

Believe and Invest//Haggai 1:2-9; Malachi 3:7-12

aster is next week...

- lot of important things to do to get ready: serving and inviting/(**campus pastors**)...
- most important is to pray and fast... We're going to believe God together for something big...
- anticipating 5500 and 6000 people. We're going to baptize people on that day... encouraging you not to go to Grandma's...
 - we need your help in this chaos;
 - we know your family will hear the Gospel here, so bring them here.

iod is doing something really incredible at our church, and I'm humbled to be a part of it... and if I'm not humble enough naturally, iod usually sends something from time to time to humble me.

After 1 of the services I came down for communion and I sat next to a row of college girls... After the service they were like, "We'd love to get a picture." I thought, "Yeah, that's a little weird... but I'm kind of flattered... put it up on your wall and remember your pastor." She said, "Great... we'll stand right over here and if you could try and get us all in it that would be great."

very time I start thinking I'm pretty awesome, God sends something to remind me I'm not. We're talking about what's in front of us as a church.

ended last week telling you guys that if what this book says about the world is true, it has radical implications for how we live our lives.

Life is not a game... heaven and hell are real.

That's why this church has a sense of urgency about it, and we are always stretching and striving and changing...

- **My oldest daughter, Kharis (6)**... standing outside of kids' area: "Dad, they tore the wall out in the kids area... I don't really like that. It doesn't make me feel comfortable." Change is tough for everybody, my family included. This isn't always going to be the most comfortable place in the world, but it will be worth it.

Today, I want to present to you what specifically we need to do as a church right now to advance the Kingdom here in RDU. There are some doors that God has opened for this church, and it's time for us to take a couple of bold steps.

Listen... if you consider yourself a part of this church, this is extremely relevant for you. (If you're a guest, like I said last week, this is kind of family talk... You've kind of walked in on a family argument... which is always a little awkward. But maybe this will help you see who we are and what we're doing.)

- Some of you really react to this...
 - Always talking about what they need from us
- May be a bad experience/abuse
 - I hope we're not like that
- But maybe it's because you never learned discipleship is about pouring yourself out... you want to sit in a room paid for by someone else and soak it in and not give anything back as if it's all about you...
- I want to make you uncomfortable, b/c that's not discipleship

(God, help us see what your word is teaching; help us to be submissive to it, and open to it... You speak words of life and goodness to us. Help us to trust you.)

Haggai 1:2-9 (Tell you what today... I always want you to bring your Bibles... but because you'll spend rest of the time trying to find Haggai in your Bible...screen)² "Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord."

But the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ⁴ Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while his house lies in ruins? ⁵ Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁶ You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes...

You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away." "Why?" declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

Here's what is going on. God had returned the people of Israel from exile. It's been almost 20 years, and they still haven't built the Temple. The Temple was supposed to be the center of their community... it would be the place where they would worship and enjoy God; the place where they would teach their kids about God; and where strangers from other nations could learn about God's love for them. It was in every way the center of their community; it was the place from which they would organize themselves to take care of the poor and needy in their community.

But it's been 20 years, and they still haven't built it.

Now, evidently, one of the excuses they had given was "Well, we're in a recession."

- (See how it says in **vs. 6** that they had "sown much, and harvested little"? That's an OT way of saying, "our stocks have crashed.")
- They say, "It's like our money bags and our 401K's have holes in them... So of course we can't give to the Temple now.")

So, God says to them, "Your excuse for not giving is 'We're in a recession.' I'm telling you that 'the reason you are *in a recession* is because you haven't given!' You say, 'We can't give because we don't have any excess!' I'm telling you, 'You don't *have* any excess because you don't give.'"

