TITLE: How’s Your Trust?

TEXT: John 14:1; Lev. 27:30; Mal. 3:6-12;

Hebrews 13:8 & 6:17-18

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about trust.. How are you doing in the trust department when it comes to God?

One of my favorite Scriptures is :

**John 14:1 (NIV) "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me**.

 Trust is really a pretty amazing thing! Trust is the antidote for a troubled heart..

 Even in those times when our heart becomes troubled, when we are going through the hard times of this life, we have a God whom we can trust! We serve a God who is trust worthy.

**4100 pisteuo {pist-yoo'-o}**

**1b2) to trust in Jesus or God as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something: saving faith**

**2) to entrust a thing to one, i.e. his fidelity, his faithfulness**

 OurTrust in God is one of the elementary truths of our faith.

 Before we will ever come to Him for our salvation don’t we first need to have an element of trust in Him?

How many here this morning trust in God?

 How many of you here this morning completely trust in God?

 Do you trust Him with your life, with your Salvation and your eternal destiny?

 Do you trust Him with your health?

 And do you trust Him with your wealth?

 Often, as Christians, if we fall short in our trust of God, we seem to fall short in the area of trusting Him with our wealth…

 Why is it that we can seem to trust God with our life, trust Him with the very salvation of our soul, but often have such a hard time trusting Him in the area of our finances, with our money?

 Take the area of tithing—most Christians struggle or have struggled with this simple area of trust…

 Do you realize that is what tithing is? It is a simple matter of trust and it isn’t something that God wants us to someday grow into as a Christian but it is a place that He wants us to start?

 Yet we so often really struggle with it—Why?

It comes down to Trust-- Or more accurately, often the lack of it. We may even miss-trust God in this area of our life.

 There is the story of the tourist who came too close to the edge of the Grand Canyon, lost his footing and plunged over the side, clawing and scratching to save himself before he fell into space he grabbed hold of a scrubby bush which he desperately grabbed with both hands.

 Filled with terror, he called out toward heaven, "Is there anyone up there?" A calm, powerful voice came out of the sky, "Yes, there is."

 The tourist pleaded, "Can you help me? Can you help me?" The calm voice replied, "Yes, I can help you. What is your problem?" "I fell over the cliff and am dangling in space holding to a bush that is about to let go. Please help me." "The voice from above said, "OK. Do you believe?" "Yes, yes, I believe."' "Do you have faith?" "Yes, yes. I have strong faith." The calm voice said, "Well, in that case, simply let loose of the bush and everything will turn out fine." There was a tense pause, then the tourist yelled, "Is there anyone else up there?"

 Real trust, like real faith often requires us to be willing to simply let go and believe that God will be there to catch us…

 Tithing is actually one of my favorite things to teach about because of the potential freedom and power that lies within grasping its message….

 Before we get to that though, there are some basic things that we need to understand about the tithe.

First-- What exactly a tithe is?

04643 ma`aser {mah-as-ayr'}

1) tenth part, payment of a tenth part.

Secondly, tithing is not something that God suggested that His people do but it is actually a commandment..

Levi 27:30 (NIV) "`A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

 Tithing is not only commanded but Scripture says that the Lord looks at it as something that is holy unto Him.

Holy--06944 qodesh {ko'-desh}

1. **holiness, apartness, separateness, set-apartness,**

The tithe in itself is not what is holy or special to God, it is our act of giving it that makes it holy, makes it special to Him.

 And thirdly, tithing is not for Gods benefit, it is for our benefit!

 This is an important point!

 God doesn’t need our money to run the universe! Let logic prevail here. God is the creator of everything that has ever been created! He has created all the gold and silver and diamonds and rubies and everything else of value on this planet! If God ever found Himself strapped for cash all that He would have to do is create some more!

 Tithing is not for Gods benefit.. Tithing is for your benefit and my benefit..

How can tithing be beneficial to us?

Mala 3:6 (NIV) "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

**7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.**

**"But you ask, `How are we to return?'**

**8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.**

**"But you ask, `How do we rob you?'**

**"In tithes and offerings.**

**9 You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me.**

**10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

**11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.**

**12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.**

The first sentence here is an important one…

**"I the LORD do not change.”**

Fact----God is immutable, He doesn’t change!

Hebr 13:8 (NIV) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

God doesn’t change!

