



God's Guarantee - Tithing

January 9, 2005

By Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

We began this year by looking at guarantees from God's word. Last week we considered the guarantees that God left concerning prayer. This morning we want to look at the guarantee that God gives us about giving and finances.

There are some awesome things that God wants to do here at and through CLF. The resources that God places in our hands of time and ability and finance are important to fulfilling the vision for the future here at CLF.

I was sharing with Pastor Dan when we were talking about where we are headed here at CLF. There are some things that God has placed in my heart as far as the future for CLF is concerned. Many of them I have shared with our leaders in our leadership summits. One of the things I have vision for is to see CLF grow to about 350-400 people. I see us mothering or planting a church at that point.

I also have a vision along with other leaders to eliminate the debt that we have on our facility. By eliminating our mortgage debt, we open up resources for missions and church planting that we can only dream about now.

So how do these things happen? We talked about prayer last week. We had a wonderful prayer time. There were close to 30 people who came to seek God on Sunday afternoon. From now on our monthly prayer meeting will be held on the second Sunday of the month at 4:00 PM.

This morning we are going to talk about tithing. In the gospels and in Jesus' teaching, money is mentioned more than any other topic. An important aspect of good stewardship is to be able to manage what is trusted to us. I firmly believe that tithing and giving offerings is not a matter of money, it is a matter of faith. It is a matter of obedience, and trusting that everything is God's and we are only stewards of how it gets managed. God has trusted us with everything we call our own. Can we not trust Him by giving back to Him? Let's open our hearts and minds as we come to the Word today.

Malachi 3:8-11

Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But" you ask, "How do we rob you?" "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. 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 floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.

I. Is it possible to rob GOD?

The answer lies in verse 8 of our text. The prophet speaks to God's people about thievery. He speaks about stealing and taking what did not belong to them.

Robbing God means taking what belongs to Him for us. It is not acknowledging Him by giving back to God what is His.

God said to His people, "By robbing me, you place yourself under a curse." Once again we see that God has given us the ability to make choices and those choices have consequences. God's people can choose to obey and act in faith on the principles that God gives and experience the guarantee of blessing that accompanies the obedient heart, or we can disregard and choose to disobey and take ourselves out of the place of blessing and put ourselves under a curse.

God does not want our life to be miserable. It is His desire and nature for us to be blessed but He responds to our faith and obedience.

II. What has God promised?

- **He will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory**
- **An abundant return – give and it shall be given to you**
- **Freedom from concern – do not worry about food and clothes**

This is His part of the guarantee. As we honor Him with the tithe, He will do these things.

III. What are the conditions and our part?

- **Mal 3:10 – Bring all the tithe into the storehouse**

God wanted meat in His house. Meat represents nourishment, strength, and that which enables growth and life. Put God to the test. Take His challenge to you. Test me in this. God wants us to examine whether or not He can be tested, whether or not He can be trusted, whether or not He can be proven. See if I won't throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room for the blessing I want to pour out on you.

God is indicating that He controls the chimneys of heaven, and His promise or guarantee is that He will

open them up and pour out prosperity on you to the extent you won't be able to contain it all.

There are many ways that God blesses and prospers his people. In this part of scripture, God promises their food and their business and their agriculture would prosper. They would know and experience His blessing.

God promised that the pests that would normally devour their crops would be prevented from doing so. The vines would not cast their fruit. This was part of the blessing that God promised His people.

- **Store up treasures in heaven**

At times the people of God have tried to store the resources of God for themselves. That doesn't work well. If we store the treasures of God here, it will be prone to decay. If we store treasures in heaven, there is no way they can deteriorate, or get stolen or destroyed.

- **Do this weekly – Regularity - Paul encouraged the Corinthian brothers and sisters to give weekly.**

God wants to bless you! God does not bless disobedience, but He guarantees blessing in heeding and obeying this principle. The attitude we give with is important.

- **Each man should give what he has decided – not reluctantly or under compulsion. God loves a cheerful giver**

Attitude of giving cheerfully: Some people will practice the principle of tithing, but do so with a very stingy attitude. God loves a cheerful giver.

Attitude of giving liberally: The liberal soul will be made fat.

