

# FAITHFUL SERVANT

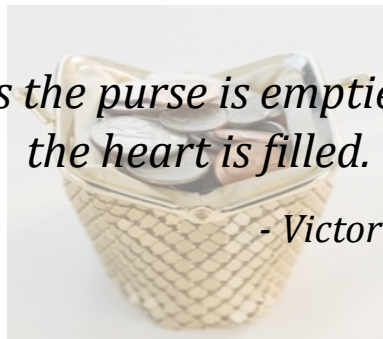
"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Matthew 25:21



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As the purse is emptied,  
the heart is filled.

- Victor Hugo



## Shipwrecked...

There were two men shipwrecked on this island. The minute they got on to the island one of them started screaming and yelling, "We're going to die! We're going to die! There's no food! No water! We're going to die!" The second man was propped up against a palm tree and acting so calmly it drove the first man crazy. "Don't you understand?!? We're going to die!!!" The second man replied, "You don't understand, I make \$100,000 a week....we'll get found soon" The first man looked at him quite dumbfounded and asked, "What difference does that make?!? We're on an island with no food and no water! We're going to DIE!!!" The second man answered, "You just don't get it, do you: I make \$100,000 a week, and I tithe ten percent of that \$100,000 each week to my church----I give \$10,000 each week to my church."

The First Man, still dumbfounded said, "I still don't understand!" The Second Man said: "Listen, I said to relax, I TITHE \$10,000 a week to my church, BELIEVE ME, My pastor will find me!"

[www.gospelthunder.com/Humor/money-and-offerings.htm](http://www.gospelthunder.com/Humor/money-and-offerings.htm)

## Giving God His Share

**Editor's note:** This article is the product of an interview with a Holy Trinity family, but their names have been changed, to help this publication to celebrate giving, not givers.

The Bible calls on Christians to contribute 10% of their income to the church, but is that before taxes or after?

For several years, Holy Trinity parishioners Gandalf and Galadriel Baggins said it was 'after,' and tithed based on their net household income. But recently, they've decided God should get His share of their money (which is actually God's money, after all) before the government takes its piece of the action.

"At first we justified our current practice by arguing that since we never make decisions about how to



spend the money taken off our cheques, it wasn't really ours," Gandalf explains. "We also noted that we tithe 10% from our income tax refunds as well, and thought that should be good enough."

But a conversation with a fellow Holy Trinity parishioner stirred some thought and prayer on the topic, and the Bagginses decided they needed to open both their hearts and their wallets a little wider.

"If we did not pay the taxes and benefits we currently do, we'd lack such basic necessities as health care, education and infrastructure," Gandalf notes.

"Neglecting to tithe from our gross income indicates how much we take for granted the great life and opportunity we have in Canada. It also shows that we ignore how hard we work for these benefits."

The Bagginses switched to gross tithing about halfway through last year, and Galadriel says the increased giving isn't easy on their family finances, but it is manageable.

"Using the gross amount significantly increases the total offering amount, and it has been a challenge to work within a smaller budget. It makes the management of cash flow much more important," she says.

"I suppose it means there is less discretionary income for us – not many meals out and those sorts of expenses. It has also been a sacrifice in control; if there isn't as much money to buy groceries, we have to let go of that control and know that God will help us to provide for ourselves."

Giving up that control is particularly tough, she admits,....cont'd on Pg. 2

*Giving God His Share cont'd...* when it comes to snazzy toys and trinkets. Even the Bagginses sometimes feel tempted to try to keep up with the Gamgees. "It's sometimes difficult to see a friend or neighbour with a nice new sectional couch and think, 'If only I could use my money in a different way, then I could have a nice couch like that, or car or clothes or other things,'" she says.

"I've heard people say that if you commit and tithe consistently, then God will bless you back. I don't believe that, unfortunately. Jesus never promised that being a Christian would protect us from bad things – in fact, he said we would be persecuted.

"When it comes to giving, God calls us to do it. Period. We need to trust that God will use it to do His work in this world."

The Bible calls us to give generously, and with joy. But Gandalf doesn't think we should wait until we feel joyful and generous to give God his share.

"I've always believed that God calls us to act, whether or not we feel like it. At times, we do the right thing because we want to. Other times, we do the right thing because it is the right thing and after acting the right way for long enough, we start to want to," he says.

"If we wait for the feelings, particularly with things like giving and overcoming our selfish desires, we may never feel like it."

*Interview & article by Rob Petkau*

## "Then come and follow me."

The bible records a story about a man who approached Jesus one day who asked what he needed to do to have eternal life. Jesus answered "You must keep the commandments" the man replied that he had done so ever since his youth "what more must I do?", he said. "You must go and sell all your possessions and give them to the poor," said Jesus. "Then come and follow me."

