



**“Giving & Taking”  
Realities  
October 4, 2015  
Courage Church**

It is important as we are going through these sermons each week, that we look at them through the scope that shows us, “this still applies to

my life today.” These are realities that apply to our every day lives here and now, in Detroit, MI. In Courage Church, and in our homes and families and friendships with one another.

When Jesus is asked about which commandment is the greatest, he quotes the SHEMA (Mark 12:29). He says, “hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” and then he adds a second command, and he says “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

As we study then Ten Commandments, one thing that is abundantly clear is this: they all fall into one of these two categories. That's why Jesus simplified it the way that he did, because if you love your neighbor as yourself, you would never steal from them. You would never kill them. You would never bare false witness against them.

And if you love the Lord your God with EVERYTHING, as Jesus says to do, of course he will be first in your life. Of course there will be nobody else. Of course you will not take his name in vain. Of course you will take the time to rest in him every opportunity you get.

The first four commandments are tied to our relationship to God, how we love God, how we serve God, how we are faithful to God.

And the last six commandments are tied to our relationship to people. To “our neighbor” as Jesus puts it. They show us how to treat somebody with

dignity. How to treat someone like you *value* them. And if you value somebody, why would you ever hurt them?

If you loved them as much as you love yourself, why would you ever think that you could take for yourself what they have? What is *theirs*...

If you loved them as much as yourself, why would you ever think that you can *keep for yourself*, what they *need*?

Today, we are looking at how the 3rd and the 8th commandments are connected, and at the depth that the bible goes into when dealing with these issues.

The third command says “Do not take the name of the LORD in vain.” And the eighth command says “Do not steal.”

If you would open your bibles with me today to Malachi 3:6-15

“For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ Will man rob God? **Yet you are robbing me.** But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 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. 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. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

“Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ You have said, ‘It is **vain** to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’ ”

Most of us read this passage in Malachi, and it becomes our default when defending tithing, and that is ok. This verse definitely says to tithe, but it also says much much more than that. In fact, this verse addresses both the 8th, and the 3rd commandments.

This last section, Malachi 3:13-15 is saying that everything that these wicked people were doing was a show. They were serving God because there was a profit to be made by serving God, and when it seemed like suddenly there was no profit, they stopped.

They serve God because of what they can get out of him here, and now, because here and now there are people who will do things for them because they “serve God.” but they have nothing coming.

They are thinking about now. They aren’t thinking about God. They are thinking about themselves. In their hearts, they saw something that would get them something, but it wasn’t real.

The word “vain” is the Hebrew word “*shav*” and it means “to not be real.”

Most people think that the third commandment is telling us to not swear. Or to not say “God - blank”

But the third commandment literally says “You must not take the name of the Lord in *unreality*.”

You use his name in a way that makes it not real.

There is something about the name of God, is there not?  
And man, there is something about the name of Jesus.

Something powerful. Something everlasting. Something that just makes you feel, in the darkest hour of your darkest day, like there is light. When it feels like everyone everywhere has abandoned you... that Someone still has your back. Someone still cares. God’s name can heal, it can redeem, it can provide, it can bring peace.

It is incredibly powerful.

But because of its incredible power, it also can be incredibly manipulated. If that wasn't the case, then it would not be in the ten commandments.

It is a name that carries weight. A lot of weight.

But throughout history, various religions and religious leaders have misrepresented that name and have used it for selfish things. Wars have been started in the name of God. People have been killed. People have been robbed. People have been hurt. All, in forms of manipulation by people taking the Lord's name in vain. Maybe you have heard of the Protestant Reformation...

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther nailed what is now known as the 95 theses, onto the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. It was essentially a list of the problems that he saw in the church and some solutions that he had for it. Mainly with the selling of indulgences, essentially what the church was doing at that time was they were monetizing forgiveness. If someone had a problem or committed a sin and they would go to the church.. the church would actually put a price on what it would cost to receive that forgiveness... what it would cost to make that sin go away.

They were the people that held the appointed offices to represent God to the people, and they were profiting from it in completely unbiblical ways. They were taking his name in vain.

Martin Luther, rightfully so, thought that was totally jacked up.

so he called them out on that... and other issues in which the Catholic Church had veered from what the bible actually said to do, with the way that they were now functioning.

This really set into motion what we now know as the protestant reformation, and the split from the Catholic church.

Psalm 119:36 says "Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain."

