

Sermon for Sunday, November 16, 1980, by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor  
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"WHEN GOD'S WINDOW GETS STUCK  
Malachi 3:6-12

Text: "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing." Malachi 3:10

There are a lot of people across the country who have asked to be sent copies of my sermon each week. However, when I am out of the pulpit for some reason such as vacation, the secretaries do not mail the sermons. Some time ago when I had missed several weeks in a row, the girls in the office got a letter from a minister in a large Presbyterian church down in Oklahoma complaining that he had not got his sermon copies and would they please hurry and send them. At the time, I thought to myself, "Well, I hope I am never asked to come preach at that church because they may have already heard my sermon!" A couple of weeks ago I preached a sermon about the threat of secular humanism, especially as it has invaded the church. As a result, I got a number of letters not only from members of the congregation, but from various states across the country. In every case, the letters complimented me for always trying to "tell it like it is" and to be plain about what the Bible teaches.

Well, I hope I am always honest with you about what the Bible says and about what God teaches us. I would hate for any of you to get to heaven and fall short because I failed to share with you the whole counsel of God. Worse still, I would hate even more to get to heaven and God accuse me of misleading you or failing to tell you His will for us.

That being the case, I want to tell you two things the Bible says about money. First, the Bible says money has caused more spiritual problems than any other thing. Jesus warned us not to lay up treasures on earth because where a man's treasure is, there will his heart also be. He also said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to get into heaven (Matt. 19:24). St. Paul said, "For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs." (Tim. 6:10) The Book of John says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him." (I John 2:15) So the Bible says money can do more to ruin your heart and your character and your relationship to God than any other thing.

Did you ever stop to realize how many good, religious men had their lives ruined by money? I am thinking of a religious student. He studied under the greatest religious teacher who ever taught for three years. And after three years he sold his teacher down the river for 30 pieces of silver. His name was Judas. What ruined him? Money!

I am thinking of a young attorney. One day he confronted a man of God and he said to him, "Look, I want to go to heaven when I die. What good thing should I do?" And Jesus said for him to give up what he had and follow him. The young man turned with his head down and walked away into--nowhere. What tripped him up? Money!

I am thinking of two very respectable church members, a man and his wife. They let it be known that they were selling some property and were giving the money to the church. But they got more for the land than they expected and decided it was just too much money to give away. So they brought just part of the money to the preacher and pretended that was all of it. So, because they really lied to God, they dropped dead. What got Ananias and Sapphira? Money!

I am thinking of an assistant pastor. He worked with one of the most outstanding pastors there ever was. But one day that pastor, with tears in his eyes, wrote a friend about his assistant and St. Paul said, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." What ruined him? Money!

Yes, money is the most dangerous enemy we have this morning. Jesus talked more about money than he did any other single subject. Why? Because he knew that love of money could destroy us. Money can ruin. Money can wreck. Money can blight the human character.

The second thing I want to tell you about money is this. God has a plan for the use of money so that it will not get the best of man. That plan includes as its first requirement that you and I tithe our money to the Lord. There are many places in the Old Testament that talk about the law of God that the first tenth of all we have belongs to him. Our text for this morning is a good example of what the Old Testament teaches. It says, "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house..." God says, "The tithe is mine." God says, "Thou shalt not keep the tithe." God says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." Now, if you don't do what God says, can you say you are trusting Him or being obedient to Him?

Well, somebody might say, "but the tithe is Old Testament. We are under grace-- we are under the New Testament." Do you want to know what the New Testament way is? There are three of them. The first way is the way of the rich young ruler. Jesus said to the young man who wanted to follow him, "first, go sell all you have and then come follow me." That is 100 per cent. That is a New Testament way. The second one is the way of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus wanted to follow Jesus, so he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give..." That's fifty percent. That's a New Testament way. The third one is the Jesus Way. He said, "You tithe--this you ought to have done." And that is the same as the Old Testament way. So if you want a New Testament way to give, there are three of them--a hundred percent, fifty percent, or ten percent. But I do want you to notice this: nowhere in the Bible is less than ten percent mentioned!

