

HONOR THE LORD – PROVERBS 3:9

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce;

- I Our son – who is a member of Saint John Lutheran – told me that the president of their congregation (similar to senior warden) addressed the congregation saying: We have a choice! We can have utilities or we can have a Pastor, but we cannot have both at our current level of giving.
- A That was a rather bold way to proclaim the state of the Church, but I suppose it was honest and forthright.
- B I trust that all of you read the article in the October Newsletter that was written by our Treasurer, Lee Trusty, expressing the consensus of the Stewardship Team Ministry concerning the fact that we are in need of greater tithes and offerings.
- C Lee's article was well written in broad strokes that were easily understood and I commend him for that endeavor.

D The budget of any Church, however, is not the reason to tithe or give offerings.

E The reason for tithing is expressed in the text I just read:

We give to honor the Lord with our wealth and the firstfruits of whatever we are given.

II Father Travis and I encourage tithing – which means 10% of one’s income – because we have learned through experience that our families are blessed and prospered as honor God with His tithe.

III In the First Testament, tithing and firstfruits giving which means giving the 10% first, was the Law given by God through Moses.

A The Law of God is always good for humanity whether it is ceremonial law, dietary law, or any other law.

B We now live in grace – not under the Law.

C Thus, tithing is not mandatory as it once was, but the promises that have been given that attend tithing have never been revoked.

- D Once again, we do not tithe in order to prosper, and obviously neither the Smiths nor the Weatherlys are wealthy, but we are so very blessed not only monetarily but also spiritually and in the ordinariness of our lives.
- IV The First Testament reading from Leviticus reminds us that the tithe of everything is **holy to the Lord**. Everything belongs to God and He makes us stewards of His bounty.
- V The reading from Proverbs reiterates firstfruits giving but tithing is not the only way to honor the Lord although the verse continues with the words: **Then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine**.
- A **Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding** remains a positive manner of living.
- B **In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths**.

C Respecting God makes for a less stressful life.

VI In our Epistle reading from Paul's second letter to the Church in Corinth, he wrote:

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

This was part of our Collect for the day: **Make us continually to be given to all good works ...**

VI Thus the Apostle lays before us as an option the very thing that was commanded in the Law with the promise of being blessed remaining intact.

VII I know that not everyone can give 10%, but it can be worked toward annually and God recognizes our will to give.

Many have relatives who need assistance that takes from that which we would wish to give.

VIII Finally, in the Gospel reading, Jesus' words correlate with all that has been written: **Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.**

IX Jesus knew the truth of His words experientially.

A He gave His teaching, healing, and blessings freely.

B While it is true that He was murdered for His radical, revolutionary style of living that threatened the traditional powers of both Judaism and Rome, He was rewarded with Resurrection which He shares freely with us, and is now at the right hand of God.

IX His crucifixion was His tithe – or should I say He gave all He had – His life – for us.

X In His Sacrifice of Himself, He demonstrated how to honor God, and we continue to honor Him by living holy lives

and honoring Him with a portion of that which has been given us by Him.