And that should be one of the Psalms we pray over our lives constantly. We want to live our lives so that they glorify him. So people see us and they see something they want to be a part of. So that every story we live is a story that draws people closer to Jesus. We don't serve God because of what we get out of Him or because of the benefits that come with being a part of the Kingdom.

That is how you protect yourself from taking the Lords name in vain. You realize, it is not about me. I am not doing this, *for me*.

The bible says more about money than just about anything else, yet we avoid talking about it in a general way because we (the church) don't want to come across like *we* deserve your money more than *you* do. So primarily, we always try and leave those types of "heart decisions" between you and God. Even when it comes time to take offering, we don't pass the buckets around, but instead make it available to you as an act of worship during the music portion, or you can give in the back at the end.

But if we just skip over the things that are hard to talk about every time we come to them in the bible, because we are afraid of offending people, then Sunday's will become merely about affirmation rather than truth and we may as well skip church and go straight to brunch if all we are looking for is a bright and lovely day off with our friends.

When we got to adultery, last week, I had to pray that grace would cover every word, yet I had to approach it knowing that I may offend some people who were adulterers.

and today, we need to approach this the same way. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1), but many of us in this place, are thieves.

And many of us in this place, do not make the name of the Lord a reality in our lives.

And the truth is, when I read the red letters of Jesus, the harshest judgments seem to be reserved for these two issues. For those who use

the Lord's name in vain, and for those who are selfish, making their entire world, about themselves.

Matthew 7:21-23 says “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

What does this have to do with the third commandment?

On that day... on the day of judgment... on the day when Jesus divides those on his right and his left, there will be many people who did many things in the NAME of the Lord who will be cast away. Because they used his name in vain.

They attached the name of Jesus to their thing, instead of doing his thing. Just like this says, the ones who will enter the Kingdom of heaven are the ones who do the will my the Father.

Notice it keeps on saying “Lord, Lord” - in Hebrew, that is how you emphasis a statement. There was no exclamation points... this is how it was expressed. They were shouting LORD! They were excited, the LORD was a big deal to them.

and its possible that many people really are excited about the LORD and yet they use his name for their own sake. The language in Matthew 7 would imply that these are people who thought they were doing the right thing. And that is scary to me. How we can grow so numb in our lives to what the right thing actually is, that we can be doing the wrong thing, in the most powerful name, thinking we are doing the right thing.

If you use the name of the Lord for selfish reasons, you are stealing. You are taking his name, and manipulating it for your purposes. You are not associating it to the power that it has, and that is why so many will be crushed by it.

Lets look at a few of the names of God in the Old Testament:  
“Elohim” is the first name used for God in Genesis 1:1 and is used throughout, and it means “God, Creator, Mighty and Strong.”

Jehovah and Yahweh speaks of an accessible, near God. A God who is as close to you as the air that you breath.

“Yahweh-Jireh” means “The Lord will provide.”

Yahweh-Rapha” means “The Lord who heals.”

Yahweh-Nissi” means “The Lord our banner.”

“Yahweh-Shalom” means “The Lord our peace.”

“Yahweh-M’Kaddesh” means “The Lord who makes Holy.”

“Yahweh-Rohi” means our Shepherd.”

If God really is the most powerful name, if he really is the name above all names... If he really is all the things that all of his names describe, then in his name is all that you will ever need.

But if you lack peace, and you claim the name of Jesus and yet don't actually believe that he will bring you peace, you are making his name an unreality.

Or if you use his name to give you the appearance of peace, when really you haven't let him be the peace in your life, but for the sake of your public you use Him as your peace, again, you are making his name an unreality.

That is the third command. Don't take his name in vain. His name carries more weight than anything else in the world. Don't make it light. Don't make it worthless. Don't use it for your own sake.

Now, shifting gears a little:

There is another time in the Red Letters, that Jesus talks the way he talked in Matthew 7, and it is Matthew 25. That is when it talks about how Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:32)

Jesus says in Matthew 25:41-43 “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you

gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

And of course, they will say "Lord when did we not feed you?" "When did we not clothe you and visit you?"

And I am telling you, there is no moment that I have found in the bible, that is more clear, or more convicting, or more overlooked in all of our debates and discussions, than this line right here:

Matthew 25:45 "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

Matthew 25:46 "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

This is Jesus. Telling us, "you have to help people." You can't live your life, in your cookie cutter house with the white picket fence and never invite anybody in... and Never give to those who need.