Can you imagine the blessing on this fellowship if we all honored God with the tithe? I believe that within one year we would eliminate the debt on this property. Can you imagine what we could do after that, in terms of missions, and ministry? It would be phenomenal.

You say, "That isn't possible." Yes it is. There are 80 giving units at CLF. About 1/3 of those gave less

than \$1500 last year. 41% of units tithed less than \$1,500. 75% of units tithed less than \$3,000. 25% of units tithed more than \$3,000.

The median income for a household in Dodge County is \$48,000. If we use that as a guide and everyone tithed – our total church general fund income last year should have been \$384,000 and it was about 1/2 of that. So just looking at the demographics, it says to me that the potential is there to honor God and eliminate the debt here and do more for missions all at the same time.

The Lord's tithe belongs in the storehouse. The storehouse is the depository, the armory, the local church. As wonderful as para-church organizations are, send them an offering, bring your tithe to your local church.

I am excited about where CLF is headed. There are wonderful things in store for this fellowship if we will grasp this principle and honor God. I wanted to share this with you at the start of this New Year. We were going to share our 2005 budget with you this morning, but I really just want to challenge you to honor God, each and every week of this New Year. When the finance and personnel committee was discussing the budget, we were looking for ways to cut the budget so we could stay within projected income, which I might add has stayed flat since 2001. Our departmental leaders have turned in requests based on their vision and needs for this year. We did cut some and still could not balance the budget. I said "we need to challenge God's people. How can we go back to the departmental leaders and say you can't have this equipment, or resources that you need, because we just don't have the money, when we have not acted on God's guarantee when it comes to tithing?"

We can do all that the departmental leaders requested and still have a great surplus to pay off our indebtedness. This is God's work, it is God's church and as your lead pastor, I desire to see God's abundant blessings on your life and this ministry.

So are you ready to put God to the test? Will you not rob God any more?

IV. You can not lose

I want to lead you this morning in honoring God so this year can be a banner year at CLF. Here's how you can be a part of what we are going to do together in honoring God at CLF this year. This is the most

fabulous, amazing, interesting, fascinating way of responding to God's word to tithe that I have ever seen. It works. The last church where I pastored, I challenged the people just as I am challenging you this morning. There were people who had given to God but not tithed. There were people who had not even given to God who took the challenge. It was interesting that those who followed through could not understand how it worked, but at the end of 90 days, they continued to tithe because God had blessed them and they saw His faithfulness first hand.

This is our invitation this morning. Everyone please join me by taking out a pen. Print your name on the first line.

READ THE CARD

1. These are the conditions we meet. (Malachi 3:10) *The local storehouse is your local church ministry.* The tithe is not sent to The United Way, Salvation Army or parachurch organizations. Our tithes are to be used for the work of ministry to the local storehouse.
2. Value of heavenly treasure is more than money. Jesus wants us to love Him more than money.
3. You get paid once a week. Write your tithe check once a week and bring it to the storehouse. If you get paid once a month, write your check once a month. The tenth is not simply \$10.00. The tithe or tenth means if you would take your gross pay and divide it into 10 equal parts; you give God one tenth of it. I.e. if your gross check is 438.00, your tithe would be 43.80.
4. Do this cheerfully. (II Cor 9:7) If this is going to upset you, put it away. If you are not going to give with a right attitude, don't give.
5. You have probably never seen this done in a church before. I have talked to our board and our treasurer and bookkeeper. We believe God means what He says, and we are going to stand behind God's word. This is a 100% money-back guarantee. For the next 90 days, (3 months) we will guarantee every penny that is given to CLF in a check for general fund. If God fails it means He is not trustworthy.

6. You have nothing to loose and blessings to gain. Try it and see if God isn't there. If at the end of 90 days, God has not supplied your needs, not wants, and you have been free from concern, or God has not given you an abundant return, I have already instructed Tim Cook, our bookkeeper, to write a check out for every penny that you gave. We won't even ask any questions.
7. Tithing is not a matter of money; it is a matter of faith. This is the only place we are to

challenge God. Any other place it is a sin. Here God's Word tells us to test him. YOU CANNOT LOOSE.

8. There are two boxes to check. I am already tithing or I will start tithing. Check which one applies to you, sign and date it, and tear off the top as the legal guarantee. Pass the bottom part to the nearest aisle and an usher will collect it.