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SERMON TITLE: "Live to Give"
SCRIPTURE: Malachi 3:6-12 (NKJV)
DATE: October 21, 2018
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

READ MALACHI 3:6-12 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-9

"For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?' Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the Lord of hosts; "And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts.

In order to properly interpret this text, we must first understand the context, so let us begin by answering some quick questions.

Who was Malachi? A minor prophet in the Old Testament

When was this book written? In the time of Nehemiah, perhaps around 430 B.C.

Where does this book fit? At the end of the Exile, after King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Hebrew exiles to return home

What's this book about? The people of Israel complained that God wasn't blessing them – and Malachi pointed out why: They hadn't kept their part of the covenant with God!

This begs the question; what does it mean to be in covenant?

To be in covenant with someone means to be in strong agreement with that person.

Synonyms with covenant are as follows: a contract with legal binding, a commitment with a guarantee, a pledge with

a promise, a pact or a deal, a settlement or an arrangement, a mutual understanding. These are depicted by a firm handshake, not a weak and flimsy one!

Probably the best example we have of true covenant is a strong marriage, such as Sam & Charlotte Fithian have. 70 years of holy matrimony is no small matter... it is only made possible by a lifetime of faithfulness.

Unfortunately, Israel was not so faithful to God, and they were reaping the consequences of their sin. They wanted His blessings in their lives, but they were unwilling to obey His Law. I wonder, is that the case for us?

How often do we tend to think the same way? We may desire God's blessings in our lives, our relationships, our jobs and even our finances, but are we willing to obey God's Word?

The people of God in Malachi's time struggled with this very issue... As a prophet of God, Malachi was forced to address Israel's unfaithfulness in more ways than one. They were unfaithful primarily in their marriages and in their tithes and offerings.

Remember how they divorced their Jewish wives for foreign women whom they deemed younger and more attractive. Also, instead of giving the first and best of their increase to God, they regularly gave defective offerings, ones that were displeasing and unacceptable to the Lord.

On top of such blatant issues, they had the AUDACITY to complain then that God was not blessing them. This is clearly unthinkable, unimaginable, and even absurd, yet this was how Israel related to God in that time! I pity the prophet, Malachi, for having to deal with them!

In order for God's people in the current era to not repeat the mistakes of the past, we must learn wisdom to do otherwise. Since we are focusing on giving today, we must be faithful to practice the kingdom principles of giving our tithes and offerings.

As many here may recall, we defined tithes and offerings in our children's moments the last couple of weeks. Tithing is to give God our first and our best, trusting that God will bless the rest! Offering, then, is giving above and beyond

the traditional 10%, and even giving of our very lives in service to God. Remember, God is a King, and He is worthy of such things!

In John 3:16, our Heavenly Father set the example for us. "For God so loved the world that He gave..." Here we understand that God is first and foremost a Giver, so we as His children should do likewise. We must learn to follow this example in giving of our very lives in service to God!

Now not everyone has a steady income or cash flow to give to God. However, everyone has something they can do. If that something is not working for a business with regular pay, then that something can be to serve the Church in some way.

For example, a child who is not yet of the working age can serve as a greeter here, offering a smile and a warm welcome to any person entering the sanctuary. Or a stay-at-home Mom can volunteer in the nursery to watch over little ones during the service time. Look at Sean Russell, who was faithfully served in the shadows of the sound room for 9+ years. See his wife, Lucy, who gets her kids up every Sunday morning and volunteers her time to help lead Sunday School. We have several example of such faithful service to God here, but we could always use more!

If God has set the example for us in giving the life of His Son on our behalf, how much more so should we give of our lives for the purpose of strengthening the Church and furthering God's kingdom in the earth!

In other words, live to give.

AMEN