Last week in the course of my sermon I looked down at the young people and I said something to them that was not in my sermon manuscript. I said to them something to the effect that I hoped they would tithe their allowance. I told them to start young and from the beginning to give God a tenth of all they had. This week I got an anonymous letter from a member of the congregation chiding me for that and in effect saying that what with taxes and many other agencies like those under United Way, which are designed to help the poor, we ought not to teach the tithe. Well, I'm sorry, but the Bible does not put any conditions on the tithe. It just says, "bring the full tithe..." without any qualifications. And as for the young people, I can't imagine any better training or any better way to help them find the Lord. From the beginning I have taught my children to tithe. Today, all five of them tithe and all five of them know Jesus as his or her personal saviour. I praise God for that. This week when Sydney and I were discussing our pledge to the Church, we discussed a certain figure and I said to her, "But you realize that is more than a tithe?" She looked at me and said, "so"? Well, I praise God for a wife like that. We give to several other religious organizations as well, but a husband and a wife ought to share the desire to be sure that at least a tenth goes to the things of God.

So God has a plan to help us so that money won't get the best of us. The first part of that plan is that we tithe. Now, if we do that, our text for this morning tells us two things will happen to us. First, God says he will open the window of heaven and pour down for us an overflowing blessing. Well, I like that! I want to be blessed of God. That's why I am willing for our family to give more than a tithe. I want to be so obedient to God that when he opens his window to bless our home it will just get stuck open!

Do you know, we can't out-give God? Anything you do for God in terms of obedience, he will do more for you in terms of blessings. Do you want more of God's blessings in your life? Then the more obedient you are the more his window of blessing gets stuck on open! However, I suppose the other side of that coin is this: if you are not obedient, the implication is that the window is closed and will stay that way. I don't know about you, but I would hate to think that in my life God's window of blessings was stuck on shut!

So if we are tithers, the first thing that happens is God's window is stuck on open as he pours out overflowing blessings. The second thing that happens is expressed in verse eleven of our scripture for this morning. There we read, "I will rebuke the devourer for you..." A fire is a devourer--it can leave your possessions in ashes. A storm is a devourer--it can leave your home in rubble. Sickness is a devourer--it can leave you crippled, it can eat up your resources, it can snatch a loved one away from you. Inflation is a devourer--it can erode your income. Depression is a devourer--it can so eat away at your happiness and take the joy of living out of your heart. A child gone wrong is a devourer. It can bring a terrible sorrow into your life. A bad relationship is a devourer. It can destroy a marriage or break up a family. Yes, there are many things in life that can devour us, which can make our hearts heavy and take away the joy of living. But God makes us a promise. He promises that not only will he open the windows of heaven and bless us, but he will rebuke the devourer--he will protect us from those things.

As we come to the time when we make our commitment of money to the Lord for 1981 there is one final thing I want to say to you. Our text for this morning is in the present imperative. It means literally, "put me to the test now, says the Lord of hosts." God is a "now" God. He says, "remember now thy creator..." He says, "Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation." I suspect there are many of you this morning who are not tithing but you are thinking about it. Maybe you are thinking, "next month--or next year--or soon--or when I get my debts paid, then I will tithe." I beg of you, don't do that to yourself. God is a "now" God, not a "then" God.

Dr. William Hill, a Presbyterian minister, tells a little story I would like to share with you. He tells it this way: One afternoon one of the Elders of my church was over in the yard helping me. He laid down his tools and asked me if I remembered the sermon I had preached Sunday on tithing. When I said I remembered, he went on, "That sermon really got to me. I went home and I talked it over with my wife and we got out all of our bills and all of our papers and figured up all of our finances--our income and our bills--and we worked out a schedule by which in one year we can pay off all those debts that we owe. We'll be absolutely square with the world, and we made up our minds that one year from now we are going into partnership with God and we are going to start tithing." I said, "Carl, what does the verse say?" And he had a kind of sheepish grin on his face and said, "Yes, preacher, I know it says 'now', but you see I owe all this money and I just can't do this now. It might throw me into bankruptcy. I just can't do it now. One year from now I'm going to do it." I said, "Carl, do you trust God?" "Oh, you know I do. Why, I

trust God for everything." Don't you think God can make your 9/10th work out to meet your obligations and do what you have to do if you will trust God and do what God tells you to do?" "Oh, pastor, I do trust God, but I just can't do it now. A year from now I promise you, we are going into partnership with God." Well, forty years have passed since then, and I've watched Carl. He never did it. He didn't do it while God was speaking to his heart and now he still hasn't done it. And I've watched his children, four of them. There's only one of them who even makes a pretension of being a Christian. God say's, "now, now!"

Well, if God is speaking to your heart about obedience this morning, do it now. You see, when we are obedient, God not only opens his window to bless us, it gets stuck that way.