If God said something was sin in the Old Testament it is still sin in the New Testament and it is still sin today..

 The promises of God are just as true for us as believers today as they were in times past.

 The commands of God are just as binding for us today as they were when He first commanded them..

**Mala 3:6 (NIV) "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.**

**EXAMPLE**: Many years ago I was really struggling with the concept of tithing and God brought me to these verses of Scripture…

 Pam and I, like many of you were a part of the credit card generation… A generation that was brought up with the philosophy of buy now pay later..

 At one point in our life, after living several years by this philosophy, we found ourselves buried in consumer debt.

(Penny’s, Sears, Montgomery Wards, master card, visa ---all filled to the limit plus our house payment, two car loans, furniture loan)

We came to a place that we were making good money but years of bad stewardship had us in pretty sad shape financially.

 It came to a point that we had more money out-going each month then we had in-coming…we were Something like 200.00 –short a month when it came time to pay the bills….

 My concept of tithing at this time was what ever may be left over at the end of the month, which usually translated into not very much---not even close to 10% of our earnings….

I remember praying to God in desperation one night about our finances and God brought me to these verses of Scripture and they hit me like a ton of bricks…..

**8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.**

**"But you ask, `How do we rob you?'**

"In tithes and offerings.

**9 You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me.**

**10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

**11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.**

At first I tried to ignore this Scripture but I couldn’t get away from the words…**."Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.**

 I found myself participating in a conversation with God…**But God, how am I robbing you?**

 **In tithes and offerings! You are under a cruse because you are robbing Me!**

And then these next words leaped off the pages at me…

**10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

Has anyone else here ever argued with God? I have on occasion and let me tell you that you always end up loosing the argument…

 I tried to reason with God about this….I said, but God, the whole tithe! The whole 10%! You know our situation! We are already 200.00 a month short in paying the bills and if we give you the first 10% of our income it doesn’t take a mathematician to figure out that we will more then double the amount we are short a month….

 God, this doesn’t add up on paper! It can’t possibly work..

 I wasn’t a genius in school but I was pretty good in math..

 But I couldn’t escape the words: **Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

**11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.**

 This was exactly what we felt was happening to our income. That pest’s were devouring it. We felt like our vines were casting off their fruit before they could reap a harvest

 Everything that we seemed to try to do on our own to get out of debt, everything that we tried to get control of in our financial situation seemed doomed to failure..

And now we had God Himself making a challenge to us…

**Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

God was saying:I dare you! Test Me and see if I won’t do that which I say I will do!

 We decided to take God up on His challenge, and To be honest I felt like the man who fell off the cliff and didn’t like the answer he got when he cried out for help.

 “I felt like saying, wrong answer! Is there anyone else up there?”

 The first month I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach as I wrote out a check for the full tithe.

 Even though deep down inside I knew that God had to be faithful to His Word….

 Do you realize that what God says, what He promises, He must do? He has no option but to fulfill His promises because He is God!

 Hebr 6:17 (NIV) Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.

**18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.**

I knew God had to be faithful to His promises but I was still pretty uneasy about it…

Anyway, we stepped out in faith (jumped off the cliff—here I come God, catch) and wrote out the check for the full tithe…by the months end something really pretty amazing happened as I think back upon that time…we made it through the month no worse off then the previous month! I still don’t know exactly how it happened!

 The next month I was almost as skeptical as the first month but I knew I had to do it…..The same thing happened, we made it through the month no real worse off then before…

 Month after month as we were obedient to God in this area of our life, God was faithful to His promise….

**and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

 **I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.**

 What seemed like an impossibility to us before started to happen…What was in the realm of impossibility to us entered the realm of reality to us..

Slowly but surely we began to climb our way out of debt..

It didn’t happen overnight but as we remained obedient to God in the area of our tithe, and simply trusted Him, it happened.

 God opened up the floodgates of Heaven and started to pour out His blessings….

Not it big lumps of cash--- but most often in other, much more subtle ways…

 God gave us wisdom and discipline to make some hard choices…. Cut up Credit cards and started to become a lot more responsible in our spending..

 As we became faithful in the area of the tithe God was faithful to His promise of opening up the floodgates of Heaven…

 For years we had lived under a self imposed financial curse where it seemed that pests where devouring our crops, and the vines in our fields would cast off their fruit, because of our disobedience and lack of trust in God..