- Each of you is more concerned with building *his own* house instead of Mine;
- Your houses have paneling and amenities and My house is in ruins;
- That's why I've withheld water from your crops and blew your profits away.
- "Your bags have holes in them..." It's like just when you're starting to get out of a hole, the heater breaks. The car tire goes flat.
- And, furthermore, because you haven't put me first, I've cursed you with the inability to enjoy even what you do have.
 - Again, look at **vs. 6**, "You eat, and you're still hungry. You clothe yourself, and you still feel naked." You have a sleep # bed, and you still can't get a good night rest
 - One of the absolute worst states you can be in is when you are unable to find satisfaction. You spend your time trying to obtain some coveted prize and you finally get it and it just doesn't do for you what you'd hoped. That's what God does to you when you don't put Him first!
- Now, I want you to get this. **God is not begrudging the fact that they have nice stuff.** He wants them to have nice stuff. He wants them to have paneling on their houses; In fact, He's telling them He wants to bless them more than they even realize! God is a Daddy... When I travel, what are we getting, dad? I love to see their faces light up...
- The problem is that they have prioritized themselves and their stuff over His Kingdom!
- These people have 2 problems...
 - **a faith problem**—they don't believe God will supply their needs, and so they won't give;
 - **a priority problem**: they build their own houses rather than God's.
 - It's a little counter-intuitive, but the way to God's blessing even in a time of famine, is putting God first, and giving

generously to Him. When you give God priority, and trust Him, and give, even in a time of recession, He promises to take care of your needs.

his is an Old Testament version of the same thing Jesus said in **Matthew 6:33**, which is to **"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."**

o, Haggai says this: **1:7** **"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁸ Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. Then I will bless and multiply your crops!**

Well, the good news is that the people experience a temporary surge in enthusiasm... evidently Haggai was a good motivational speaker... because they mend their ways and there is a surge in giving. But unfortunately the enthusiasm tapers off, because about 100 years later we find Malachi, the last prophet in the OT, saying this:

Malachi 3:7-12 ⁷ **From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them.... Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. These people are like, (But you say,) 'How have we robbed you?' You're God."** How do you rob God? Break into groups?

your tithes and contributions. God had established a giving pattern. 10% of their income was to go directly to support the temple and the temple workers. That's what tithe literally means: 10%... No, in actuality, if you added up all they were instructed to give, it was 23%, but the other 13% went to civil and governmental expenses, something like income taxes for us. The bottom line is 10% went directly for the work of the Lord to pay for the operations of the temple and public worship.¹

"Contributions" were gifts on top of that... these were gifts for special projects, like building the temple or feeding the hungry. Like what we are doing now with the Believe project.

Well, they had withheld these things from God because they were afraid to give and because they prioritized other things, and God called it "robbing."

- Now, the people said, "Wait, wait... we're not robbing God. Nobody broke in the temple and stole your candles. We didn't take anything from You."
- But God reminds them that everything they have comes ultimately from Him. And when He gives it you, He says I want you to give me back 10% on everything I give to you."
 - Say you had a friend come to you and said, "When I die, I'm going to leave you my estate, which is valued at \$100,000. The only thing I ask is that when you get that money, you give 10,000 of it to this charity I love. Do you say, "What, are you kidding me? How dare you ask for 10,000 of my money?" No, it all comes from them, that is not at all unreasonable.
- God says, "All this, it all comes from me. I want you to have and enjoy it. But I want you to trust and prioritize Me. So I want you return 10% to me."

Because you didn't, ⁹ **You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.¹⁰ Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹ I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. ¹² Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.**

low many of you believe that? You only really believe that if you give a way that shows you trust and prioritize Him.

low, there are always some dangers in applying OT passages directly to us... but there are certain things that are true for them that are true for us. In every age God uses His people to pursue His mission in the world, and He does so through our tithes and offerings.

he work of God here in our area has a need... we need to expand so that we can reach people. And we need to give it priority and give in a way that shows we trust God.

low, I know that some of you don't give because you have questions and some objections that come from a bad experience. I don't want to belittle your questions... some of them are very legitimate, but I want to do my best to answer them today. And I'm going to show you how most of them go back to those 2 things: **a trust problem, and a priority problem.**

his bothers you... Why? Too American to hear the Gospel and understand it? I want to make you uncomfortable? You still think you're the point and Christianity is about sitting here and consuming rather than radical sacrifice.

this is where I play the whack a mole game... I list them, and knock them down. I'll bring up some you didn't know you had!

. "Tithing is law. I'm under grace."

- Some people are like "tithe is OT, the law, we are not under the law, we are under Christ..."
- You are exactly right... we are not under the law, we are under Christ, and we have freed from the law.
- Several things here...
 - But just because we are not under the law doesn't mean it is no longer a guide for us. "Hey, I'm free in

Christ, now I can murder and steal!" God doesn't change, and His plans don't change.

