

Time Talents Treasures
1 Kings 17:8-16 Malachi 3:8-12 Mark 12:41-44

Recap TTT so far

Time - 168 hours per week How do we use it? Do we give it to God for Him to use, even our everyday activities

Talents - incredible diversity of Talents here, used in MANY ways.
Remember I shared part of the new Jungle Book film where Bagheera wisely says to the boy Mowgli ' You can't fight like a wolf - you are not a wolf. Fight like a man cub! '
Each and every one of us has our own, unique set of gifts and abilities that God has given us, and some we have been trained in, and they are all needed so that the body of Christ can work well as a whole.

So this week we are thinking about the last of the 3 T's - Treasures
The money we have, as well as other resources, and how we use them for God and His Kingdom.

Let us think again about the prayer that we say in the middle of each service

Everything in heaven and on earth is yours.
All things come from you and of your own do we give you.

Generous God.... What He has done for us

I wonder how much we think about the fact that everything we have ultimately comes from God

In an agricultural community those depending on the land to produce crops in order to eat and produce extra for selling in order to make an income, are very aware of what might be termed 'Acts of God' floods, droughts, gentle rain at just the right time, heat waves that parch the land, plagues of locusts or other pests that destroy crops

Some of us who enjoy gardening still marvel when we plant a seed of something like a runner bean and it miraculously grows into a tall plant with orange/red flowers and then produces delicious runner beans. But we can't MAKE it grow... we can give it the best conditions we know of but we can't MAKE it grow
That is an act of God !

The food we have to eat comes from God and what variety

The air we have to breath was created by God

The fuel that we have to run our cars and produce plastics and... comes from the ground in rock formations created by God

Our God is a generous God an incredibly generous God

Everything in heaven and earth is His

I wonder if we think about that very often or if we even agree with that?

In well known stories from the New Testament we see something of God's generosity in the miracles that Jesus performed

Think of Jesus first miracle when He turned water in to wine

He turned gallons and gallons of water in to wine and the VERY BEST wine :-)

Think of the feeding of 5000 He started with just those few loaves and fishes, fed everyone AND there 12 baskets left over. He didn't give them all just a mouthful, He fed them so that they had sufficient to eat and left overs

Look at the story of the widow at Zarephath

There was famine in the land and this widow, with no one else to care for her had just a handful of meal and a little oil in a jug to prepare a last meal before her and her son died from lack of food

But then, after using it to feed Elijah, God performed the miracle so that (vs 15 + 16) she and her son AND her household ate for many days with the jar of meal never becoming empty nor did the jug of oil fail

God has given us sooooo much and so much variety and ultimately He gave us His own son - Jesus Christ

God's generosity to us is incredible And I know that most of the time, if I am honest with myself, I take that for granted. PAUSE

In the Bible there are more than 2000 verses that speak about money/wealth/possessions and how we should treat them

It doesn't say that wealth is inherently bad... but it does say that to those who are given much, much is required

It does say that we need to be careful about the emphasis and priority we put upon financial wealth It does say that we cannot serve 2 masters. If we spend all our time and energy in trying to become wealthier and wealthier then it is all too easy to take our eyes off Jesus and focus on things that lead us away from Him

So how often do we remember and think about and give thanks to God for His generosity to us?

And how do we respond to His generosity??

How do we respond to God and His generosity to us?

What we do with our resources, what we do with our homes, our cars, our possessions, how we spend our money can be a challenge. And I have been challenged this week as I have prepared for today.

What are we thinking when we say the words

Everything in heaven and on earth is yours.

All things come from you and of your own do we give you. ??

Which part of all that God gives us do we give back to Him?

Or said in another way.... how much of all that God gives us do we keep for ourselves!

Time is one of our most precious resources - those 168 hours a week. If we have a quiet time with God at home, which part of our time do we give Him? The best part of our day when we are most awake and alert? or the end of it when we are tired and distracted?

When we come to church to worship God together, do we come joyfully and expectantly?

How do we give of our talents to Him for Him to use?

I have been so encouraged over the last 10 days. I sent an email out to a few people from church to see if they could help a local family who have been going through a bit of a rough time. I asked if people could maybe prepare a meal or help with the school run. Your response has been fantastic. People have offered to not only help with the school run but also with housework, or trips to the shops or doctors.

The meals that have been prepared have been wonderful.... not just beans on toast or a bowl of soup but you have phoned the family to check what they do and don't eat and then you have carefully and lovingly prepared freshly cooked meals and hand delivered them to the family

THANK YOU - you have given back to God your best

Giving back to God what is actually His to start with, is part of our worship and as you have given to this family, so too have you given to God

What about our other Treasures?

What about our money? Do we think about that too as part of our worship? Do we give to Him joyfully or reluctantly?

I want us to think about this for a few minutes. I know it is a personal and sensitive issue and I am not wanting to 'have a go' or make anyone feel guilty. As I said at the start of these TTT talks a few weeks ago, I am thinking of them as part of a spiritual stock check. And I am challenging myself as much as any one else.

