

An Act of Worship

(Deuteronomy 14:22-29)

Theme Title: "Peace is..."

Series Title: "Peace in Giving"

October 17th, 2021

Something to think about:

Money is one of those subjects in our culture, and quite frankly, in our world that is very complicated and wrought with controversy. But, talk about it we must. There are nearly 200 references to money and possessions in the Bible and today we look at one of those passages.

Deuteronomy 14:22-29 (NIV)

²² Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. ²³ Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. ²⁴ But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), ²⁵ then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. ²⁶ Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. ²⁷ And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own.

²⁸ At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, ²⁹ so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

The tithe originated as a practical thing with a practical purpose. It wasn't to make people rich, or to cause controversy, or even to be a difficult thing to comprehend. And even though the tithe had a practical purpose in support for several different people groups in the Jewish community, it also served the higher purpose of worship unto GOD. Giving to the support of the ministry was an integral part of Jewish society because it focused on the central purposes of GOD's community functioning as a community of faith. This leads to our key point this morning...

Key Point: "Giving what you have to God is about more than money and possessions, it's an act of worship."

Let's look at each of the purposes that the tithe was instituted for within the Jewish religious context...

1. An act of worship to God in recognition of His provision.

Leviticus 27:30 (NIV), ³⁰ A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

2. To provide for the priests and Levites.

Numbers 18:21-24 (NIV), ²¹ "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. ²² From now on the Israelites must not go near the Tent of Meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. ²³ It is the

Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offenses against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. ²⁴ Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. That is why I said concerning them: 'They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.'"

3. To provide for the poor in the land: Levites, foreigners, fatherless, and widows.

Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV), ³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴ "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵ "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

⁴⁶ "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Something to take home:

One of the clearest things we can learn from this passage of Scripture, is that God is not just concerned with our money, but rather, He's concerned with us. The requirement to give a tithe of all that the Israelites had was for the sole purpose to focus people's attention back to God as an act of worship.

What would change in our life if we looked at everything that we own as being a gift from God? How would our life change if we saw all of our possessions as God's property rather than ours? What would be different if instead of focusing on our possessions as a means to make us happy we focused on God who brings complete joy, and used our possessions and money all for His glory rather than our own?

Do your possessions own you?
Do you own your possessions?
Or do all things belong to God?

How we answer these questions is a clear indicator of the condition of our hearts.

Key Point: "Giving what you have to God is about more than money and possessions, it's an act of worship."