

## STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT GOD'S MONEY

### Matthew 23:23-24

**Introduction:** Jesus spoke the words of our text a long time ago but they are just as "cutting" today as they were then. Jesus had a way through barriers, pride, through walls of tradition. Jesus could get to the basics very quickly. The religious leaders were being ridiculously strict in small, unimportant details, but neglecting the more important principles. There were tight laws on everything especially the TITHE.

### I. THE OLD TESTAMENT SYSTEM OF TITHING WAS GOOD

1. The tither understood that all he had was God's. Ten percent was only symbolic of all that God owned.
2. The tithe cared for the temple and the priestly needs.
3. The people had lost the first meaning of tithing by Jesus' day.
  - There was no deep awareness of God's ownership.
  - There was no respect for God's principles of holy living.
  - There was only ritual left. Heart and meaning was not in their giving. (Is it not the same today?)
  - They gave the tithe regularly, but failed terribly in justice, mercy and faithfulness to God's principles of holy living.

### II. MUCH OF JESUS' TEACHINGS WERE ON HOLY LIVING

1. Jesus taught about "mercy." *Matthew 18:21-35* - The parable about the unjust steward describing how the unmerciful will receive NO mercy from God.
2. Jesus taught about "justice." *Luke 19:1-10* - Zacchaeus found that justice goes with salvation.
3. Jesus taught on "faithfulness." *Luke 9:62* - To keep looking back can bring an unfaithful relationship with God. (A farmer who keeps looking back while plowing will plow a crooked row.)

### III. STEWARDSHIP IS VISIBLE

1. Justice, mercy, faithfulness, etc., are usually invisible to the eyes of others and can vary, but stewardship is visible and concrete.
  - Others can see one's real heart through the outward act of stewardship
2. The story is told of a pastor who was speaking to a farmer and asked the farmer if he had a million dollars would he give half of it to God? "Yes" was the farmer's answer. The pastor asked the farmer, if you had 10,000 head of cattle, would you give half to God? "Yes", was the farmer's answer. The pastor then asked the farmer, if you had two pigs, would you give half of them to God? The farmer quickly replied, "Preacher, you know that I only have two pigs..."

3. Too often we are more influenced by advertisements to buy and spend than we are in God's laws and teachings of stewardship.
  - Stewardship is not like some lottery.
4. *Psalm 37:25; Proverbs 30:7-8*
5. Billy Graham once said, "God has given us two hands - one to receive with and the other to give with. We are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are channels made for sharing."
  - God requires responsible use of HIS possessions whether it be the earth, our bodies or our check books.
6. What one does with his/her money indicates what goes on inside his/her heart and mind.
  - We can take our check stubs and determine where our hearts have been.
  - It is said that the I.R.S. investigated a Christian once who tithed. \$10,000 income and \$1,124 was given to a church. The agent found that the person was a tither but couldn't understand why the Christian man gave so much until he (I.R.S. man) gave his usual \$2.00 the next Sunday at his own church. Then it hit him!

#### **CONCLUSION:**

1. We need to remember that we are never complete, true, real owners of anything, only managers.
  - How we manage God's things is a thing of deep and personal faith.
2. A preacher was "up a financial tree" and a friend was in a "financial hole." The preacher told his friend, "if you come up the tree and help me, you'll be able to get out of your hole...."
3. We need to remember who actually owns what and how we are to care for that which is not really our own. We are to be Stewards of all that God entrusts to us.