Keeping what you don't need when someone else does need it, is stealing. Not giving God what he asks of us, is stealing. And it is making the name of the Lord an unreality. It is using Him for your good, when you were put here for his good.

The harshest judgments are reserved for people like that. For the ones who hold out on peoples needs by holding on to what they don't need.

Stealing comes in all sorts of forms, but they are all rooted in the same thing. A lack of understanding of *echad*. A lack of understanding of community. A lack of value for other people, and their needs.

The only way to steal is to put yourself before someone else. You have to conclude, no matter how desperate, that you either "need it more" or you "deserve it more" than someone else. And as we just read in Malachi, holding on to what you are meant to give away makes you guilty of robbery.



This is what we (the church) normally teach about the tithe, and I will tell you why. The church generally teaches:

God says, “everything is mine anyway, but because I love you so much, I let it be yours. I just want the first. The first tenth. Prove to me that you can handle the 90% by first giving me the 10%. Bring that to the storehouse. Bring that to the church. So my work can move forward.” and that is true. We 100% could not do what we do without you. Without your generosity.

And so churches, have forever taught this.

But sometimes it can become skewed. Building projects, salaries, staffing needs, and personal well being can become motivating forces behind campaigns that can at times be manipulative and lack transparency and it has turned people off to giving in general.

I read a disgusting article about a church recently (and I am sure that most of you have read it as well) who sent a collection letter to a member, a single Mother who had joined the church six months prior, and that letter was a bill that she owed for being a member and for the months that she had gone without making a contribution. They listed all sorts of weird fees that she had to pay in addition to a monthly amount no matter what she may make and whether or not she was working. It was not a tithe. It was a membership fee, and it was quite a hefty one.

and at that point, it is the church who is stealing. And the church that is supposed to represent the name of the LORD here on earth are now the ones now who have taken the name of the LORD in vain by saying that “The LORD is not our provider.” He is not providing for us through the generosity of the people so we must tax them instead.

But the NAME of the LORD, “Yahweh-Jireh” means “The Lord will provide.”

But for that church who sent the letter to the single mom, the name “Yahweh-Jireh” is *not* a reality.

“The Lord will provide.”

And yes, he often provides through the generosity of the people of God who feel called to a place that is doing good, and naturally something in us wants to give to that. Wants to be a part of that. And honestly, if we are Christians and we are an active part of the body of Christ, I believe with all of my heart that we should tithe.

I believe that you should give to the church, because it is the only way the work of the Lord will ever move forward. God uses people to move his gospel forward, and every time you give, you are being the hands and the feet of Jesus.

But tithing is between you and God. I am not the pastor who checks the tithing records. My relationship with any of you is not swayed in either direction because of what you give because I have no idea what you give. But between God and you, you should be giving.

Is tithing itself crucial for your salvation? No. Its not. But *generosity* is a fruit that your life simply must bear.

You need to give. And a lot of times, like most everything else in the bible, the concept in the Old Testament law really gets more extreme when Jesus starts talking about it.

Really, the Old Testament limited what you had to do. It limited what was required of you. It gave you something tangible that was attainable in order to honor God. It said, "if you want to rob God, do nothing. If you don't want to rob God, tithe." Give ten percent.

But Jesus, and the New Testament in general, blew that wide open. Jesus said to give to those who ask (Matthew 5:42, Luke 6:30), he says to always go the extra mile for people. And, Paul says to do it cheerfully! (2 Corinthians 9:7) - the church of Acts took such care of one another that there was not a need among them that was not met (Acts 2:42-47).

This may feel like a tangent that is not about stealing, but it is a bit of framework for you to understand the bigger picture of what is happening here.

Because it's the same thing. If the name of the LORD is "the Lord will provide" (Yahweh-Jireh) and yet you take from others to provide for yourself, you are saying, clearly, "I don't trust God to provide."

You are saying, "that name is not real."

Now, my favorite verse about stealing in the bible is this one right here.

Ephesians 4:28:

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”

There are two kinds of people.

1. Those who give.
2. And those who take.

If you think that you are neither, then you are likely the latter.

If you think that you can live your life indifferent to the way you treat others, then you are a person who takes. Our worlds are meant to be interconnected and communal, and if everything you have you keep for yourself while everyone else is in need, something is out of balance.

If your whole life is about how you can get more, and your concern is never who it is at the expense of, or who you are walking on or hurting or taking from to get you there, you are walking on judgment territory.

