

Matthew 23:23-24: Woe to you, scribes & Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint & dill & cumin, & have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice & mercy & faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat & swallowing a camel!

Intro: Sinclair Ferguson: Martyrdom will never kill you, ultimately. But false teaching always will.

1 Timothy 4:16: Keep a close watch on yourself & on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself & your hearers.

Last Sunday, we saw Jesus begin to pronounce His eight “woes” on the false teachers of Israel: the scribes & Pharisees. In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounces compassionate, sad, & angry condemnations upon them for their sin & hypocrisy. All the “woes” we see in this chapter are in contrast to the many “blessed’s” in chapter 5 in the Sermon on the Mount. And His “woes” are love too! And remember, this is Jesus’ last public teaching on the last week of His life! He ends His public ministry with these warnings! And Jesus warns the scribes & Pharisees in these two verses that their priorities are not God’s priorities & God’s priorities are not their priorities!

Danny Byram Song: The main thing in life is keeping the main thing the main thing – Jesus is the main thing.

1. False Teachers Tithe Everything

Matthew 23:23: Woe to you, scribes & Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint & dill & cumin

a. Woe!: “How horrible it will be!” “What a horror!” “What a tragedy!” “What a disaster!” It’s a cry of condemnation mixed with grief, anger, & sorrow. It’s a warning to turn & repent before God’s final, irreversible curse crushes you forever.

b. The scribes & Pharisees are hypocrites: They say one thing, but they do another, with evil, self-righteous intent. **Matthew 23:3, 5:** For they preach, but do not practice; ⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by others

c. Tithing (a tenth): Ligonier: Tithing is giving back to God a portion of our income, the fullness of which is already His. God created everything, and Psalm 24:1 teaches us that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness therein.” Everything belongs to Him. When we tithe, we are giving back to God some of what He has given to us. The word tithe means “tenth.” In the Old Testament, we see that Abraham and Jacob gave tithes even before the law of Moses was instituted (Gen. 14:19-20; 28:20-22). The Israelites were later commanded to give a tenth of their increase to God (Lev. 27:30), and this tithe supported the Levites, as well as the widows and orphans in Israel (Num. 18:21; Deut. 14:22-29).

There were three different tithes in the O. T.: 1) Tithes for Levites; 2) Tithes for the poor; 3) Tithes for festivals/feasts; (about 23% total); Plus they could give freewill offerings above & beyond these tithes.

d. Scribes & Pharisees were excellent tithers: They tithed all-from the biggest to the smallest parts of their lives! They even tithed from their mint, dill, & cumin: they tithed from their smallest garden crops! But you can give greatly & sacrificially & still miss God & justice, mercy, & faithfulness: **1 Cor 13:1-3:** If I speak in the tongues of men & of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. & if I have prophetic powers, & understand all mysteries & all knowledge, & if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, & if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

e. Scribes & Pharisees were excellent tithers, but they loved money: Luke 16:13-14: "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one & love the other, or he will be devoted to the one & despise the other. You cannot serve God & money." The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, & they ridiculed him

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2. False Teachers Fail To Focus On The Main Things

Matthew 23:23-24: Woe to you, scribes & Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint & dill & cumin, & have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice & mercy & faithfulness. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat & swallowing a camel!

a. The scribes & Pharisees neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice & mercy & faithfulness: They tithed, but they didn't tithe justly, mercifully, or faithfully; they didn't trust & delight in the God of the tithe!

Weightier matters of the law refers to the matters of most importance: these are the main matters, the central matters, the most important matters, & the scribes & Pharisees missed them! And they missed the weightiest matter of all: Jesus Christ, the Messiah, & our LORD & our God!

Herman Ridderbos: Justice refers to righteous deeds in general; "mercy" denotes a loving attitude toward one's neighbor; and "faithfulness" is a sincere & intimate relationship to God.