It's quite a demand that Jesus makes, isn't it? Here was a young man who wanted to follow Jesus. You'd expect Jesus to be grateful to have him tag along. You'd think he'd appreciate getting any support that he possibly could. And yet, as the story continues, we learn that this young man could not meet the demand. This young man did not become a disciple of Jesus.

So what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? Different people see discipleship in different ways. Some would say that it means going to church on a regular basis. Others would say that discipleship means attending a bible study or volunteering to teach Sunday School. Still others would say that discipleship requires reading the bible at home and regularly saying your prayers. But is that really true



discipleship?

Although all of those things are important, none of them defines discipleship. If they did, the young man in the Gospel would have been accepted. He was a man who was dedicated to the Law. He did what he was supposed to do. He was good and Jesus recognized that. But clearly, that was not enough.

No, that young man discovered that there was more to discipleship than merely doing the things he was meant to do. He discovered that there was more to discipleship than merely being a good person, that it went far deeper. ...Cont'd on Pg. 3



## Returning the Ball

*Bible reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15*



When watching a college baseball game, my young daughter retrieved a foul ball. If it had been a professional game, she would have been allowed to keep the ball, but at this level fans are expected to return baseballs. I wished that she could keep it because I thought it would be a big thrill for her. Then I saw how she enjoyed giving it back. In reality, the young man who collected the ball was just the batboy or equipment manager. But to a six-year-old, he was a "real live ballplayer," an athlete in uniform. She couldn't have been more delighted and awestruck if she had been giving the ball back to Babe Ruth himself. In a similar way we present gifts to God. Just as the baseball wasn't really my daughter's, what we give to God isn't really ours. At our best, we are only being obedient – doing our duty – with the gifts first given to us. As Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Luke, "When you have done everything you were told to do,...say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10 NIV). But wouldn't it be great if we could return our gifts of money and service to God with the same sense of joy and wonder that my daughter had in returning the baseball? It's not the gift that's special but the One receiving it.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to give joyfully. Amen.

*"Then come and follow me." continued...*

Discipleship meant making a decision to put everything in life behind Jesus. This, the young man could not do. He was wealthy and his wealth was more important than anything.

If the young man had his way, he would have been a follower of Jesus, but would have been allowed to section off parts of his life in order to keep Jesus out. He would have liked to follow, provided that his money was safe. But Jesus would have no part of that. If someone wanted to be a disciple, they had to willingly open their whole life to Him.



Walking the life of a disciple is no easy task.

Again and again we get diverted from the path that Christ is walking. We see other things that we want to follow. However, Jesus calls to us to return. He calls us to follow Him once again, as His is the only route that leads to life.

So what are some areas of our lives that Jesus wants to be involved in? Well, He wants to be invited into the relationships that we have with other people. He wants to be invited into our homes and to be a real part of our life. He wants to feel comfortable with how we relate to our fellow employees. He wants us to allow Him to guide us in making decisions. He wants us to allow Him to help us use the things we have been given so that they may truly honour Him.

That, the young man in the scriptures had trouble doing. He had no trouble keeping the Law, but when it came to how he used what he had, he wanted to be in control. He didn't want any interference, he didn't want any unsolicited advice. So his response was to walk away.

How sad that was. It still happens today. People walk away from Jesus because they are unwilling to surrender control. And yet Jesus was not willing to compromise. To Him discipleship was an all or nothing venture. There was no such thing as becoming a partial disciple.

Knowing that, sometimes makes us feel a bit uncomfortable just like it made the young man uncomfortable. However, Jesus makes no apology. If we want to be a disciple then we have to come on Jesus' terms. Jesus said, "Go and sell all your possessions and give them to the poor, then come and follow me."

Very few people today can sell all they have and give their money to the poor. Actually, this call of Jesus may well have been specific to the young man. However, that does not get us off the hook. When Jesus met with the young man, he could tell that there was something that the man valued more than a relationship with Him. It was his money. For others today it might be something else. It might be their job, their car, their iPod or laptop, their sports or even their family.

Whatever we value most in life, that is our god. Jesus calls us to surrender to Him and to follow Him in a life of discipleship. He has offered His very life for us. Now He wants us to accept Him and put Him in His rightful place. He wants our complete and utter allegiance. He wants to be a part of every single aspect of our lives.

What areas in your life is Jesus still shielded from? What parts of your life do you try to section off in order to keep them to yourself? A common area is the area of stewardship – how we use what we have been given. Sometimes we forget how we get various things. Often we credit ourselves. We admire our skills. Yet scripture reminds us that all that we have has been given to us by our Heavenly Father. We are not self-made. We have been entrusted by God with the things that we have, and it is up to us to see that we are faithful stewards. Our goal in life should be to please God.

