

“Lordship: Are We Robbing God?”

Malachi 3:6-18 (NLT)

6 “I am the lord, I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed. 7 Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. But you ask, ‘How can we return when we have never gone away?’

8 Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! But you ask, “What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?” You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. 9 You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! 11 Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. 12 Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

13 You have said terrible things about me,” says the Lord. But you say, What do you mean? What have we said against you?

14 You have said, “What’s the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying His commands or by trying to show the Lord of Heaven’s Armies that we are sorry for our sins? 15 From now on we will call the arrogant blessed. For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare to punish them suffer no harm.”

16 Then those who reared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In His presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared Him and always thought about the honor of His name.

17 They will be my people,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. On the day when I act in judgment, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child. 18 Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not. (NLT)

When young William arrived in the city, he found it hard to get work. Now lonesome and far from home, he remembered his mother’s words and the last words of the canal boat captain. He was led to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” and he became part of a growing church. He remembered his promise, and out of the first dollar he earned, he gave God His portion. He began with 10 cents on a dollar (10%) Finding regular employment, he soon became a partner in the

business and in a few years he became the sole owner. He now resolved to keep his promise to the captain and his Mom. He made an honest bar of soap, gave a full pound, and instructed his bookkeeper to open an account with the Lord and place one tenth of all company and personal earnings to that account. He prospered, his business prospered, his family was blessed, his soap sold, and he grew richer faster than he had ever hoped. Soon he was giving it all to the Lord's work. Who was this soapmaker? William Colgate, today a household name. Almost sounds like one of those, "And that's the rest of the story" stories doesn't it. I can almost hear Paul Harvey's voice saying good day. **[NOTE 1]**

Well, there are very few guarantees in life, but God gives us several. I want to talk about one of those guarantees today. This passage is very clear. If we return to God, He will return to us. If we give Him the whole tithe He will bless us. It is as straightforward and simple as can be. In our Scripture passage for today God actually invites us to try, prove or test Him –to verify His trustworthiness with our giving. He also says that by withholding givings we rob Him or cheat Him of the privilege of pouring out great and overflowing blessings. He calls for renewed giving with the promise, or guarantee if you will, that 1) there will be resources for God's work. 2) He says those who give will be placed in position to receive great and overflowing blessings. You can experience the windows of heaven actually opening with blessings you will not be able to contain. And 3) God says He will "rebuke the devourer" for your sakes. He will cause every blessing that has your name on it to be directed to you and satan himself cannot stop it.

Jack Hayford writes in His Bible Study on the Minor Prophets: "Do not be afraid to prove God with your giving; He is God and He will stand the test every time!"

Now the temple worship of Israel depended absolutely on the tithes of the populace. Tithes were not primarily monetary donations but portions of grain, olive oil, wine, and other agricultural products. In addition, wood had to be supplied to burn the offerings or roast the grain or meat for the Levites to eat. When the tithes were not brought to the temple, the worship of the Lord had to be suspended. "Sorry folks, worship is canceled this week ... nobody tithed this week." This kind of thing was happening when Malachi was writing down his prophecy. **[NOTE 2]**

In verse 7 God says, "Return to me and I will return to you," but Israel in essence says, "Who, Us? Why do we need to repent?" Why do we need to turn back to God, we never left Him did we?" So God points to one glaring example of Israel's failure. Not that this was Israel's only sin or that this sin had any greater status than others. This was simply a readily provable sin. The people's failure to tithe or make offerings showed conclusively that they were willing to cheat God out of what was due Him. The word "Rob" or "Cheat" means to defraud or take away. Are we robbing or cheating God? If nothing else this passage of Scripture would make each of us take a look at our giving and ask ourselves, "Are we robbing or cheating God?" The answer is between you and God. I will never tell you what you should give to the church. No one from this church will ever tell you what you should give. But I hope and pray that each of us will take it

to the Lord in Prayer. Ask God? “Should I be giving more?” Make a decision that gives you peace.