Now we are living under the promise of His provision…

 A few times back then we actually saw what form those blessing of God took (IRS), but most of the time we didn’t see anything spectacular happen…it just happened….

 God seemed to either stretch our money or stretch the month..

But the real benefit came, not in just getting out of debt but in an increased trust and reliance upon God as He was able to prove Himself faithful to us in this area of our life.

 It opened up a whole other dimension of our ability to trust God more completely in many other ways..

 It was a few years after this that I felt God calling me into ministry.

 I felt Him calling me to leave a 22 year career where I had a good income and a good retirement plan to go and start all over again in the ministry…

 Once Again I kind of felt like the man who fell off the cliff and cried out; “is anyone up there?”

 Once again I heard Gods voice say just let go and trust in Me…

 Let me tell you it was a lot easier to let go and simply trust God because He had already proven Himself faithful.

 I found that if I could trust God with my money, my finances as messed up as they where, I could trust Him with everything else also….

 And that my friends is the primary purpose for the tithe!

 It is not to enrich God! It is to enrich us!

 To teach us that our God is a God that can be trusted.. That He is a God who is faithful to His Word..That He is a God that we can entrust with anything and everything that we have, including our very life and He will never disappoint us!

 When we come to Christ we are to give Him our all. That is what being a Christian is all about. And our thought shouldn’t be, God wants me to give Him 10% but that He allows me to keep 90% if I so choose!

This is a message that I like to preach on at least once every year or so because I feel that it is not just an important part, but an essential part of our relationship with the Lord because it is all about trust..

 Do we really trust God or not?

 I can still remember the first time I preached on the subject of tithing as a pastor.

 When we were assisting at Foursquare we ended up being sent down to Osceola to pastor a struggling Church down there.(Explain)

 The Church finances were a mess and there were only three family’s attending--two of which were really struggling financially…

 I remember praying one of those first weeks about what to preach on and I felt the Lord impressing upon me to preach on tithing…

 I can remember thinking, but Lord, these people are really struggling financially, It would be awkward preaching a message on tithing to them at this point….

 The Lord simply impressed upon me---that is why you need to preach it.

 Because they are struggling! Because they are living under financial bondage, because they need to know how to open the floodgates of heaven upon their lives…..

 I can count the sermons that I have heard on tithing in my life time on one hand and even then I would only have to use one or two fingers…and that is really unfortunate…I wish that I had grasped its importance years before I did.

 To many pastors this is not an easy message to preach because of a fear that some may miss-understand your intent in preaching it….

 The purpose of the message this morning is not to benefit Oak Grove Church.. It is not to benefit me as the pastor…

 The purpose of the message this morning is to give you opportunity to see the floodgates of Heaven opened upon your life and live in the fullness of all that God has for you..

 To give you opportunity to experience all the promise and provision of God in your life..

 To help you understand that trust and obedience in this area of our life and relationship with the Lord is just that…. An area of our trust and obedience!

 Tithing is not for Gods benefit! He who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, who owns the very hills themselves doesn’t need our money…….

 God doesn’t want our money, He wants our trust.

 And that is what tithing is really all about…A way for God to prove His faithfulness to us, a way for Him to prove that He is a God who is trust worthy..

 Are you up for a challenge from God this morning?

**Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.**

 This is the only place in Scripture where we have been given a direct challenge from God, God saying, come on, I dare you, try it out and see if I will not do that which I have promised to do--Open the floodgates of heaven upon your life….

It is all a matter of trust---do we trust God or not?

 The Scripture I read in Hebrews a while ago said that there are two unchangeable facts about God, actually there are more then just two, but one unchangeable fact about God is that it is impossible for God to lie.

 He must do what He says He will do! He has no choice because of who He is! He is God!

 Another unchangeable fact about God is this…

 It is impossible for us to out-give God. For with whatever measure that we use His measure is infinitely greater.

 Our minds can’t even begin to conceive all the blessings that lie within the storehouse of Heaven that He has to pour out onto our lives..

 We unleash and release those blessing through the simple act of trust… Trust is what will open up the floodgates of blessing from God upon our lives.

 Do you trust God this morning? Trust Him with your life, Trust Him with your health and will you trust Him with your wealth?

Prayer…..