At least one commentator believes this condemnation from Jesus actually corresponds to the three tithes in the O.T.: 1) The tithe to the Levites (justice); 2) The tithe for the poor (mercy); 3) The tithe for the festivals (faithfulness)

They didn't pursue justice – they tried to figure out ways not to honor their parents & take care of them!
They didn't pursue mercy – they were self-righteous & looked down on others & treated them with contempt!
They didn't pursue faithfulness – they were hypocrites, liars, lovers of money, & rejected God & His Messiah!

They were like me the time I got mad at my sister for wasting toilet paper. Tithe toilet paper – murder in my heart!

GOSPEL!

b. The scribes & Pharisees are blind guides, straining out a gnat & swallowing a camel: They are blind! They act as guides, but the blind can't lead the blind: **Matthew 15:14:** Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

There's a play on words here b/c the Aramaic word for "gnat" is "galma" & the word for "camel" is "gamla". They are like Jews who focus on not eating a tiny little gnat (smallest unclean animal: Lev. 11:41) – to get that gnat out of their soup or drink, but then they swallow a big camel (largest unclean animal: Lev. 11:4)! (Mark 7:18-19)

c. False teachers today misuse the tithe: They lie about the tithe-They love money-They help others love money-They neglect Jesus! **Benny Hinn Video (20 JAN 2024):** Seven blessings of the tithe can be summarized:

- 1) Everything you touch will prosper - an open heaven.
- 2) Blessings untold will be yours in every part of your life.
- 3) The enemy is unable to destroy what God has given you.
- 4) God will protect your income.
- 5) Your family will be safe from the hand of the enemy.
- 6) God will use you as a testimony to the world.
- 7) You will be highly favored by the Lord.

I'm talking to someone who needs financial blessings today. (To Give: BennyHinn.org/Donate)

d. New Covenant Christians should give freely, generously, & sacrificially b/c Jesus is better:

John MacArthur: Generosity in giving results in a greater reward from God. You want blessing from God, you want it poured out, you want it overflowing, pressed down, shaken together, packed in full, then give [Luke 6:38]. That is the most direct route to blessing from God . . . [Acts 20:35: remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."] In other words, what you give away brings you a greater blessing than what you receive. That should be enough. That should be enough to make us line up to give. Do you want to be most blessed? Than give. Do you want to receive pressed down, shaken together, & running over so that

your lap is filled? Then give. Those two monumental promises of blessing and generosity from God, who is the source of everything, who is the giver of every good & perfect gift, who has the power to get you wealth, who gives you all that you have, those promises from God should make us sacrificially generous.

I fear a lot of anti-prosperity gospel Christians are anti-tithing Pharisees. They take great pains to explain, figure out, study, & justify why they don't have to tithe. They may spend hours studying the Scriptures to figure out how they don't have to give God anything – possibly because they too love that money so much. They too are blind guides, straining out a gnat & swallowing a camel. Jesus didn't tell the Pharisees to stop tithing mint, dill, & cumin. He said they ought to give the tithe & pursue justice, mercy, & faithfulness: **Matthew 23:23-24**: Woe to you, scribes & Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint & dill and cumin, & have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice & mercy & faithfulness. **These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.**

Is it still possible to rob God today? Do you really think that you (in the New Covenant, living at the richest time in the history of the world in one of the richest countries in the world) should give God less than the poorest Israelite?

If you tell me the Old Covenant tithe is in no way applicable to the New Testament believer, I will disagree with you. Because Jesus here disagrees with you & God's Word elsewhere disagrees with you:

1 Corinthians 9:9-11: For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰ Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

Some argue the tithe was merely a tax required of the nation of Israel & since we are no longer a theocratic nation, the tithe is no longer required. But Israel, in the theocratic nation, were God's people. Who are God's people today? The church. And how does God's Word in the New Testament apply what the tithes were used for?

1) Tithe for the Levites: **1 Corinthians 9:13-14**: Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

2) Tithe for the poor: **Galatians 2:10**: Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. **2 Corinthians 8:1-3**: We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will

3) Tithe for the festivals: Temple events, feasts, Passover, etc. Who is our Passover? Jesus: [**1 Corinthians 5:7**: For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.] When we give to the local church, we should be funding the preaching of Jesus Christ & Him crucified; we should be funding the carrying out of the great commission; we should be funding, yes the place we meet for our festivals & celebrations – every Sunday & the Lord's Supper!