As Christians we are not governed by any law that commands us to give a tenth of our earnings to God; however it must be noted that the practice of tithing goes all the way back to Abraham who gave Melchizedek the priest a tenth of his earnings. This is before the Law of Moses. And also if it was appropriate under the law to give a tenth, Christians who are free from the Law because of their relationship with Jesus Christ, will want to give no less than a tenth insofar as we have received and know so much more! **[NOTE 3]**

Further, no one robs or cheats God without robbing or cheating themselves at the same time. God knows that. That is why He challenges us to prove or test Him. Give and see if I don't bless you. So it's not strictly an issue of obedience. It is not commanded. It is an issue of the heart. Your giving is between you and God. And God, in this passage invites you to test Him. Give sacrificially and see if God does not bless you beyond what you would believe. C.S. Lewis catches the spirit of this when he writes in *Mere Christianity* “If our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc. is up to [or even with] the standard common among those [non-Christians] with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditures exclude them.” Wow! How's that for a challenge? That challenges me! **[NOTE 4]**

John Maxwell a Pastor and “leadership guru” who has written scores of books says that stewardship is Lordship. In his resource under the same title, he explains what Lordship is and why it's necessary. One of the last things he covers in the resource is something he calls the “Lordship Test”. It is so easy for us to ask Jesus Christ into our hearts as savior and then go on with life as though we had just put on a life preserver and nothing else. It's kind of like we accept Him as an insurance policy. Fire insurance against hell. We may even intellectually agree with the statement, “Jesus is Lord.” But if we still fail to live like it, make decisions accordingly, and act like Jesus really is Lord, He is not. As John Calvin Maxell puts it, “He is either Lord of all or not Lord at all.” Jesus said as recorded in the gospel of Matthew the 6th chapter and verse 21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (NIV) A few verses later we read, “Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. Then verse 10 of Malachi chapter 3: “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.” Do we trust God? **[NOTE 5]** What we do with our possessions and our money reveals what is in our heart. Giving leftovers to God is not practicing Lordship. The reason that Malachi wrote, “Bring in the whole tithe” is that the word whole refers to firstfruits, not leftovers. You see the first fruit, the first part of the harvest is often the best! It means putting it aside first! Not seeing how much money is left at the end of the month but deciding ahead how much to give at the beginning and

trusting God to get you through the month. God tells us, through Malachi to bring in the whole tithe! If we place God first He will take care of our needs. The question of the day is: “What will I do in this area of my life?”

The firstfruits way is a different way to do finances and most businessmen would tell you it is not the right way. It may not be the best way to run a business. But we are using this (the Bible) as our guidebook! Not best practices in the business world?

My wife and I have had our struggles financially. Many due to our own foibles. But three different times I have gone 6 months to a year without a call, without a full time job in the ministry. All three times we dealt with very lean times. I am thinking of one particular time in early fall of the year before I started here at Doster Church. There was plenty of month at the end of the money. We were discussing what bills would not get paid. I went to a birthday party of one of my former parishioners and they ordered too much pizza so they sent home a couple pizzas with me. That was a help in and of itself but between the boxes or inside one of the boxes (I don't remember which) was the exact amount of money to pay the bill we had decided we couldn't pay. God can and will bless us if we put Him first and live like He is Lord of our life! I could tell you several more stories of times that God saw us through. It taught Amy and I to depend on God. At one point Amy was upset when I was in my 10th month without a call and got a rejection letter or rather, a letter saying the church had chosen the other candidate to be their Pastor. She kept getting the message, “Trust and Obey”. My Mom said it to her, she heard it on the radio, the preacher at the church we were attending preached on it. It got so she was sick of it. But that is Lordship! Trust and Obey! **[NOTE 6]**

Jesus is either Lord of ALL or not Lord at all!

The reason that God challenges us to prove Him or test Him by risking and giving the full or whole tithe to Him is that we all need to determine personally if our obedience to Him makes a difference or not. If we will but take up the challenge, if we will take a step out in faith and trust in the Lord, He will release the windows and doors of heaven. It is clear no matter how you interpret or translate this passage that God is promising almost unlimited resources if His people will only put Him to the test.

