**Sermon 2**: The Heart of Radical Generosity

**Place:** St John, Prospect Ky

**Date:** 11/12/23

**By:** Rev. Dr. Alvarez

**Bible Verse:** Mark 12:44 (NIV)

- "They all gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

**Introduction:** Tithing in Biblical Context:

Throughout history, tithing has held a profound significance. We learned last week about tithing in response to God’s victory and his faithfulness (**500 years before the law**) with Abraham, and in response to a promise/God's vision in the House of God with **Jacob** represents a historic appreciation for God's provision and blessings. We also discussed tithing under the law commanded by **Moses. Tithing** has been an integral part of the worship and obedience to God. Emphasizing the provision of the Levites, the maintenance of the Tabernacle, and support for the pilgrimages and feasts.

**Hebrews 7:8:** "In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living."

**This verse is part of a passage that discusses the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood.**

**The Spirit of Radical Generosity:**

In the New Testament, Jesus does not prescribe a specific law of tithing but emphasizes a spirit of radical generosity. He calls for a deeper commitment beyond a fixed percentage, asking for a radical response to God's grace, echoing the sacrificial love exhibited through His own sacrifice on the cross.

**"For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have." - 2 Corinthians 8:12 (NIV)**

**The Heart of Radical Generosity:**

Jesus' teaching on tithing challenged the legalistic view, urging a deeper understanding of **true giving beyond monetary obligations**. The transition from maintaining tithing to embracing it as a movement impacts the Great Commission, reflecting the mark of true discipleship.

**Challenging Legalistic Views**: The teachings of Jesus challenged the legalistic view of tithing, redirecting the focus from mere financial obligations to the truth and the matters of the heart. Jesus emphasized the importance of genuine giving, rooted in love and faith, rather than rigid adherence to law.

**Moving from Maintenance to Movement**: The transition from maintaining tithing to embracing it as a movement is pivotal, as it impacts the Great Commission and reflects the mark of true discipleship. Tithing by grace becomes a means of financing the mission, exemplified by the radical generosity displayed by individuals such as Zacchaeus and the widow with two small coins. **It's a call to radical generosity, positioning ourselves to be a blessing to our families and the broader community.**

Here are some key teachings and warnings related to giving as expressed by Jesus in the New Testament:

**1. Widow's Offering (Mark 1241-44, Luke 21:1-4):**

 Jesus highlighted the sacrificial giving of a poor widow, emphasizing that her small offering, which was all she had, was more significant in God's eyes than the larger contributions of the wealthy.

**Principle 1:** This teaching serves as a warning against giving merely for show or out of abundance but rather encourages sacrificial and heartfelt giving.

**2. Giving in Secret (Matthew 6:1-4):**

 Jesus cautioned against acts of righteousness, including giving, for the purpose of being seen by others. He encouraged giving in secret, assuring that the Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward openly.

**Principle 2:** This teaching emphasizes humility and genuine motivation in our giving.

**3. The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 1916-30, Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18:18-30):**

Jesus encountered a rich young ruler who asked about inheriting eternal. When Jesus instructed him to sell all his possessions, give to the poor, and follow him.

**Principle 3:** the young man's unwillingness to part with his wealth revealed a warning about the potential hindrance of material possessions on one's commitment to God.

**4. Zacchaeus' Generosity (Luke 19:1-10):**

 The story of Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector who encountered Jesus, exemplifies the transformational power of radical generosity. After encountering Jesus, Zacchaeus pledged to give half of his possessions to the poor and to repay four times the amount he had cheated on anyone. This account serves as a powerful testimony to the impact of encountering Jesus on one's attitude towards possessions and generosity.

**Principle 4:** The story of Zacchaeus shows the tangible shift in one's priorities and actions upon experiencing the grace and presence of Jesus, while the warning about tithing legalistically highlights the need for a holistic approach to faith and giving, placing love and compassion at the forefront of our actions.

In summary, Jesus' teachings on giving in the New Testament emphasize the heart behind generosity, sacrificial giving, the dangers of materialism, and the eternal significance of heavenly treasures. These teachings serve as profound warnings and exhortations for believers to cultivate a spirit of selfless and genuine giving, rooted in love and devotion to God and others.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 **The Collection for the Lord’s People**

**8**And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. **2**In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their **extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity**. **3**For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. **Entirely on their own**, **4**they urgently pleaded with us for **the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people**. **5**And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us

**Mark 12:44 & 2 Co 8**

**Poverty isn't just about money; it's about lacking a generous heart.**

**Call To Action:**

**Heart Decision:** Make a heartfelt decision to put God first and become a practicing, sacrificial, disciple (PSD) who practices radical generosity in all aspects of life.

**Regular Giving:** Commit to giving regularly, whether it's 10% or less, recognizing the importance of consistent and intentional giving.

**Honoring Pledges:** Re-emphasize the significance of honoring church pledges and the impact they have on fulfilling the church's vision and mission. **NEXT WEEK THE 19TH**

**Conclusion:**

1. Conduct self-reflection: Regularly examine your financial motives and attitude towards money to uproot any seeds of greed or materialistic desires.

2. Develop a contentment mindset: Practice gratitude and contentment by focusing on the blessings you have rather than constantly desiring more.

3. Redefine success and priorities: Shift your mindset from pursuing material wealth to seeking spiritual growth, investing your time, talents, and resources in activities that have eternal significance.

**St. Augustine:** "What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like."

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, as we strive to be holistic givers and embrace radical generosity in the kingdom of God, may we remember that our time, talents, and treasures are entrusted to us by the Lord.

Let us use them wisely and generously, knowing that our giving reflects our love for God and our commitment to serving His people.

Let us commit to living as radical givers, embodying the spirit of generosity not by the letter of the law but by the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Benediction:**

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; may the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace. Go in the peace and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to be holistic givers and radical disciples in the kingdom of God. Amen.