So I see the giving of O. T. Israel in harmony & parallel to giving to the church of Jesus Christ, not a nation state.

I agree with John Piper: the tithe is simply a good place to start for believers who have infinitely more than in the Old Covenant: **John Piper**: Now at the end of the day, as Don Carson likes to say, I would say we should value our riches in Christ in this new covenant relationship so highly, & our freedom from sin so highly, & our gospel so highly, that we would simply love to give. Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). And we would be free from a love of things, & a dependence on things, & we would out give those who lived under the law because we have a better covenant & a better promise. Everything is greater with Christ. Why wouldn't giving be greater? So, I think I preached on tithing two or three times in 33 years at Bethlehem. I mean I talked about

giving & sacrifice all the time, but as far as tithing goes . . . & when I did, I think the gist of it was: Brothers & sisters, why would we want to do less? I mean, the person who is saying: Do I have to? They are getting off on the wrong foot immediately. Everything is greater in the new covenant. We have better promises, a better covenant – Hebrews says – why wouldn't there be better sacrifice, better giving?

John MacArthur (the poor widow who gave everything in Mark 12:41-44): It was significant because she gave everything, friends, & you can't give any more than everything. But the point that Jesus is making is this, that that is sacrifice & that is the essence of giving. And the ultimate sacrifice would be to give everything . . . Giving is to be generous, sacrificial . . . What does it teach about giving? Does this teach we're to tithe? No, it teaches that we're to give sacrificially, & maybe that means everything we have. Certainly it means more than we're giving now. And I say that for myself as well.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2: Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7: The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Timothy 6:17-19: As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Acts 20:35 remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"

Matthew 6:19-21: Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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3. We Must Focus On The Main Thing

Matthew 23:23: Woe to you, scribes & Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint & dill & cumin, & have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice & mercy & faithfulness.

a. The weightier matter of the law: justice: Ps. 89:14: Righteousness & justice are the foundation of Your throne

Ps. 103:6: The LORD works righteousness & justice for all who are oppressed.

Genesis 18:19: For I have chosen him, that he may command his children & his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness & justice . . .

Deut 10:18: He executes justice for the fatherless & the widow, & loves the sojourner, giving him food & clothing

Deut 16:20: Justice, & only justice, you shall follow, that you may live & inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Jesus is the weightiest matter of the law: Isa. 42:1: Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

Matt. 12:14-21: But the Pharisees went out & conspired against him, how to destroy him. Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, & he healed them all & ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, & he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, & a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; & in his name the Gentiles will hope."

Jesus is our justice; He taught justice; He brought justice; He did justice; He died & rose again for justice!

When you see Jesus for Who He is, you will give & tithe & sacrificially give & be generous the right way!

b. The weightier matter of the law: mercy: Exodus 33:19: And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name "The LORD." And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Micah 6:8: He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Jesus is the weightiest matter of the law: 26 times in the law: "Mercy Seat": **Chad Bird:** When the Jewish scholars chose a Greek word for the golden cover atop the ark of the covenant, commonly translated into English as "atonement cover" or "mercy seat" or "place of atonement," they used the word ἱλαστήριον (hilasterion). This is the word that Paul used in his letter to the Romans to describe who Jesus is. He wrote that we "are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation [hilasterion] by his blood, to be received by faith" (3:24-25). Atop the cross, for all eyes to see, was what before had been hidden from the world, for only the eyes of the high priest to see, & that only once a year, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Atop the cross is Jesus the ἱλαστήριον, the place of atonement. On the ultimate Yom Kippur, it was not a golden lid, inside the Holy of Holies, with two cherubim on either side, that was sprinkled with the blood of a beast. Rather, on the day of the world's atonement, it was a flesh-and-blood man, naked & publicly visible, with two criminals on either side, who was sprinkled with his own blood. In that crucified man, the Messiah, our Lord and our God, is our atonement. Is our life. Is our redemption. Is our forgiveness & acceptance before the Father. Jesus is our hilasterion, the place of atonement, the seat of mercy, the location of divine love.