- All through the Bible, not just in the law, the tithe is what God's people give to God's work. Abraham tithed before the law was given; Moses taught it; Jesus commended it in Matthew 23:23.
- **Plus, giving in the Bible is always supposed to be in response to what God has done for you.** So, here's the question: Have you seen God do more or less for you than what Israel had seen?
 - We've seen Christ: We've seen God come to earth, be tortured and die on our behalf. And that lavish generosity of God should not make us give less than what the law requires, but more.)
 - Tithing is not the ceiling of NT giving; if anything, it is the floor.
 - **Luke 12:48**, "To whom much is given, much is required." **Love of God should take you farther in giving than the law ever could.**
- You see, here's what I've noticed: people who say that are almost always not giving more than tithe, but less. They don't come up and say, "Pastor... I want to give radically to the generosity of Jesus, but what you are teaching is restraining me."
- Listen, I'm not saying I'm right about everything, but I've studied this as much as any of you. I promise. Every passage on giving in the Bible, I've looked to in depth, to make sure I teach this right. And one thing is for sure... what never changes is that we are to give God **our first and your best**, not our leftovers.² The 1st of our income, and the best of our income, should belong to God.
 - Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God..."
- Fine, don't use the word tithe... Question: Are you giving God your first and best, or are you giving Him your leftovers?

² Deut 26:1-4; Matthew 6; 1 Cor 16:2

2. "I can't afford to tithe"

- God says to these people, "You can't afford not to." They thought if they gave to God, they wouldn't be able to provide for their needs. God said to them, "The reason you can't provide for your needs is because you haven't put me first."
- Did you hear the incredible promises He made to them? ¹¹ I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts
- **Sounds like Matthew 6:33**, "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
- You say, "But I just can't. I have no discretionary income. Every penny is accounted for." 2 things.
 - 1st, I want to challenge your concept of discretionary income: If you found out your kid needed a medicine that cost 10%, you'd figure out a way to do it. You could survive. Or, if you're single, if your salary got reduced by 10%, would you die?
 - 2: If you say, no, if my salary got reduced by 10%, I would die... start somewhere... start at 5 and work up.

3. "When/then" givers

- A lot of people say, "When this happens... then we'll give." "When we get our **house** paid off or our cars **squared** away"; "when we get out of **debt**", "when our kid gets out of college" ... *Then* we will give."
- When then... pastor friend said this: the problem is: "'When' never ends and 'then' never comes."
- Jesus said (Luke 16:10), "If you're not faithful when you have a little, you won't be faithful when you have a lot." Faithfulness is a pattern you set when you're making \$150/mo, that you continue when you're making 150K a year.
- You can always find an alibi to justify your apathy.

- **E.g.** College students: Most college students don't give. Our attendance doubled, our giving stayed the same.
 - You're like, "Well, yeah, pastor, we don't have jobs."
 - I know because you go out to eat, you don't mind dropping \$5 for mocha frappe soy latte cino... I read an article this week that showed that college students have one of the highest amounts of discretionary income of any group in the nation: \$53.9 billion. Most of you have an income.
 - The only way you should not tithe to God is if you have no money from your parents, no income from a job, nothing. Otherwise, you should give to God. *The issue with the rich person who won't give and the college student who won't give is the same: you don't want to adjust your lifestyle.*
 - It's not about money, it's about being a disciple
- Jesus said, "If you're not faithful when you have a little, you won't be faithful when you have a lot." Start the pattern of faithfulness when you're making \$1.50, and when you're making 150,000, you will be faithful then, too.

How many of y'all are offended yet? Next week, touchy feely and peppy... I promise...

4. "I tithe my time"

- "I don't give my money, but I tithe my time." That's great... you should tithe your time. But that doesn't excuse you also tithing your income?
 - Try that reasoning with the IRS. I didn't pay taxes on my income but I did try to spend 28% of my time being nice to people.

