**Last Week Recap:**

**Matt. 6:1:** Beware of practicing your righteousness **before other people *in order to be seen*** by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

**Two Important Principles from Verse One: Big-God Living**

1. First, we should realize that *our supreme object in life should be to please God*, to please Him only, and to please Him always and in everything.
2. Secondly, we must remember that we are *always in the presence of God*.

**The Issue:** Giving and praying so that one “may be praised by others” (v.2) or “that they may be seen by others” (v. 5).

**Solution:** Giving and praying with principles 1 and 2 in mind, and doing so “in secret” (vs. 4 & 6).

**Discussion Still Needed:** “When you give (to the needy)…” & “When you pray…” & “When you fast…”

**Giving:** Giving is always giving to God. This encompasses giving to the church, other ministries, or giving to the needy.

**Giving to the Local Church/Giving to Other Ministries/Giving to the Needy**

**Popular Questions**:

* Are Christians mandated, through scripture, to tithe (give ten percent) to the local church? Can one split their tithes between their Church and other ministries? Do we have to give, because I am truly financially unable to contribute at this time?

**First Fruits:** Gen. 4:4-5; Deut. 26:1-11; Prov. 3:9-10

* First fruits refer to the first and the best of one’s harvest (fruit or grain ect…) or cattle. Soon, God’s provisions for the tribe of Levi, through the command of the tithe, would require the first fruits for the Lord. Since all giving is to God.
  + First, we give to God our first and best, because he is our **highest priority**.
  + Secondly, it is an **act of faith**. We are trusting God to provide for our needs.
  + Thirdly, we have to be **good stewards**. If our first fruits go to the Lord, then we have to be good stewards in other areas.

**Tithe**: Ps. 24:1; Gen. 14:17-24; Num. 18:20-2 (Levi); Deut. 14:22-29; Mal. 3:6-15

* All that we have is Gods, and tithing is like a constant offering of the first fruits of the whole thing. It is saying and showing that “the tenth is yours, in a special way God.”
* Tithing was clearly an OT principle that God himself gave God’s people. God laid down these principles for the purpose of the provision for the tribe of Levi (and the priests themselves), the Temple, and so that the duties of the Temple and the priests would/could be accomplished (feasts and caring for the poor too). A deeper study of the tithe system would point towards the Levitical (or sacred tithe), the tithe of the feasts, and the tithe for the poor. Pretty soon the tithe of Israel is more than 10% and included these other elements.
* God rebukes God’s people and calls it a matter of robbing God for not being faithful to the tithe “how have we robbed you” (v.8) “in your tithes and contributions” (v.8) “bring the full tithe into the storehouse” (v. 10) – Malachi 3.

**New Testament and Paul on Giving**:

* The NT does not talk about tithing. It neither demands it nor condones it.
* **Jesus** says: Jesus *assumes* giving (Matt. 6:2); He says our *true heart* (priorities) is demonstrated by our money (our budgets) (Matt. 6:21); He commends *faithful* giving such as a widow giving from her poverty versus others from their surplus (Mk. 12:41-44), He often talks of giving to *the poor* (Matt. 6:2; Lk. 3:11; Lk. 12:33-34; Matt. 25:31-46) and Jesus seems to *support the tithing* of the Pharisees and scribes while condemning their lack of justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23).
* **Paul** says: Give *willfully* and *sacrificially* (1 Cor. 16:1-4); *cheerfully* (2 Cor. 9:7), *purposefully* (1 Cor. 16:2), and God promises to *bless* our *faithful* giving (2 Cor. 9:6).

**Quote from John Piper**:

* “An illustration I hope it is clear when I say that tithing is not a “have to,” not a New Testament rule. I am saying something like this: Suppose a football coach does not say to his high school team, “Everybody must get up at 5:00 every morning and run three miles so as to be fit for the maximum effectiveness of this team.” But instead the coach says, “I want you to love this sport with all your heart and I want you to give it all you have got this season. I want you to pursue maximum excellence and serve this team to make it as great as it can be.”
* Now which of those two ways of talking to the team sets the higher standard? The second way doesn’t have any rules attached to it. The first one does. Up at five every day. Three miles. It sounds pretty rigorous. But I think the second word from the coach is the higher standard. He touches the heart of the team members. And if any of them uses the absence of rules to justify half-hearted allegiance to the team, he is simply not following the heart of his coach. And so it is with giving in the church.”

**Principles of Giving:**

* I believe the local church has a *unique and special place in God’s plan*, and therefore a special claim on the giving of its people. It is the *one institution in the world that is clearly rooted in the New Testament*, and in the gospel, is the local church.
* Tithing to the local church is a good *rule of thumb to start in giving*; however, giving above and beyond elsewhere (**other ministries**) is very encouraged because lavish generosity is highly encouraged in the NT. If we are honest with ourselves, we can all give if God is a priority.
* *Most ministries are funded by local churches* from local ministries to global ministries (IMB, SBT SJBA…). *Most missionaries are funded through local churches*. Also, most local churches work together to *provide benevolence ministries* to locals, and to church members when in need.
* I encourage each and every believer to ***budget special funds*** to give to unknown people/needs that God might bring into your life (outside of the church and especially inside of the church).
* Read Rom. 7:6 and think through our whole series (not murder but anger; not adultery alone but lust, not divorce but unfaithfulness to a vow, not an oath but it’s about integrity ect…). Jesus has constantly through our series not taken away from the law, but explained the original intent and spirit of the law versus the corrupted teachings of the Pharisees and scribes.
  + Surely with all of this in view you can see how it would seem that Jesus’ purpose wouldn’t be to do away with the bear minimum standards of giving in the OT (which God himself instituted), but would rather be to promote further generosity for God’s NT plan to bring forth the gospel (the local church which fuels and funds the great commission in our city and the global church).