Matthew 9:13: Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

David Mathis: Then, in the fullness of time, God sent his own Son not simply to dispense his mercy, but to embody it. Jesus is the Mercy of God made human. He didn't just teach his people to echo God's mercy in their lives (Matt 5:7; 18:33; Luke 6:36; Luke 10:37), but he himself was, and is, the mercy of God to us. Fittingly, the most prominent request made of Jesus in the Gospels is, "Have mercy on me!" (Matt 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30-31; Mark 10:47-48; Luke 16:24; 17:13; 18:13, 38-39), which is precisely what he did in his perfect life, sacrificial death, & triumphant resurrection – extending God's mercy not just to Israel, but to all the nations by faith.

Jesus is our mercy; He taught mercy; He brought mercy; He showed mercy; He died without mercy & rose again so that we might have everlasting mercy forever!

When you see Jesus for Who He is, you will give & tithe & sacrificially give & be generous the right way!

c. The weightier matter of the law: faithfulness: Exodus 34:6: The LORD passed before him & proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful & gracious, slow to anger, & abounding in steadfast love & faithfulness ."

Samuel Saldivar: The faithfulness of God means God is unchanging in his nature, true to his Word, has promised salvation to his people, and will keep his promises forever. He is worthy of eternal trust no matter how unlikely his promises seem. Nothing in heaven or on earth can prevent God from accomplishing all that he has promised his people through Jesus Christ. This reliability of God should be a great source of comfort and strength for God's people as they repeatedly fail and go through trials and suffering.

God calls His people to faithfulness: Deuteronomy 32:4, 20-21: The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness & without iniquity, just and upright is he . . . ²⁰ And he said, "I will hide my face

from them; I will see what their end will be, For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness. ²¹ They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols.”

Jesus is the weightiest matter of the law: Isaiah 11:1-5: There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, & a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom & understanding, the Spirit of counsel & might, the Spirit of knowledge & the fear of the LORD. ³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, & decide with equity for the meek of the earth; & he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, & with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, & faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Jesus is our faithfulness; He taught faithfulness; He brought faithfulness; He showed faithfulness; He was faithful; Yet He died & was punished as the unfaithful one who took upon Himself all of our unfaithfulness & then rose up from the dead so that we might be with our faithful God forever & grow in faithfulness!

When you see Jesus for Who He is, you will give & tithe & sacrificially give & be generous the right way!

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- **1 Corinthians 15:3-5:** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, & that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

- **Galatians 6:14:** But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Jesus didn't merely tithe mint, deal, & cumin. Jesus didn't merely tithe His time & His wealth & His life & His body & His blood. Jesus gave it all! Jesus paid it all! Jesus gave all of His time & all of His wealth & all of His life & all of His body & all of His blood on that cross so that you & I might be saved! And then God raised Him up!

Christ Jesus Is The Matter Of Greatest Weight
He's Justice And Mercy And Faithfulness Straight
He's Worthy Of Tithes And Everything Great
Compared To Him, All Loves We Must Hate
He's Clean Through And Through, Our Heavenly Gate
He's Righteousness Pure In Whom We Relate
Our Guide And Protector With Every Best Trait
But Shed His Pure Blood, They'd Murder Irate
He Died On That Cross And Bore Our Sin's Freight
Forsaken By God All His Wrath Satiated
Then Rose From The Grave, Death's Dead, It's Checkmate
New Creation Is Here For He Does Create
By Faith Alone His Righteousness Translate
Flee To Him Now And He'll Reinstate
All Joys And Pleasures That Sin Would Deflate
He By Himself Is Our Happiness Weight
He's Everything Great! His Return We Await
He Won't Be Late, And On That Date
We'll Celebrate, For He Is Our All Who Hearts Elate!

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