- I'm glad you donate your time... not trying to belittle that. But you can't section off parts of your life and obey God in some areas but not others.
 - breaking into a house
 - "I'll be your husband 6 out of 7 days"
- **Ultimately, what what God wants is not really our money or our time... He wants you... your absolute trust and obedience in everything!** (God is not sitting around in heaven going... 'I really need some money for these projects I am wanting to do.' or, 'Man... I wish I had more time throughout the day... I know, I'll take some from you...')
- What He wants, **2 Cor 8:5** is our very selves... which *includes* our time and our money.
- Now, if you are living on loans, or off a credit card, then no, you don't have income. Come to financial peace
- But if you have income, you should tithe it.

"It's crazy to give in a recession"

- Yes, that's certainly what the world says. Hold on to your money, especially during this time, because we have no guarantees about the future.
- But our trust is ultimately in God, not in our economy. **God's people act differently in a recession.** They give, because they trust God with their future.
- In some ways, I'm glad for this recession for a few things.
 - Listen, I'm not glad you lost your job, or that your retirement got slashed 40%;
 - but I'm glad through this that some of you might see money is nothing to trust in! If that is what happens to you through this recession, then ultimately it was immensely profitable for you.
- The culture calls it crazy to give in a recession. God calls it wise, because trusting God is the wisest things you can do.

"I give to other things besides the church."

- "I give to the local charity; I give to missions trips; a school I really believe in..." I'm glad for that, I really am. I hope you give to lots of things besides the church. My wife and I help support 4 different missionaries and relief workers beyond what we give to the church.
- That said, you see here that God is prescribing 10% to go to the temple. The temple, in that day, was God's ordained way of working in the world. In the NT, God's strategy for doing His work in the world is the local church.
 - Acts 1, God gives the great Commission; Acts 2.
 - That's the whole strategy of Acts; go to the most strategic cities in the world and planting churches.
 - You see, the church is uniquely equipped to meet the physical and spiritual needs of its community. The church can minister to body and soul.
 - So, in the NT, you don't see the Apostles going and digging wells or doing evangelism crusades... they planted churches, and those churches dug the wells and did the crusades. Study Acts... the church took care of the poor both in their midst and in the community, and they did that while preaching the Gospel to them.
 - **The presence of a healthy, thriving local church in a community is the greatest hope for that community..** it equips Christians to minister to their neighbors and preach the Gospel to them.
- I believe this with all my heart: the local church is the hope of the world. It is God's ordained plan, His 'plan-A' for bringing healing to the world. So that's the 1st place you should give.
- That's why I am calling you to join up with us and give generously, because I want you to be a part of God's great mission. I used to feel bad asking... I don't anymore. I'm just calling you to be a disciple. This is how God does His mission, through the church (that's the NT pattern), and to be His disciple you have to have a part in it.
- "Well, the church I grew up in didn't do a good job spending its money. It wasted it." So, that doesn't mean you throw out

the whole concept of the church because of your experience growing up.

- **Restaurant**, bad experience...did you give up eating? **UNC fans** had a bad experience this year with college basketball...except for TZ... But, you haven't given up on basketball, have you?
- It's like some of you have not only thrown out the baby with the bathwater but the whole institution of bathing altogether.
- One more thing: **Some of you resent the church asking for money**... And that really baffles me, I have to be honest! Let me ask you this: **Do you resent the American Cancer Society asking for money?** No. Why? You believe cancer is a killer, and you know there is a need. (You may not give yourself, but you don't resent them asking.)
- But you resent the church asking for money to preach the Gospel... which makes me ask, "Do you really believe sin is the ultimate killer and Jesus is the only solution? Maybe you resent it because you don't believe that?"
 - Not trying to go over the top... but I believe that people going to hell is a more pertinent need than diabetes or cancer, and nothing I'd rather give my money to than that.

"I don't know where the money goes"

- 2 thoughts here...
 - (1) **Where have you been?**
 - Last year we gave away somewhere close to \$1 million dollars... and we are forever parading people past you... we sent workers overseas and put before you a continual stream of people...
 - For example, we just helped start a new place in town called "The Samaritan Health Center" to administer healing to people who can't afford it. Part of the Durham Rescue Mission. We gave them start-up capital and in addition to that, we helped organize a

bunch of our health Care Professionals give their time during the week to help care for the needs of others.

