

I. Intro

A. Text: **Matt. 22:34-40**

³⁴ *But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.*

³⁵ *Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,*

³⁶ *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”*

³⁷ *Jesus said to him, ““You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”*

³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.*

³⁹ *And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’^[e]*

⁴⁰ *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

1. Final segment in our sermon series: **"Financial Peace"**
 - a. Last few weeks we've talked finances from a Kingdom standpoint.
 - b. Today: Giving, tithing, sowing/ reaping, etc.
2. If you want to start an argument among Christians...
 - a. Holy Spirit
 - b. Tithing
3. Money is NOT the root of all evil. The love of money is.
 - a. It's a question of love.
 - b. It's a matter of the heart.
 - c. What do we really love?
 - i. Most of us have a sad case of the me, me's.
4. Money is not the problem & will not the answer to our problems.
 - a. Money is a tool that helps you become more of who you already are.

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- b. In the hands of a drug addict, a gambler, a consumer-crazed shop-aholic, or any number of selfish behaviors... Money becomes an atomic bomb.
 - c. In the hands of a wise person, money becomes a tool for worship, good deeds, family provision and God-focused enjoyment on earth.
5. Money can be a **great tool**, if the person holding the tool knows how to use it effectively.
- a. Now we've already established the fact that God's #1 concern is building and expanding His kingdom on earth.
 - b. God empowered mankind to be stewards (managers) of the resources that God entrusted us with, to build His Kingdom on the earth
 - c. So if you are responsibly utilizing God's resources as a tool to build God's kingdom, I would call you a skilled craftsmen who God can trust with increase!

II. There's A Reason Why We Give

A. We Give Out of Love

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "'You shall **love the LORD** your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'You **shall love your neighbor** as yourself.'

- 1. Love God → Love People
 - a. If we have a problem loving people, then people is probably not where the problem starts.
 - i. If you really love God, then you'll be passionate about what He's passionate about.
 - ii. Passionate About People
 - iii. Passionate about orphans
 - iv. Passionate about widows

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- v. Passionate about those who are oppressed
 - b. People who get offended at other people, are really harboring an offense against God.
 - i. If you really loved God, you'd freely love what He loves.
2. Everything we do as children of God is based off of love.
- a. We are loved... so _____
 - i. **1 John 4:19**: "We love because He first loved us"
 - b. Giving is no different. When we give, we give as a response to love.
 - i. **John 3:16**: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave...*"
 - c. Biblical giving is always motivated by love, not obligation.
 - i. We were so moved by God's love for us that it primed our hearts and out of overflow, we began to love Him back.
 - d. Out of love, His passion(s) becomes our passion.
 - i. His passion is people; and bringing them into His Kingdom.

*It's all about love. Everything we do (including our giving) is all about the state of our **hearts**.

3. Jesus understood that our **hearts** are tied to our wallets.
- a. "*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (**Matt. 6:21**)
 - b. Budget & Tracking

*If we find that we haven't stewarded God's resources in a way that allows us to help build His kingdom, than perhaps we have a heart problem.

B. We give out of obedience.

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house" (Mal. 3:10)

1. **The Tithe:** literally means "a tenth"
 - a. First mention of giving tithes was in **Gen. 14:18-20**
 - i. Concept pre-dates the law by several hundred years.

*Beautiful picture of freely honoring God by investing in others.

- b. We've been mistaught the concept of tithing as a matter of an obligation.
 - i. We gotta!
 - ii. Just give God his portion so we can get Him off our backs and we can do whatever we want with the other 90%.
 - iii. How much belongs to God (10%)?
 - iv. Actually, it ALL belongs to Him.
 - c. Don't ever think that you're doing something special by giving God something material.
 - i. God doesn't need our money.
 - ii. The money we have, looks like it's ours. But it belongs to God.
 - d. Returning God the first 10% actually declares that we agree that the other 90% belongs to Him. The 10% is but a representation of the whole.
 - i. Act of Faith.
 - ii. Agreement with heaven.
 - e. A Benefit: Proportionate Giving (10%)
 - i. Cool because you don't have to measure up to what everyone else is doing.
 - ii. Started Tithing in 1997
 2. Question: Wasn't the tithe tied to the law? If we are no longer under the law, why the talk about tithing?