I put together this year of Preaching in late January this year. So I did not pull out this sermon at this particular time for a purpose. I prayed before and after I came up with a plan on what to preach on for the year and gave it to the Consistory so they could see it. Now I am just wise enough to realize that God laughs at us when we tell Him our plans so I am willing to be redirected any week. But we had like \$4 in our checking account before the worship service last week. Yes we have savings but most of it is earmarked for certain things. So maybe God had me preach on this for a reason?

The name of our church is Doster Community Church. It seems almost silly to me to call ourselves a “Community” church and then decide not to participate in the Delton Community Worship service. But we can't do that and pay our bills if many of you decide not to attend the service and especially if you just decide not to give this Sunday or the Sunday after, the amount that God would have had you give if we met in this space as usual next Sunday. So I am asking you to pray about it, think about it, and do

what God would have you do. I don't have a corner on God's wisdom. I am simply preaching what what God told me to.

Lordship is accepting that God is sovereign. Sovereign means "One who possesses and exercises supreme authority." God is in control. 97 different times the Bible talks about God being sovereign or in control. Lordship is placing God first in every area of your life. God wants 100% of your allegiance, the key to every room in your heart! And Lordship is accepting responsibility and accountability. We are called to use the gifts and blessings that God has given us and we are expected to grow them. Jesus taught us that in the parable of the talents. And He tells us in the 6th chapter of the gospel of Matthew, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do NOT break in and steal. Lordship is doing the will of God! Lordship is personal obedience regardless of the cost! Jesus is either Lord of All or He isn't Lord at all. Lordship means living it out in thought, word, and deed (action).

Please don't hear me scolding! This church of 55 members raised \$31,000 dollars for building maintenance, boilers, and windows. We replaced the furnace and some gutters on the parsonage. This church, YOU, have shown that you will come through when needed and I know you have given sacrificially. I am not even saying that I think any of you should give more, unless God is saying that. I am preaching on Malachi 3 like I panned way back in January. Live like Jesus is LORD of your life. That is the main point this morning. Please focus on that! **[NOTE 8]**

Our hope must never rest on our love of, or service to, ... God, but only on His Grace, Mercy, and unconditional Love. What we must do is "turn" and repent of all our sins and offenses against our God and our fellow human beings. We must trust in the Lord our God and live our lives in such a way that people cannot help but notice that Jesus Christ is LORD! Is Jesus Christ Lord ... of your life? Is it obvious to others? You cannot expect blessing from God if you are not trusting in Him and living as though you are keenly aware that He is Lord. Let's pray ... AMEN

Sermon Notes for “Lordship: Are We Robbing God?” given August 9, 2026

Based on Malachi 3: 6-18 given at Doster Community Church

- I. If we return to God, He will return to us. If we give Him the whole tithe He will bless us. If we renew our giving:
 - a. There will be resources of God’s work
 - b. We will be in position to receive great and overflowing blessing
 - c. He will cause every blessing that has your name on it be directed toward you and satan himself can’t stop it.
- II. To rob or cheat means to defraud or take away. Ask God in prayer if there is any way that you are robbing or cheating Him and listen.
- III. No one robs or cheats God without robbing or cheating themselves. God asks us to test Him in this. It is not strictly an issue of obedience it is more an issue of the heart.
- IV. Stewardship is Lordship. Jesus is either Lord of All or NOT at all. Are we living like Jesus is Lord?
- V. What we do with our possessions and our money reveals what is in our heart. Giving leftovers to God is not practicing Lordship. “Whole” means firstfruits. (The first and best part at the beginning)
- VI. God is promising almost unlimited resources if His people will give first and then trust and obey.
- VII. Lordship is more than just trust and obey.
 - a. Lordship is accepting that God is sovereign, in control, the authority.
 - b. Lordship is putting God first in every area of your life. 100% allegiance.
 - c. Lordship is accepting responsibility and accountability. Use God’s gifts and grow them.
 - d. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Do the will of God.
 - e. Lordship is personal obedience regardless of the cost!
- VIII. Are we living our lives like Jesus Christ is Lord? What are you going to do about it? Our hope must rest on God’s Grace, Mercy, and Love!