Series: Stewardship

Message: 02 The First Recorded Tithe Genesis 14\_17-24

Text: Genesis 14:17-24

Theme:

Date: January 13, 2019

Location: Christ Community EFC

**If you would, please turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 14; and we will be picking up at verse 17. (p. 10 of the pew Bible)**

We looked at this passage a bit last week when we started this short sermon series on stewardship.

By definition, *stewardship* refers to:

**1:**the office, duties, and obligations of a steward

**2:**the conducting, supervising, or managing of something *especially***:**the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care

A steward is one who is entrusted to be the keeper of another’s goods and interests and to act on their best interest.

At the heart of stewardship is the question of ownership. Is God the God of heaven and earth or is He just God of heaven but I am the god (owner) of my home, my paycheck, my car, my choices?

Is God the God of heaven and earth and everything that is in heaven and on earth is His?

If so, than God has entrusted to us our lives, our finances, our jobs, our families, and everything else in our lives and He gets to call the shots.

At the end of the day, stewardship comes down to this heart question—do I see these things as mine or as Gods?

Do I get to say how they are used or do I use them, as a steward, in line with and according to the best interest of those to whom they belong.

I use all that God has given me to advance His kingdom, to share His love, and to spread the gospel, to accomplish His will.

For Adam and Eve the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a test of stewardship. The tree itself was neither good nor evil, but it served as the object used to test the heart of Adam and Eve.

Were they going to treat God as God of heaven and earth? Were they going to see themselves as stewards of all that God had entrusted to them?

Or were they going to claim ownership and put themselves in the place of God? Of course we know how that turned out!

We may not have a tree of good and evil in the middle of our parking lot to test our heart as Adam and Eve, but we do have to come to the same test. Is God God?

I mentioned last week that it has been estimated that about 15 percent of everything Jesus spoke about related to money in some way or another.

Jesus spoke more about money than about heaven, and hell combined. He spoke more about money than about love. Money, more than anything else reveals what’s in our hearts.

Money becomes for us, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that reveals who’s in charge—God or us.

In our text this morning we are going to look a little deeper as Abram is being confronted with a heart test.

God called Abram (AKA Abraham) to leave the land of Ur, the land of his fathers a go to a land where God would show him.

When Abram leaves Ur, his nephew Lot travels with him. When they arrived in Canaan trouble broke out between Lot’s servants and Abram’s servants so Abram told Lot to look over the land and pick where he wanted to settle

Lot look out and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered so he pitched his tent there near the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Kings from the east come and attack the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Defeating the armies of Sodom and Gomorrah these kings looted the cities, taking their inhabitants and along with Lot and his family.

Abram then takes 318 trained servants and goes after these kings from the east to rescue his nephew Lot.

Let’s pick up here in Genesis 14:17-20 “**After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).**

**18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)**

Who is Melchizedek?

The truth is we really don’t know much about Melchizedek. His name means “king of righteousness.”

And we are also told that he was the king of Salem. Salem is possibly a shortened version of the old Hebrew name for “Jerusalem”. So Melchizedek may have been the king of Jerusalem.

But Salem is also related to Hebrew shalom, the word meaning “peace,” so he was the king of peace.

These two titles, king of righteousness and king of peace are titles given to the messiah.

This causes some to believe that Melchizedek is a theophany. A theophany is an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. There are a few times in the Old Testament where we see Christ appearing before he was born in Bethlehem.

For certain, in the context of this story Melchizedek was a righteous ruler who was God’s representative.

As the priest of the Most High God Melchizedek brings with him bread and wine: (the elements of the Lord’s Supper—God covenant meal) and he blesses Abram in the name of the Most High God.

**19 And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”**

Melchizedek says: Abram; you have been blessed by “…**God Most High…”** This victory you have just won over the kings from the east, this was given to you by God. This is His victory not yours.

This battle was won by God who is the “…**Possessor of heaven and earth**…”

Melchizedek goes on in verse 20 to say “**blessed be God** [praise God] **Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”**

Then Abram’s response is one of worship, of gratitude, one of recognizing God’s hand and blessing on his life.

So…**Abram gave him a tenth of everything**.

Abram gives Melchizedek, God representative, a “**tenth of everything”**—a tithe. This is the first mention of a tithe in the Bible.

So what can we learn from this encounter between Abram and Melchizedek?

**The first thing we learn is, in part, an answer to objections to giving a tithe that some make today.**

The objection goes like this. We are New Testament Christians and since the tithe is part of the Old Testament Law, we don’t need to tithe today. Besides, tithing isn’t commanded in the New Testament.

While it is true that in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy we do find commands given to the people of Israel concerning giving.

And true, we are not under the Law, the Old Testament commandments given to the people through Moses as a means of earning our salvation.

(Our salvation is not based on our ability to keep all of the commands.)

And yes, we are under grace. Our salvation and the forgiveness of our sins is through faith in Christ, His death on the cross and not in our work or effort or tithing.

We can no more buy our salvation by giving money to the church than we can earn our salvation by being good.

But keep in mind, Abram gives Melchizedek a tenth, a tithe, of everything he won back from the kings of the east more than 500 years before Moses wrote the book of the Law!

Abram gave a tithe, not because of some law or command. He gave it as an act of worship! It was an offering of thanks given in appreciation and recognition of what God had done.

It was an act of worship offered to the God of heaven and earth.

**The second thing I would like you to notice is that in giving a tithe, 10% of everything, Abram was not making a down payment.**

There are some who twist scripture together to say that if you “give, it will be given to you (Luke 6:38), and if you sow sparingly you will reap sparingly (2 Corinthians 9:6).”

They might even throw in Malachi 3:10 for good measure.

“**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**.”

The implication is, if you give to the church, or this TV ministry, God will multiply 10 fold…100 fold in return!

People who teach this kind of message have grossly taken these verses out of their context to make them say something God never intended them to say.

If you think you can somehow give God a few bucks and in return expect to be given something…well let me forward you and email from this Ethiopian princes who would like to transfer 3.1 million dollars to your savings account.

As we read this passage it is clear that Abram gives to Melchizedek, who represents God, a tithe—10%, as an act of worship—worship in recognition of who God is and what He has already done.

Abram doesn’t stop by Melchizedek’s house on the way to battle to drop a few buck off in the hopes that the battle will go well.

We worship God no matter how things turn out in the here and now.

We worship God because He is worthy of our worship, **not** to get a return on our investment.

Worship is not about what we get but about what we give and to whom we give it.

Giving a tithe an act of worship not a law to keep or a down payment on a future blessing.

**Finally, note that given of a tithe, the 10%, does not mean that I am free to use the 90%, the remaining in whatever way I please.**

God is the **Possessor** [owner] **of heaven and earth** and everything in it**.**

We looked at this last week: Genesis 14:21-23 where “…**the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.”**

**22  But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, 23  that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.**’

Again, God is the possessor of heaven and earth and everything in it! He owns it all. The 10% and the 90.

What we do with the 90% left is just as important as the heart attitude we have in giving the 10% to God.

It is important in my relationship with God as I humble myself and keep God in His rightful place.

What I give to God is between me and God. It is private.

What I do with the 90% is between me and God but it is a witness. The way I treat and use the 90% shows the world who I truly I believe God to be.

**Benediction**

**“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Num. 6:24-26)**