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- a. Admission: You actually don't hear me mention tithing much (although I tithe and more).
 - b. The law was a schoolmaster to set some guidelines so that we could see.
 - i. The law is not bad at all.
 - ii. It helps remind us see where we're at.
 - c. Jesus didn't come to destroy the law, He came to fulfill it.
 - d. **Matt. 5:21**: *"Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the Kingdom of Heaven".*
 - i. Murder
 - ii. Adultery
 - iii. Love your neighbor, hate your enemy
3. Admission: I tithe. But it's always been difficult for me to teach others to do so.
- a. I've been tithing for years. When I was getting \$4.00 checks I was tithing.
 - i. It was just something that I did.
 - b. I never wanted to burden anyone or put an obligation on them.
 - i. We've got enough religious rules already.
 - c. I've learned not to despise the rule. The standard is good.
 - i. But I can't reach the standard on my own strength.
 - ii. If I do, it'll get burdensome. I
4. Holy Spirit alone empowers us to freely go above and beyond *"the rule"*.
- a. 10% is a good place to start

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- i. I get to freely give God 10% of His resources that someone else will then steward.
 - ii. With increase in mind.
 - b. Act of faith.
 - c. Doesn't have to stop there (11%, 12%).
 - i. Freewill Offering
 - ii. Sacrificial Giving
 - iii. Extravagant Giving

C. No matter what we call our giving (the Tithe, Freewill Offering, Sacrificial Giving)... We give God first place.

"Honor God with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase"
(Prov. 3:9)

1. The principle of "Firsts" is most clearly understood in
Exodus Chapter 13
 - a. Set apart/ Consecrate all the firstborn
 - i. Sons
 - ii. Animals
 - iii. Crops
 - b. That in all things God would have First place in our lives.
 - i. God wants our best.
 - ii. He owns the rest.
2. God owns the corporation called "Everything".
 - a. God is the owner. We just manage.
 - i. And God wants a return on His investment.
 - ii. Take mine off the top.
 - b. If Uncle Sam gets his off the top, why shouldn't God.
 - i. He's the owner of Everything!
 - c. Anything less than first place is out of order!

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3. Most of our issues in finances come from: Mistaken Ownership & Misplaced priorities.

“But **seek first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (**Matt. 6:33**)

- a. As we budget our Father's resources, why not an informed, intelligent, Holy Spirit empowered, Kingdom-driven decision about how best to honor God with the increase?
 - i. Why not do it first?
 - ii. Why not pray about it before we get to church?
 - iii. Why not pray about it before we spend a dime?
 - iv. Automatic deposit → Me first spending
 - b. The modern church has produced a generation of irresponsible, compulsive givers.
 - i. Hear a good sermon so we give a certain amount.
 - ii. Sitting among certain people, so you give a certain amount so we don't look bad.
 - c. **Question:** Should I give to God or should I pay my rent?
 - i. Give all your money to the church and you neglect your house?
 - ii. **1 Tim. 5:8:** *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel/unbeliever*
4. Mark the priorities first: Demonstration
- a. First: God
 - b. Second: Savings, rent, food

c. Third: Cell phone, Cable

5. If you managed a register at Burger King, and it was time to give an account of how you stewarded the corporation's resources...
- a. Would it be right to start coming out of your pockets, trying to make up the numbers match?
 - i. Mistaken Ownership
 - b. Would it be right to wait to yet get your paycheck, pay your bills, then bring the outstanding balance back to your supervisor?
 - i. Misplaced priorities

III. Test God

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 there will not be room enough to store it. (Mal. 3:10b)

A. Making God first in our stewardship has it's privileges.

- 1. Return on the investment is not the motive for giving, but it is a certain expectation we can count on.
 - a. Rewards are primarily eternal.
 - i. Souls saved, chains broken, etc.
 - ii. **Matt. 6:20**: *"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."*
 - b. God often makes a Kingdom deposit into our now.
- 2. Rebuke the devourer
Mal. 3:11: *"... I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field...."*

B. We get to invest someone else's money and we get to enjoy the benefits (eternally).

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1. God doesn't need our money.
 - a. He wants something for you, not something from you.
 - b. He wants you to enjoy the blessing of partnering with Him in the Kingdom.
 - c. He wants to see you grow/ mature in the grace of God.
 - d. No such thing as a mature Christian who is not a mature giver.
 2. Set the Example: Starts at the top.
 - a. TRC gives 10% of all increase to start new churches just like ours.
 - b. Your pastor sows 10% into overseers
 - i. Sow into TRC
 3. First Lady sows 10% into TRC

C. 8 Week Challenge: **Mal. 3:10-12**

1. Test God
2. *"Generous giving is not about doling out more money. It's about re-directing the heart so that we become passionate about the things that Christ is passionate about"* (**Gordon MacDonald**).