terms, you will begin to spot the hypocrites from a long distance! We need to know The LORD'S instruction, when it comes to our charitable giving, and the reasons behind why we give. For it would be sad indeed to go through this life thinking we are doing it right, only to stand before the throne of God and have our inner motives negate all the good that we have tried to do.

So let us look together this morning at the *how* and *why* of our charity, as I do a rare departure from plain expository teaching in order to give a more "*topical approach*". I feel that it becomes necessary to help us understand the concept of giving, to explore what God has to say on the matter entirely. So, we will look at not only *Giving to The Less Fortunate* (which Christ speaks to in this passage), but also *Giving to The LORD*, and finally, *Giving in Love*. Please allow me to explain.

## **Giving To The Less Fortunate (Matthew 6:1-4)**

**Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven. So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father Who sees in secret will reward you.** **Matthew 6:1-4**

Now, I do not know if the Pharisees literally sounded trumpets to announce their good works, or The LORD was merely using sarcasm here, but needless to say, these hypocritical religious leaders wanted everyone to be impressed with them. Therefore, everything they did was for show. Have you ever wondered why our politicians today always seem to have cameras present when they do anything good? It is for the same reason, namely, political gain. I often wonder, if our leaders would ever do a single good deed if there were no one around to see!

Jesus says that when we do things to gain the approval of others, then that approval is the only reward we will ever receive. Can I be blunt here? The very same people who lavish praise on you today can just as easily turn on you tomorrow (I've seen it happen so many times before). So, why ever let the praise of people be your motivation? Just this morning, I was reading in **Psalms 107** that the love of The LORD endures forever. So why not be motivated by pleasing the only one Whom you can always count on? Seems to me to be the much better choice.

We should also notice that Jesus said **"when you give to the poor."** and not **if**. Our regenerated nature in Christ assumes that we will most certainly desire to reach out to the less fortunate among us. In fact, Christ has told us that we are to never refuse someone in need.

**Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.** **Matthew 5:42**

That being said, for us to help others is a given. No one who has truly received the grace of God will become miserly and selfish as a result. To have the love of God within us is to by nature love those around us. So we give. We are to give generously, expecting nothing in return.

As I quoted from Vernon McGee earlier, when we involve a third party in our giving (or any other of our righteous acts for that matter), we cross the line into hypocrisy. Does this mean that we are to never do anything in view of the public? Not necessarily, but when we do things for the praise and approval of the audience, we do in fact show our hypocrisy. In short, we can do the right thing for the wrong reason. And God who sees all, knows our hearts.

I can tell you story after story of gifts given within the church that were done for the sake of someone's personal glory, rather than the glory of God. This is why there are so many nameplates on buildings, church pews, and about everything else you can hang a plaque upon in many churches today. Sad to say, according to Jesus, that little bit of praise from men is the only reward those people will ever receive.

The phrase **"do not let your right hand know what your left is doing"** is simply a metaphor for secrecy. To help someone who is less fortunate is a private affair, and the only one's who need know of it are the giver and the recipient. Why would there ever be a need for public announcement? In most cases, to do so would be to the detriment and embarrassment of the person in need. So how can we possibly love our neighbor as ourselves and then make a spectacle out of them at their own expense? May it never be! Love, genuine agape love, wants the best for those it loves. And to protect the dignity of our brothers and sisters should be an honor for us. So give, give generously and in secret.

I have found in this life, that every time I lend a hand to someone in need, God blesses me exponentially. I have often heard it said, "you cannot out-give God." And I believe that this is true, but a word of caution here: Do not give expecting to get anything in return, for to do so also exposes our own selfish natures once more. Give generously to those in need, because God has already given generously... to you!

## **Giving To The LORD (Malachi 3:8-10)**

**“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!” “How do we rob You?” you ask. “By not making the payments of the tenth and the contributions. You are suffering under a curse, yet you — the whole nation — are still robbing Me. Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way,” says The LORD of Armies. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.”** **Malachi 3:8-10**

While we are on the subject of giving, I felt it would be a good time to talk about tithing of our income to The LORD. A lot of church folk these days will argue that tithing (giving a tenth of one's income back to God) is an *Old Testament* concept, which we are no longer required to observe. Of course, the same folks that usually say this are the very same ones who offer little or no financial support to the Church to begin with! So first, allow me the leeway to dismiss their arguments for the nonsense that they are.

Jesus said Himself, that He did not come to do away with *Old Testament* Law, but to fulfill it. Tithing would, by definition, come under the *Ceremonial* portion of The Law, as it applies to the worship of God. The first mention of giving tithes in the *Old Testament* is in **Genesis Chapter 14:18-20**, when Abraham offered a tenth of his spoils of war to The LORD. He did this as a gesture of thanksgiving to God for protecting him as he pursued those who had kidnapped his nephew Lot. God gave Abraham the victory over his enemies, and therefore, Abraham offered God a tenth of all that he had recovered from them. So, in this, the tithe came to represent our acknowledgment that all we have been given is a gift from God, and therefore, we return this portion back to Him in love and gratitude.

Nowhere in the *New Testament* does Jesus or any of the apostles set aside the giving of the tithe, in fact, just the opposite. To those who would say it is to be done away with as *Old Testament* Law, should listen to the words of the LORD as he confronted the Pharisees for their ever-present hypocrisy.