If we believe that we are giving something of what God has given us back to Him, then just as with our Time and our Talents, which part of our Treasure are we giving Him?

In the Malachi reading we can see that God is challenging the Hebrew people. He is reprimanding them because they have been 'robbing him!' God expected His people to give a tithe to Him. That is He expected them to give the first 10% of all they harvested to Him, to bring the 'full tithe in to the storehouse' This was so that the priests, who did not work the land and grow their own crops, and the widows and orphans could be fed.

God expected His people to prioritise giving a tenth back to Him so that they could then live on the other 9/10ths

And look at vs 12... if they give back to God in this way, he will watch over their harvest and 'you will be a land of delight'

Many Christians still work on this principle. They set aside 10% of the money they earn and give it back to God as an offering, as part of their worship in thanks for what He has given them

Some would say that the Old Testament rules and regulations are no longer applicable and therefore do not set that tithe aside

I would say that a tithe, 10% is a good guideline to work by. God gives us so much and keeping 9/10ths and giving Him back 1/10th seems a good guideline. A good way of showing our thanks to God

Whatever proportion of our income we give to God, I think it is important for it to be planned and thought out, to be intentional about what you give, not just to give what is left over at the end of the week or month.

As I have said, God does not want you to get in to debt But I imagine that many of us budget our income. Can I encourage you to think seriously about where your offering to God fits in to that?

There are ways that you can give in a planned way to church, either by setting up a Standing order with your bank, or by using little coloured envelopes that Chris Jones has available, that help you to plan and by systematic with that.

Standing order forms are available in the Narthex. If you want an envelope then speak to me or Ed or Chris about it and we will make sure that you get those envelopes

Whilst I am talking about this - if you are a tax payer then as a church we can claim tax back on what you give so if you haven't filled in a Gift Aid form, again Ed or Chris can help you.

Equally important is - if your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax, then you need to let Chris know so that she can stop claiming the Tax back. Otherwise we are robbing the chancellor - not God :-)

Just a little story about planning our giving.

There was a man in my last church who had not been a Christian very long - just a few years. His life had been mixed, sometimes earning a decent salary, sometimes he had been unemployed and so was on benefits. Whichever, he had never given any money away to anyone. He and his family lived on what they had and he felt it was theirs and theirs alone.

Not long before I left Bath he decided that, as a Christian, maybe he should think about giving something of what God had given him back to God. After some time thinking and praying he finally took the plunge and set up a standing order so that he could give in a thought out and planned way. He didn't have spare cash. He and wife and 4 children lived on a tight budget. But he felt it was right to give something regularly as part of his worship.

He filled out his standing order form and handed it in to the treasurer. This was a huge change in how he thought about money. No longer was it all his to spend as he wanted. But he felt it was right, between him and God, to give a fixed amount each month back to God as a part of his worship. It would be tight, and in some ways it would be sacrificial.

Once he had given his form in to the treasurer, over the next week, he received 3 letters or notifications that he was entitled to various financial rebates. He was amazed and each time one came in he could not believe what was happening!

You see, his thinking had changed. His heart had been changed and he WANTED to give something of what God had given him and his family back to God

And God blessed his cheerful giving.

This man had not given because he was expecting something back from God

He decided to give in a prayerful, planned and joyful way in grateful response to all that God had given to him

I have no idea what amount his standing order was for But I know that it was a grateful offering totally acceptable to God.

Many of you give generously of your Time your Talents and your Treasures

But I want to ask you to spend some time, if you haven't already, on a spiritual audit

Can I encourage you to involve God in your finances.... in reviewing your bank statement

Where we spend our money reveals our priorities and one of those 2000+ verses about money says that we cannot serve 2 masters

Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also Matt 6:19-21

I pray that we won't be a church that 'just pays the bills' but will be a church that joyfully and generously and intentionally gives to God as part of our worship, so that He may use that money, and other treasures, to build His Kingdom.

Pray about or giving to God.... get our bank statements out and ask God to show us where our priorities are and if they are pleasing to God

Prioritise giving something to God

Plan our giving to God - be intentional - maybe decide to give regular amount if you don't already

Maybe even **sacrificial** - feel the pinch a bit... maybe one less coffee out or a meal each week that is 'basic' and so save some money or one bottle of wine less each week or...?

Widows in both our readings were sacrificial and God blessed them in amazing ways

But be **joyful** and expectant :-)

Ask you to spend an hour, over the next 10 days - before the end of May

- to sit down with God and your bank statement / finances
- remind yourself of ALL that God has given to you
- look at how you spend your money
- pray for God to guide you
- if you don't currently give in a planned way to God is that what He is asking you to do and if so how you might do that (s/o envelopes)
- might you increase your planned giving to God
- might you need to decrease it for some reason
- might it be right to stay as it is
- then to thank God and trust Him for what happens next
- Pray for us as a church - that we would become even more generous in our giving back to God some of what He has given to us
- Sing vs 5 of In the Bleak Mid Winter as prayer