

## TRUST IT ALL\_ HONORING GOD WITH FIRSTFRUITS

Last week we considered the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment concerning honoring Mothers. Let's backtrack a bit to **the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment** concerning honoring God. The Lord spoke saying: **"I am the LORD your God...you shall have no other gods before me."** No other gods before Him. In other words, **God is to be first and foremost** in our lives. He is to be the number one priority. We are to value Him and esteem Him above anyone or anything else.

No let's backtrack some more. About **2000** years prior to the giving of the commands at Mount Sinai, we read in **Genesis 4** about a time when two brothers had an opportunity to do that very thing. **"Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD, I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."**

Long ago I was taught the issue at hand here was that both boys should've offered animal sacrifices. God must've told them that's what He wanted, and Cain disobeyed. I accepted that idea for quite some time, but eventually realized that to reach that conclusion you have to do more than "read" between the lines\_ you have to "write" between them. Yet, if we just stick with what it says, the most obvious problem wasn't with what they offered, so much as when and why they offered it.

They both gave out of what they had. Cain gave grain because that's what he raised. Abel gave a lamb because that's what he raised. The Hebrew word (*minha*) translated "offering" here is not the usual word for a "blood sacrifice." The most common meaning for this Hebrew term is "gift." Each brought what they'd been blessed to produce. We'd expect a farmer to bring an offering from his crop and a shepherd from his flock.

In **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:12** the Apostle Paul says, **"If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have."** When the Law of Moses was given at Sinai, provisions were made for offerings of fruit & grain and animals\_ as well as for drink offerings. Unless God changed His mind, He never had a problem with offerings of produce. In fact, **Leviticus 2:1-3** tells us they are just as much "a sweet aroma" to the Lord as an animal sacrifices. So if the problem wasn't that Cain offered grain, what was it? Back to our text.

**In the course of time**, Cain **offered some fruit** from his crop. Abel, on the other hand, offered "first" fruits from his flock. He didn't wait to see how many lambs he'd have before calculating what he could afford to give. Cain gave left overs, but Abel gave "fat portions" from his "first born." That's like saying "he gave the very best" he had. No wonder God accepted, even favored, Abel's offering. The **Hebrew writer** also says: **"By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings." (11:4)** So, what of our offerings? What do we give to show honor of God? Would God speak well of them? Truth is, our offerings indicate more about the degree of honor we have in our heart for God than we may care to admit. It really is a **trust** issue.

**Do we offer “First Fruits?”** How much of our time and energy do we give to everything else, before we offer some to Him?” Do we thank Him and praise Him the first thing every day? Or do we ignore Him all day, falling into bed, totally exhausted with a token, “*Now, I lay me down to sleep\_ forgive me Lord for what I keep?*” Do we use our strengths every waking moment to fulfill our own wishes, hoping that He’ll be satisfied with a half-hearted promise to serve Him tomorrow?

And what of our resources? Oh, yea. We’re going to get personal. We may not raise sheep or harvest grain, but we all have means whatever our occupation. In the same way that God provides seed to the sower and blesses the ewe lamb to produce, **Deuteronomy 8:18** tells us that He gives us the ability and the opportunity to work and be productive. You may be one who’d say, “*I don’t have a job. I draw unemployment or social security...*” or whatever\_ but as God told the people through the prophet Haggai, the silver and gold are still His. We have obligations to pay bills, but there’s probably not a one of us who has not chosen at one time or another to spend anything extra on ourselves without considering an obligation to honor God.

My suggestion would be for us all to pray and ask God how much we should give\_ and then actually give it.

If you’ve been here any length of time, you know that I’m not a prosperity preacher. I’m not claiming that if you give a dollar to the church, you’ll have ten fall miraculously into your lap. But, God promises over and over again to fulfill our needs if we honor Him with our firstfruits. Listen to **Proverbs 3:9-10**. **“Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.”** And **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:7-11**. **“Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”** Sound familiar? **“As it is written: ‘He has scattered abroad His gifts to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.’ Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”**

The leadership here believes in God’s promises\_ and they are among the very first to pour out themselves and everything they have into the work of the Lord’s church here. As He Himself declared through the prophet **Malachi...**

**“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me.” But you ask, ‘How do we rob You?’ “In tithes and offerings. You’re under a curse, the whole nation of you, because you’re robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. 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 you will not have room enough for it.” (3:8-10)**

There are few things that God tells us to “test” Him about\_ but if we have difficulty believing what He says here, that’s exactly what He does. When it comes to the principle of “sowing and reaping” in regards to our money and possessions, He says invest in the Kingdom and you can’t lose.

A friend once told me that he had so many other obligations that he just couldn’t afford to give anything to God. I told him he couldn’t afford not to. A relative insisted that we are under a new covenant\_ and therefore under no obligation to give anything, let alone a tithe. I referred him to our text.

In **Malachi 3:6** God prefaces His plea for them to tithe with these words. **"I the LORD do not change..."** In fact, Jesus teaches us in **Matthew 6:33** to **"Seek God and His kingdom first..."** and He will see to our needs. This is a huge trust issue. Do we trust it all to God\_ even our finances? Do we trust Him with everything enough to give what He asks for\_ and even more when it is called for?

Before we sing **"Trust it All"** by Brett Stanfill, consider the opening lyrics...

**With every breath, with every word I speak; With every step, with every heartbeat\_  
Jesus, let it be for You, for You only; My whole life, all for Your glory\_**

**My life is in Your hands; I trust it all, I trust it all to You.**

**My dreams and all my plans; I trust it all, I trust it all\_**

**Forever I am changed. I'll never be the same.**

**Because of Your love, because of Your love.**