There is this moment in Luke 12, when Jesus is teaching, and someone in the crowd asks him “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

And after telling the man that He is not the judge or the arbitrator (Luke 12:14) he tells a parable about a man who produced plentifully, and so he thought to himself “Where do I store all of my crops? So then he said to himself, (Luke 12:18-19) “I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build

larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."

The man is storing up a treasure here on earth. On the same earth where others are going hungry every single day with no food to eat, and this man is tearing down his barn, so he can build a bigger barn, so he can have a place to store it all. But then, God responds to the man, and says this (Luke 12:20): "Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"

Whatever you gained in this life will be gone, and somebody else will take it, and it will be fleeting for them too. But as for you, its over, tonight.

That is not typical New Testament language. That is judgment language. That is the stuff you read about in the Old Testament, but these are red letters. Jesus utterly despises this stuff.

And if you want your life to be about building barns and bigger barns and filling them with stuff, then you better enjoy those barns now, because unless something changes in your heart, they are the only barns you will ever have.

There is nothing in the whole bible that is spoken of with more harshness than with being selfish, taking what is not theirs, people keeping what they should give away. And people taking what is not theirs. There is nothing more condemned, or spoken more clearly and repetitively, than the coming judgment of those who can't get beyond their own selfishness to the point where they are completely immersing themselves into the lives of others.

the idea that the world belongs to you or that you matter more than others is completely toxic and will destroy you.

There is only one time after Jesus' death when we see God react to a sin by giving them death, and that was over a shady business deal. (Acts 5:1-11) Ananias and Sapphine sold a piece of land, and they conspired together to keep back some of the money that they made and yet claim that they were turning all of the money in. And this story is so peculiar, because

Peter says to them, “the land was yours to do what you will with it... why would you lie?”

Because the church in that moment in history was at the purest form it had ever been in. Everyone was sharing, everyone believed that everyone else mattered just as much as them. People were selling properties and bringing all of the money forward so that everybody’s needs could be met. And the problem with what Ananias and Sapphires did was not that they kept back some of their field money, it was theirs to sell. But they wanted to reward without the price. They wanted the oneness, without the sacrifice. What they did disrupted the *echad* that the church was experiencing in that moment, in its purest form.

It was a corruption of purity.


It showed the church that suddenly, they needed to put a guard up, on a community that had worked very hard to build trust.

It showed them that they were vulnerable.

Many of you in this place have had first hand experiences with someone taking from you. We live in Detroit, those things are a reality. I have heard the stories. Pastor Chilly and Netta told us some of the stories when Dawn and I were visiting and considering taking the role of lead pastors here. I don’t know if they were trying to test us, scare us off, or what... whatever it was, it didn’t work. They told of a time when their car was stolen outside a restaurant and they chased down the robber, and another time a couple of you were held up at gunpoint. Robbed for what little you had in your pockets.

You know how vulnerable it left you. How paranoid, even for a moment, that it left you. How shook up. A couple of you have told me about how you have been held at gun point over silly things like backpacks. And in moments like that, stuff just doesn't matter. If it's worth going to prison for someone else over, it's certainly not worth losing your life over.

But even when you are through it and everything is okay, it leaves you feeling violated and alone.

Chet		Tent wall / fence / separation
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The word picture for 8 (stealing) is a fence. It's there as a barrier.

It's there so you feel a little more secure. But you don't put up a fence unless you are anticipating needing to keep someone or something out. It's an initial line of defense. Not the strongest of defenses, but it is that first barrier that says "I value what I have, I have worked for it, so don't even think about taking it."

We looked at a house here in Southwest that we are considering buying, and there is a fence around the whole thing. Front yard, back yard, all of it. This is pretty new to me, the idea of a fenced in front yard.

Thousands of people here in Detroit live in fear, behind their fences and double locked doors and security systems... and even though crime may be dropping and the neighborhoods are getting stronger, here, more than most places, people continue to live life in the zone that says "at any moment, someone I do not want in my home could walk through that door, or break through that window."

There is a reason that the eighth commandment is thou shall not steal, and it goes far beyond breaking into someones house and stealing their diamond earrings or their television set. At its core, it is a reality demonstrating the way that you value your fellow man. And when you do steal, it does something in you, and to you, in the long run, just as much as it does to the person you are taking from.

It will leave them feeling vulnerable.

But it will leave you feeling empty. No matter how much you get away with taking.