- We give 21%. You say, "Well... it should be more." I agree. We'll get there. But when people say, "You should give away more." I want ask, "How much of your personal income do you give away?" If it's not more than 21%, shut up. I should probably get some help with that.
 - The other day a girl came up to me after church and introduced herself to me... just a few months ago was **cutting herself**... she trusted Christ a few weeks ago and has started to bring her family here... that's where our money goes.
- (2) The other thing I'll say here is come and talk to us... we'll sit down with you and explain to you our budget. When people do this, they usually leave committed to give more not less.

8. "This church doesn't need my money"

- This one always blows my mind... People say, "That church... they're doing fine... hiring new staff... flat screen TV's. (Yes, without apology we do what we can to make the message excellent and clear for our community.)
- But you say, "So they don't need my money."
- Do you not realize how many more lost people there are?
- Think of it like an investment...
 - If you've got a stock that's doing well, you put more money into it. If you got one doing poorly, you don't say, "I'm going to help that stock out and put a lot of money into it." No, you put your money where you get your greatest return on it... If you believe in a product, then you invest in it. If you think it's got a future, you invest in it.
 - Or, fantasy football... man, that player is doing really bad... he needs some encouragement. You chose the one that will get the job done.

- When you give, don't give to the greatest need; give to the place that will do the best job meeting the greatest needs.

OK, so, I've tried to answer your questions...so now, let me ask you a few.

- Does your giving show that you have made God and His kingdom a priority? Are you putting Him first? (Or does that description in Haggai apply to you? Are you paneling your house while the house of God lies in ruins?)
- Listen, God does not begrudge the ways He has blessed you, and He doesn't want you to feel guilty about it. He loves to bless you. But He wants you to put Him first.
- And He wants you to trust Him... so that even when you don't have gobs of excess cash laying around you give sacrificially and trust Him with your future.
 - God and I have played a game...

low, I want to be careful... I'm not promising that if you give, you'll have, in your mailbox, a check waiting for the exact amount that you gave.

- Maybe it will be in ways other than, and even more significant than, financial ways. Maybe God will:
 - **Reduce your materialism.** Curt Alan, our overseas church planting pastor, was an executive here who left to go and serve God overseas... the blessings that God put in my life through sacrifice were not material. The blessing God put into my life was the freedom to not be a slave to materialism." God didn't make him financially richer, but He made Him richer as a person.
 - **Or maybe He'll just give you the ability to be content with what you have.** That's like greatest blessing ever! If your goal is happiness, peace, and security, and God can give you all that without money, that's even better. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

Here is my point... if you would put God and His kingdom 1st in your life... you would find that God puts so much richness into your life.

Matthew 6:33... Seek first...

Now, as I've mentioned, just like in Haggai's day, the work of God in our area has a need.

Filing cabinet: Go through CARD:

- Not just something I am getting you to do, something I am doing with you

I'm not talking about your pocket change or your lunch money... It needs to be a lifestyle adjustment... reducing what you live on...

- downsizing your house,
- What you drive
- giving up a 2nd home,
- what you drive...
- nothing wrong with any of those things and I'm not saying if you have them it's bad or you have to give them up or feel guilty...
- I'm just talking about giving in a way that shows you give God top priority in your life and that you trust Him with your future.
- For some of you it will be a gift that, in the eyes of the world, is relatively small... go out to eat one less time... cut your clothing budget in half... but it represents trust and priority.
- For others of you, it needs to be huge, because God has given you much...and you don't need to spend it on yourself, you need to invest it in His kingdom.
 - For you that God has given a lot... do you really want to enter eternity having spent everything God gave you on yourself? God gives you what He gives you to invest in His Kingdom... this life only lasts a few years, but you'll reap rewards on what you invest in God's Kingdom for eternity!

here's the point: Everybody who considers this church theirs should be a part, and everyone should give in a way that shows trust and priority. Everyone, college students, high school students, everybody.

Conclusion: Summit, here's what I know—whenever God wants to do something He puts what He needs in His people. And it's enough to get the job done...

God may not feel like enough... like the 5 loaves and 2 fish. Ultimately what they had was not enough... but God multiplied it.