...Cont'd on Pg. 4

## Greedy Monkey

This is how monkeys are captured in Southeast Asia.

In some areas of that part of the world (mostly in the rural villages), monkey meat is considered a viable food source. An easy way to catch a monkey is to tie a jar or vase with a very narrow neck out where there are monkeys.

The mouth of the vessel is just wide enough for the monkey to squeeze its paw inside. Peanuts are placed in the container. The monkey wants the nuts, so it reaches in, grabs a fistful of peanuts but cannot withdraw its paw because of the fist it has made.



What is obvious is that all the creature has to do is let go of the fistful of peanuts and it can go free. But their stubbornness in holding on to that fistful of peanuts results in a lot of monkeys winding up on the dinner table.

I wonder what we are holding on to so tightly in our lives? What do we have clenched in our fists that we are unwilling to let go?

*Author unknown*

<http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/database.aspx?filter=Illustration>



An increase in giving of \$208 is like a 4 L jug of milk worth \$4 each week for a year...

## YES, BUT HOW?

Have you decided to start the journey toward tithing to the church? Are you wondering how you can donate? There are several ways:

1. Place an anonymous **cash** donation in the offering bowl at the back of the church (it sits on a small table to the left of the open glass doors inside the sanctuary)
  2. Sign up for **offering envelopes** at the round table in the foyer. This will allow the envelope secretary to record your donations throughout the year and to issue a tax receipt to you.
  3. Place either cash or **cheque** (made out to Holy Trinity Anglican Church) in your envelope (or a visitor envelope also found on the round table in the foyer) in the offering bowl at the back of the sanctuary.
  4. Sign up for monthly **automatic withdrawals** from your account. This method prevents forgetfulness and also allows for donations during vacations or absences. Forms are also on the round table in the foyer, or can be sent to you electronically (please email [office@holyltrinitycalgary.org](mailto:office@holyltrinitycalgary.org) to request one) Don't forget to place your completed form in the offering bowl.
- If you have any further questions, feel free to contact Corporation: [corporation@holyltrinitycalgary.org](mailto:corporation@holyltrinitycalgary.org)



*"Then come and follow me." continued...It is appropriate, then, to reflect regularly on our lives as God's stewards. Two such areas that we should look at is our use of our time and our use of money. Does our use of these things please God our Father?*

It must be said clearly, that the giving of our time or our money means nothing apart from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. People can volunteer their time for various projects, or can give vast amounts of money to needy causes, but these are merely humanitarian efforts outside the context of Christianity. The giving of time or money for the Christian must be considered in the context of what Christ has done for us.

People sometimes think that stewardship is something that takes place once a year – at the annual campaign. However that notion could not be more wrong. Stewardship is something that calls for our attention all of the time. It is part and parcel of our daily relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not something to consider for a short while and then ignore. But rather, is something that is to be a part of our daily life, a part of our lifestyle.

Every person has a lifestyle. However, the lifestyle of a Christian is to be different from that of a person of the world. As Christ was out of step with the people of His time, so will we find that we are out of step with the people of our time as we strive to follow the way of Christ. The prevalent attitude today is focused inward. People look after themselves first, and only after that is done, do they begin to look outward.

For Christians, however, it is different. Christians are called to live a life worthy of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to love and serve others. We are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our broken world today. That calls for commitment. It calls for discipline.

A healthy life of stewardship helps us keep such a discipline. As we remember who has given us the things that we have. As we remember the blessings that we have received. As we remember Christ's call to us to serve Him in the world. So will we be encouraged to bring Him honor in our lives.

A biblical lifestyle that we are encouraged to accept for ourselves is that of a tithing lifestyle. Scripture tells us that people who were faithful to God, gave 10% of what they had, back to God. They recognized that it had been given to them by Him, and by their offering they were returning thanks.

It would be very difficult today for someone to practice tithing after years of not having done so. However, it is possible for each of us to develop a tithing lifestyle. Such a lifestyle begins the moment we decide that we want to respond to the goodness of God by offering back to Him a portion of what He has already given to us.

Perhaps we could begin by increasing our giving by 1% per year, working towards the biblical standard of 10%. It may be difficult. It will undoubtedly force us to re-evaluate our spending. However, it is a discipline which truly will bring honor to God.

We must remember that the work of Christ in the world today is to be carried out by those who have chosen to be His disciples. There are no others who will do the job for us. We are Christ's hands and feet. Each of us through our baptism are called to this ministry. When the young man talked with Jesus, he learned the meaning and cost of discipleship. It does cost a lot. But when we consider what Christ has done for us, could He possibly ask too much in return?

By Stephen Hambidge

The Stewardship Committee's latest idea for helping to raise the annual church budget.