## **Amnon & Tamar**

There is a very interesting story in 2 Samuel 13, about two people we don't really hear much about, named Amnon and Tamar. This story left me devastated. Amnon was one of King David's sons, and Tamar was his half sister.

Now, verse one says that Amnon loved Tamar, and he was very crafty in a plot to get her alone. When he finally gets her alone, he asks her to lay with him. And her response to him is heart breaking. She doesn't want to do it, and she looks at Amnon, and says:

“Where could I carry my shame?”

She is saying, Amnon, you will destroy me if you do this. I will have nowhere to go. It will ruin me.

But of course, he doesn't care about any of that.

After he forces himself on her, and lays with her...

Something strange happens.

2 Samuel 13:15 “Then Amnon **hated** her with very great hatred, so the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love which he had loved her.”

Amnon got what he wanted, and it made him bitter. It turned into a hate so deep it outweighed all the love he thought that he had.

Thou shall not commit adultery  
Thou shall not steal  
Thou shall not covet

Amnon stole something from Tamar. He coveted something he knew he could not have, and he took it anyway, and it ultimately cost him his life. But before Tamars full brother killed Amnon, Amnon was already dying when he became bitter.

But he got what he wanted.... What happened?

Why did he hate her more than he loved her, after he had her?

And why is it every time we think we need something, or want something, and we finally get it, it always leaves us feeling empty?

Because when we take our desires into our own hands then we take the Lords name in vain.

Marriage is supposed to be a gift.

Sex is supposed to be a gift.

Friendship is supposed to be a gift.

A home is supposed to be a gift.

And even the things that we work for, and we save and save for, are still gifts from a loving God to an undeserving recipient.

And the best things in life, they are worth *waiting* for. They are worth *fighting* for. They are worth *working* for.

When Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, he worked for her for 7 years. And then when He was tricked into marrying Leah (which I feel like I will never understand how they managed to trick him into marrying the wrong girl, unless Rachel was in on it...) But then he worked another 7 years to actually be able to marry Rachel.

But what a gift she was to him, even though he worked for her.

Life takes work. The life you want will require sacrifice and it will require persistence and resilience and that is the best kind of life. Because just like Proverbs 13:11 says, "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it."

## **Tithing**

I told you guys in the first message, that this series was inspired by a teaching I saw by a man named Dr. Frank Seekins, who is an expert in Hebrew word pictures and did a message on all ten commandments in word pictures. I have learned so much from his teachings recently. He is also a marriage counselor, and he said something that I really could not get out of my head.



He said, when dealing with couples who were struggling in their marriages, He made this observation, and this will seem strange to you... But he said he always asks the couple one question, and the answer will usually tell him how quickly, if at all, things are going to get better for them.

The question that he asks is, "Do you tithe?"

And he says, he would take a couple that tithes gratefully, but has absolutely enormous problems, over the couple that doesn't tithe, but has less problems, every day of the week.

And he says this... he says the couple that tithes, will get better in half the time, and here is why.

He says of the struggling couple that tithes, "They have a loving and generous heart towards God, and I can turn that toward their spouse... but if they don't have a generous heart toward anything, then I have nothing to work with.

What is he saying?

If all they have ever known is taking, what is ever going to shift their process to suddenly giving?

If when they hear the name of the LORD they don't immediately default to the thought that "That is the most powerful name in all the world... that is the realest name, the truest name, the most wonderful name, the most DESERVING name in all the world.

If they can't even give the most deserving God even a portion of what he deserves, how will they ever give generously to this person that they are struggling to even be in a relationship with... Who, to get to that point in the struggle of marriage that they are willing to throw their arms in the air and call it... would have had to first establish in their mind all the reasons why this person *no longer deserves their love*, or their effort, and they likely have solid grounds for thinking that in the first place.

There has to be a change. There has to be a shift. A radical shift, from us using God, to us being used by God.

I read that on average, across the country, 4% of all professing Christians actually tithe. I am sure that number is higher here, but its still lower than it could be.

Guys, think about our church. Think about everything that we do in this city. Think about the turkey dinner we are going to have next month, and the families that are going to get a Christmas because of us at Joy to the D in December. Think about the hundreds of backpacks we give away, and the homeless we help weekly, and the people who have come to us with simple Benevolence needs that we have been able to hand them cash without asking them any questions. The food pantry, that we are able to send families with bags full of groceries home.