God can't multiply it until we give it. If you hold on to it, and don't give... there will be so much that God would have done here that won't get done.

know that if we would step out in faith, and giving God priority, God will use us to do so much more than we can imagine...

- Want to stay and play kickball? Is the pope Catholic? I ruled at kickball in gradeschool. Ball came to me and I caught it... first grade girl was out. I felt really bad. I apologized. She said, "No, they really like it when you play..." My turn came, I kicked a grand slam. Every time.
- I had to leave before the final inning, b/c I had another appointment.
- Picked Kharis up later that afternoon, and she said, "Dad, my team won big at kickball..." (I was looking for a compliment... because dad you were awesome...) "because I scored so many times." You only scored b/c I knocked you in. All you did was get on base."
- All we do is one small part, God knocks the grand slam.

Guests... not talking to you; if anything, what we want you to hear is that we do all of this because we think the Gospel is this important...we love the spread of the Gospel more than we love our tuff. Our question for you is... have you ever experienced the Gospel and been changed by it? Give us a chance to explain it to you!

If you're a Christian, and you're unbelievably offended by this... let me ask you this... what are you offended at? Are you resenting this because you think we spend money wrongly, or do you resent this because you don't want to pour out your life in sacrifice for others, and you hate it when someone disturbs your selfish, materialistic peace?

Bullpen:

God wants to bless the nations!

- This is *how* God does His work in the world!
- ***Sacrifice is giving up something you love...***

What do you love, what do you trust in?

Girls, think of it like a guy... you want the guy that will give you the greatest future.

It's what God told Abraham before he made him a great nation (in Genesis 12); it's what he told the nation of Israel before they went into the promised land in Deut 8; Jesus said it in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you;" Paul taught it in 2 Cor 9. So don't pull one of these, "Well, this is Old Testament. No, this is All-estament.

So, let's get into the 2 reasons behind their disobedience: a ***faith*** problem and a ***priority*** problem

- They didn't think they could afford it... God says, "They couldn't afford not to." If they gave to God, they wouldn't be able to provide for your needs. God said to them, the reason you can't provide for your needs is because you don't put me first. Matthew 6:33
- Priority problem: He says, "You yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins." You take care of yourself, and as an afterthought, with the leftovers, not with your 1st and your best.

If you would put me first, you would find that not only would I meet your needs I'd also bless you beyond what you can imagine.

Now, there is a danger sometimes applying passages like this one to our situation... and there are some specific promises given to that group of people at that time in history that are not identically applicable to us.

- But, there is a truth in here that runs all the way through the Bible, and that is that we are to seek God first, and when we do, He promises to supply all our needs.
 - Kharis and change. Standing outside of kid's area: "Dad, they tore the wall out in the kids area... I don't really like that. It doesn't make me feel comfortable." Change is tough for everybody, my family included.

Again: When God had brought His people out of captivity, one of the things He commanded them to do was to establish a place of worship. That was the 1st thing they were to do. It was a very loving thing to do, because the temple would be the place from which they could teach their children as well as the surrounding nations about their great God. There is a great promise: if they will do this, God will bless them beyond their wildest imaginations. Not only will he cause them to prosper, He'll cause other people, other nations, who don't know God, to know God through them. Through seeing their happiness and peace and blessing.

But they hadn't done it! They had excuses and reasons.

- Like a fantasy football team, nobody says "man, that player looks like he can use some love, so I'll choose him even though he's a very poor player who has no

good stats – but I just feel like he needs me to choose him.

- The other thing is that the people you give the money to will answer to God. You'll answer to God if you don't give; they'll answer to God for what they do with it.
 - The woman with the 2 mites.
- But people tell me all the time, as we're eating out at Pei Wei together, that they don't have any discretionary income.
 - If you are eating the chili noodle bowl at Pei Wei instead of Ramen noodles, you have discretionary income. Again, the background problem is the same; we don't want to adjust our lifestyle so that we give to God.

Why would you pull something on God you wouldn't try on the IRS?
Does the IRS have more authority in your life than God?

Guy came up to me holding a copy of my book... Said his 10 year old daughter looked at it and said, "Man, with as much as he talks every week, I thought it would be longer."