

You, Your Money & God by Revd. Andrew Weiss

“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

These are the words Jesus said.

Jesus who we believe is the king, the one who we believe is the way the truth and the life.

And yet we struggle with this very thing on both sides.

We struggle and justify what we should or should not be paying to the tax man

And we struggle and justify whether we should put money into the collection plate.

Or is that just me?

I want to talk to you today about giving to God what is God’s.

And there begins the question – what is God’s?

What portion of the money we receive, of our salary, our allowance, of ANYTHING we receive for that matter – belongs to God?

Well if we believe the Bible and what we say in our Liturgy every Sunday...

Then listen to what David says in 1 Chronicles 29:13, in praying for the offering:

¹⁰ Then David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly; David said: ‘Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, for ever and ever. ¹¹ Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹² Riches and honour come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴ ‘But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill-offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

What’s that? –Everything comes from you.

So everything comes from God. It’s all God’s.

So here’s the thing – the thing that will set you free if you believe this...

God is interested in your money.

Not because He needs your money...for He certainly does not! It’s His anyway...

He is interested in your money **because YOU need it!**

Since you are important to God, your money is important to God.

God is interested in how you secure it, spend it, save it, and share it.

Some people say...don’t preach about money, preach about something spiritual.

Nothing is more spiritual than how you handle your money.

It is the supreme test of where our heart is.

Matthew 6:21

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Money is something we use every day, it's our medium of exchange, our very survival depends on it.

How can Jesus Christ be Lord, and not be Lord over our money? How can he care about us, and not care about that which is so intrinsically tied to our very survival?

“But, it's uncomfortable...” you might say.

“I don't like it when the preacher talks about money.”

Well yes it can be.

And if that's true, you would not have liked the preaching of Jesus Christ.

When He walked this earth, Jesus taught parables, and half of them had to do with our attitude toward money!

1 out of every 10 verses in the NT deals with our attitude toward money!

Verses about faith...about 500

Verses about prayer...about 500

Verses about money - over 2,000

Remember the story Jesus told about the poor widow put in two small copper coins?

The Pharisees were giving their large offerings, and the little lady gave her two small copper coins. That whole story has to do with our attitude toward money.

If God's not interested in money, then why include that story in His Word?

The unjust steward

The rich man who foolishly builds bigger barns

Rich Young Ruler who came to Jesus.

Rich man and Lazarus

These stories are to do with our attitude toward money.

If God's **not** interested in money, then why include these stories in His Word?

Clearly, God is interested in your money!

I'll tell you who else is interested in your money...Satan!

It is his desire to keep you under a curse/in bondage. And the best way he can do that is to affect your attitude toward money in a negative way.

I love the story about the grandmother who took her young grandson to her Sunday-School class. When the collection plate came around the young boy held the R1 his grandmother had given him in his clenched fist. And she tried to encourage him to put it in the plate - he was reluctant but finally dropped it in.

A little bit later he became restless and she said, “Would you like to go and play outside. He said “Yes,” and so they got up and began to leave and on the way out the boy said to the class teacher, “Can I have my money back, were not staying.”

Well we can be reluctant when it comes to giving, and we can even be reluctant when it comes to listening to a sermon on giving.

But right now, let me give you four reasons why I'm not hesitant to preach on giving this morning, four reasons why we need to reaffirm this important aspect of the Christian life.

1. We don't preach on it very often.

Not that it's wrong to preach on it, but we just don't do it.

2. We need to preach about it - it's Biblical

The truth is that you cannot preach on the gospel and not preach on giving. Jesus saw fit to include it in the majority of his teaching.

3. It's a needed subject for our culture

Money has become the number one obsession of world.

We want the money and we want the stuff the money buys. Whether or not it serves any purpose seems irrelevant at times.

Reflect on this:

- 90% of the population have more debts than assets
- money is a factor in 90% of divorces
- 2% of the people when they reach age 65 are financially stable – they need no additional income – only 2%.

And all of this speaks to the need our society has in dealing with finances and greed and giving.

4. Not only is it needed in our culture but it's needed in our churches.

A cartoon showed a man hiding under the pew bench at church and his wife is saying, "You can come out now dear, the offering is over."

Why do we need to tithe?

It has always been God's method...He has always used His people to do His work. For those people who gave or tithed in the Bible, tithing wasn't just a duty, it was a delight!

II Cor. 9:7

"let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver."

That's the right motive, love and obedience.

We need to print bumper stickers that say, tithe if you love Jesus, any fool can honk!

So why don't we tithe? I think the answer is in our failure to understand our tithes and offering.

I also think we have not been taught how to look after the money God has given us and I would suggest that the first thing we do in the new year is have a course on money where we can help one another understand what it is we are supposed to be doing with our money, how to get out of debt and how to treat our stuff in a way that is an example to the world around us not an just being part of the world around us.

I want to encourage to you this morning to put God first in the area of giving and see how blessed you become and what a blessing it is to others.

In Luke 12:15 Jesus says, "Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

1 Timothy 6:6-8 says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing we ought to be content."

Now, we hear that and we know that. We know that God wants us to give back to him and we know that he blesses us for it, and yet we have a problem with it, when it comes week to week.

There's no law that says you have to give.

But you cannot claim that you have made God the ruler of your life and withhold this area from him. You cannot do it.

And if I'm not giving to God, if I'm holding back or just tossing in a rand or two here and there, then I cannot claim that I have made him the ruler, the director of my life in this area.

And so with that in mind I want to give you three Scriptural attitudes in which we are to approach the giving of tithes and offering.

Attitude 1 - Give first and Give Cheerfully

Don't wait till you have finished your money to see what is left over to give God.

"Give God what is right not what is left." Andy Stanley

Giving is not a debt you owe. It's not something you have to do.

It's something you get to do. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says "God love's a cheerful giver." It's got to come from the heart.

Attitude 2 is to give generously.

Give Cheerfully, Give Generously.

There is no set amount in the New Testament. In the old it was a tithe or 10% and that's probably a good starting point. You decide.

If you are already giving 10% then consider your percentage in prayer.

Acts 20:35 says The Lord Jesus Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Attitude 3 - Give Thankfully.

In 1 Chronicles 29:13, David, in praying for the offering that was given says; "Now our God, we give you thanks and praise your glorious name. But who am I and who are my people that we should give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand."

This is probably the most significant principle in giving is to give thankfully. To finally realize that everything I have has been given to me by God. And it's an offering of thanksgiving to return just a portion of that to the Lord.

Now the bible does not teach that you give in order to get.

We give, knowing that we will receive in return.

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure-- pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

And giving is like that. When done from the heart it brings an amazing return.

- And sometimes that's financial.
- Sometimes it's spiritual.
- Sometimes we see it now.
- And sometimes we won't see it till the next life.

It's an investment in life. It's a trust fund!

Search your heart.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Let us pray

Stewardship “Gift” Prayer

Lord, you alone are the source of every good gift,
of the vast array of our universe,
and the mystery of each human life.
We praise you and we thank you
for your great power and your tender, faithful
LOVE.

Everything we are and everything we have
is your gift,
and after having created us,
You have given us the greatest of all gifts, your son,
JESUS CHRIST.

Fill our minds with His truth
and our hearts with His love,
that in His Spirit
we may be bonded together into a community
of faithful, caring people.

In the name and Spirit of Jesus,
we commit ourselves to be good stewards
of the gifts entrusted to us,
to share our time, our talent
and our material gifts as an outward sign
of the treasure we hold in Jesus.
AMEN.