**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, and yet you have neglected the more important matters of the Law — justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These things should have been done without neglecting the others.** **Matthew 23:23**

You see, the Pharisees were so legalistic in their approach to tithing that they even gave a tenth of the spices from their herb gardens to The LORD! But of course, their hearts were far from Him. However, notice what Jesus said about their tithing. He said **“you should have done these things...”**. Does that sound like He set them aside to you? In other words, God expects His children to acknowledge Him and His good gifts to us by giving a portion of those gifts back to Him. It's not an *Old Testament* concept, it's a *Faith Concept*! Tithing is our way of acknowledging that all we have been given is a gift from God. So why on earth would we decide that it no longer applies to us?

So then, we are supposed to bring our tithes (a tenth of our income) and our offerings (additional gifts above the tithe) into the “storehouse”, according to the prophet Malachi. In other words, we bring our gifts into the church to help support the ministry there. It takes a lot of money to properly staff and to enable a church to function. If no one gave their support, then the doors would close forever. Thankfully there are a great deal of Christians out there who understand the importance of giving to The LORD so that His work continues.

And just as we are supposed to give to the poor without fanfare or recognition, the same principle applies to the church. We give, quietly, not expecting a pat on the back or our name plastered on some wall of honor, for our motivation for giving is solely to bring glory to God. I have been blessed to be the pastor of this church in that its members have always stepped up when we needed extra funds to continue God's work. So this message is not intended to shame anyone. For as far as I can tell, this congregation by and large are living up to what God requires. And He has blessed us all for it!

Read what God promised in Malachi; He said that we should **“test Him”** in tithing! It is the only place I know in Scripture where God commands us to **test Him**. And He says that when we do this, we will see that He will bless us accordingly. So God will give us blessings when we are faithful in giving our tithes and offerings to Him. I have seen this many times in my own life. For you cannot out-give God.

But once more, a word of caution here: Do not start tithing as a means to gaining something for yourself, for to do so is to be motivated by selfish greed, rather than purity of heart. So how then are we to give? We will discover this truth in our next point. We give... because we *LOVE*!

### **Giving in Love (Psalms 107:8)**

**Let them give thanks to The LORD for His faithful love and His wondrous works for all humanity. For He has satisfied the thirsty and filled the hungry with good things.**  
**Psalm 107:8-9**

I could have very well chosen a thousand other verses to make this point, but something about this verse struck a chord with me this past week. God has shown us nothing but love, mercy, and grace, and so often, we demand more, rather than stopping to acknowledge Him for what He has already done. So, how is it that we are supposed to give to others, and to God? Answer: In *love* and *thanksgiving*.

I remember years ago there was a needy family in the church we were attending, and the pastor there decided to take up what we Southern Baptists call "*a love offering*". For those of you who didn't grow up around the colloquialism, this is an offering **above and beyond** the normal Sunday collection of the tithes, designated specifically for someone who is in need. I will never forget the pastor's words that day. He said, "*Now church, this is a love offering, so if you don't love, then don't give!*" What a true and profound sentiment! I still hear it in my head every time someone comes to me with a need: "If you don't love, then don't give..." I believe that is exactly what Jesus was saying in the Sermon on The Mount! If love is not your motive for giving, then God will never acknowledge the gift you give. So, **don't bother to give, if you do not love.**

I must confess that sometimes, I am selfish. It's that disease of self-love that we are all infected with in our flesh. And from time to time, the symptoms sure do come on strong. Can I get a witness? Now, I am not saying that when I see a need, I don't give, because I very often do. But sometimes, to be honest, I give more out of a guilty conscience, than I do out of love. Thankfully, I am married to someone who is much more generous than I, and usually, when I tell her to pray about the size of the gift that we should offer in a particular circumstance, then the amount she comes up with is usually about twice the size of mine! So, we usually go with her amount, because she loves more, and quite frankly, I need to do better.

Can I give you a bit of advice this morning? When you see a need that needs meeting, whether within the Church or to an individual who is struggling, before you decide what to do, sit down for a moment and think about all the good things that God has done for you. *Then...* you will be a whole lot better prepared to offer your gift. And always remember: It's a *love offering*, so if you don't *love*, then don't give! Convicting is it not? Is it any wonder then, that The Scriptures say that **"God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7b)**? Because when you truly love, then you are more than happy to share what you have with others. This is giving with the right attitude. This is giving from a *pure heart*. And let me tell you, when that is how you feel on the inside, you couldn't care less who *is* or *is not* seeing what you give. Love overrides all other cares, when it is the real thing. This is why I believe that the Apostle Paul is famous for saying:

**Do everything in love.**

**1 Corinthians 16:14**

So the next time you are struggling with what to do when you see a need, stop and think of all that you have been given. And count those blessings before digging deep into your pockets, not out of some kind of guilty compulsion, but rather as a way of giving thanks and sharing from all the blessings that God has given you. And then, **give cheerfully, in love.** Trust me in this. You can never out-give our heavenly Father! For He is the greatest Giver of them all.

**Give thanks to The LORD, for He is good; His faithful love endures forever.**

**Psalm 107:1**

**TRUTH!!!**