I believe we fall above the 4% average, but imagine if our number was 100%. Imagine how many more needs we would be able to meet. There was a house that the church had an opportunity to buy, we had to be a non-profit to buy it, and had a short window to do it. We couldn't do it that time... But imagine if we could have just said yes, lets take it. And lets fill it with people who need a place to go, or lets fill it with interns who will work for the Kingdom every single day. Or lets fill it with homeless single moms who chose to keep their babies but nobody is stepping in and helping. Last night, in the middle of the night, a young man called me and from a cell phone that he was borrowing from someone he was with, and told me that he had no place to go. And that he is freezing downtown and its only getting colder.

I sent a text to Emily about places we could possibly put him up, wrote him and told him to get to church, and then made every excuse to myself as to why I can't just pick him up and bring him to my loft. I tried to convince myself, I have three kids, we live in a loft, they are having trouble sleeping right now, there are no doors on the rooms... its just not practical.

I feel like I just keep on missing the mark, over and over. Its like what Paul says, "I keep doing what I don't want to do, and I keep not doing what I know I should do." (Romans 7)

But the reality is, its getting colder. These requests are only going to get more consistent. The need is only going to grow.

Malachi 3 says to bring the full tithe into the storehouse so **there will be food**... So when people come to the church, we will have the food to feed them. We will have the resources to give them. It is a system that *simply works*, when people participate in it. There would not be a need among us that the church could not contribute to meeting if we truly brought the full tithe to the storehouse.

Old Testament says 10%.

New Testament says give to the needs. Don't let needs go unmet.

Tithing is just one of those outward expressions that says "your world is not about you."

Its a shift. Its a shift from being a thief, to changing a city. A shift from using God, to being used *by God*.

and that is what Paul addresses in Ephesians 5. He says "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."

He is not just restricting thieves from stealing. He is not just saying, "take the way that you have known, the selfish way.... the way in which you view yourself and your needs as more valuable than others and their needs, and throw that all away, and start over, from nothing.

No. He doesn't just say stop stealing. He doesn't just say "Thou shall not steal. He adds onto it. He makes it practical. He says work with your hands, so you can make money, so you can give it away.

He is saying, "You used to be incredibly selfish. Now you are going to be incredibly generous." and imagine how much better you are going to feel. You used to steal to give yourself value. You gave yourself value by devaluing others...

Now, you will find your value, in valuing others.

He is giving them something new to do instead.

Something that won't leave you needing more... needing you to steal from someone else...

Amnon became bitter when he took what he wanted because it wasn't his to take. And when it didn't fill the void that was already in his heart, it broke it wide open and bitterness just absolutely filled it. He went from what he thought was love, immediately to hate, when it didn't pan out the way that he wanted it too.

When it didn't turn out "happily ever after."

Remember, the devil works in gaps. And the more you take from others, the more you will need to keep taking in order to keep fulfilling that need you have created. Its a cycle, and it leaves you empty.

But when you start working, and you are handed your paycheck, and you look at this money that you have earned and you can say "now, how do I make this world better with this?"

How will the Kingdom move forward today because of the work that I have done this week?

Then you will see, yet again, another way that you are part of the *echad*. The unity in the midst of diversity that is holding the world together.

And if you are in this place and you have taken what is not yours... or you have taken the Lords name in vain, these are bad things... but they are not unforgivable things. Jesus Christ died on a tree to carry the weight of those things, and every other sin that lingers over our lives. He died in our place because he loves us so much more than any set of rules or codes.

Jesus tells us, no-one can keep all of the commandments perfectly... so we all are guilty... and maybe you are here and you have broken all ten of

them. The same blood that covers one covers them all if you will accept it. Jesus is the reason we come to this place and we learn about ancient scriptures that seem to have nothing to do with Him. But in reality, its all about Jesus. Hebrews 4:16 tells us to boldly approach the throne of grace... that we may receive mercy.

Do you know what that means?

It means we are to boldly approach the throne of grace... guilty.

Because someone else already paid the price.

There is no condemnation in this place today, only love. We talk about hard issues because hard issues tend to be the biggest and most controlling reality in peoples lives, but Jesus died to wash all that junk away.

We all take from each other. We all make God's name an unreality in our lives. We all rob God sometimes.

So lets change the areas of our lives that need to be changed. I know in my life, there are a whole lot of them. God doesn't just want you to stop doing something that maybe you have let drive you. He wants to give you something new to do, that you will like even more.

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.” (Ephesians 4:28)