

# The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

IN THE INTEREST OF JARVIS STREET BAPTIST  
CHURCH, TORONTO, AND OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH.

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PASTOR AND EDITOR

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1: 16.

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE TITHE AND THE BLESSING

A Sermon by the Pastor

Preached in Jarvis St. Church, Toronto, Sunday Morning, Nov. 12, 1922.  
(Stenographically reported.)

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine eat her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

"And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."—Malachi 3: 10-12.

**I** CONCEIVE it to be the function of the ministry to bring to the people the message of the Lord. And I want to explain to you why I have selected this text this morning—or, rather, how it was selected for me. It is known to many that something over a year ago this church passed through a great crisis, when those who were known as the principal givers, with many others, withdrew from our fellowship; and left us to maintain this great work, without their assistance. Notwithstanding that God has supplied "all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus," We have undertaken things of which we were formerly afraid. For instance, for years there was a discussion as to how the message of the pulpit might be printed and circulated. Even at a time when this church reported as its revenue for the whole year, \$73,000, we could not find sufficient money to do it; but as soon as the Lord in His grace made us poor, He made us rich enough to do it; and thus the ministry of this church has been extended; and we say it to His praise, that never a week passes that we do not receive messages from different parts of this continent, and elsewhere, of blessing attending the reading of the printed page. We have had conversions reported, and baptisms, through the reading of The Gospel Witness. It has been a silent missionary carrying the gospel to places where there was no preacher to preach. Thus we have learned that there is a real joy in getting things done with help from God.

You know there was a time in this church when we used to organize wonderfully. I think we were so clever at organization, that we almost organized the Spirit of God out of our life: when any money was to be

raised, we organized, and we had "drives" and "canvasses;" and it was done in a very efficient fashion; and the money was obtained. But the spiritual blessing did not accompany it, as we believe it should have done. We have learned to take these things to the Lord in prayer in a way in which we had not learned before; and somehow or another the necessary help has come. The "barrel of meal" has not wasted; the "cruse of oil" has not failed; and we have never had to report a deficit of any sort. God has supplied our need. From time to time we have had to tell the people that there was some special obligation in view; but as we have done it, there has always been more than enough to supply our need.

Yesterday we had a meeting of the Prudential Committee, just to see how our affairs were; and we faced some things that we had to give attention to. For instance, during the war about three hundred men went out from the church; and more than forty of them sleep in France and in Flanders. In the Spring of 1919 the church gave instructions to the Finance Committee of that day to erect a suitable memorial, to perpetuate the memory of these splendid men. I can see them now: I can remember when some of them stood up in our services, and volunteered. I remember in those terrible days of blood how, one night, eight went down from this church to the armouries, and went home in uniform. Some of these very men never came back again. We cherish their memory: we are grateful to God for the splendid service they rendered. That memorial tablet was prepared; and just about the time of the crisis in our church life, it was ready, or nearly ready, for delivery. After our friends had separated from us, we wrote them and asked them if they desired to have a share in the erection of this memorial. It was our obligation: we were Jarvis Street Church, and not they; and we were responsible for it; but they very generously assumed nearly half of the responsibility; and notified us to that effect. That left us about four hundred dollars that we were to be privileged to give to complete the amount. It will cost \$900. It is a beautiful bronze memorial, which I expect will be erected where that larger list is hanging, in the south-east corner, and that will be transferred to the other side of the church.

Yesterday we said, "We shall have to ask the church to adopt some means whereby all the people will have the privilege of having a share in erecting that memorial;" and we knew we had only to say the word, and the money would be forthcoming, however great the sacrifice involved.

Then there is a sum of six hundred dollars we have to raise for our insurance this month. We have had experience with this before: we had only to tell the people, and to tell the Lord; and the money was forthcoming. So then we decided we must ask the people, or ask the church, to set a day for an offering, when we would take a special offering of \$1000 for these two objects.

The Prudential Committee, or rather, in the beginning of our discussion, one member of the Committee, felt that we ought to take an offering for Foreign Missions beside that, and at the same time. Many of our members contribute weekly to missions; but there are some who do not give by the week; but only as they are given opportunity by special offerings.

There were, then, these three things for which we should ask an offering. Psychologically, it seemed very unwise to ask for three things at once. First of all, I questioned the wisdom of it; but we had prayed that God would guide us, and ultimately we decided to ask the church next Thursday if they would approve the taking of a special offering on the 26th of

November for these three objects. And I was requested by the Prudential Committee to make that announcement this morning; that when we come together on Thursday we face that matter together; and then prayerfully ask the Lord's blessing.

Well one day this week a lady telephoned me, who had been converted just a few weeks before; and she said she wanted to see me about baptism. She came into the vestry, and I had a talk with her. She told me how she had dropped into this church occasionally for ten years, and how the Lord always laid hold of her somehow. Then she went away to Vancouver, something over eighteen months ago; and she said the Lord followed her to Vancouver, and actually brought her back across the continent to come to this church. And she came in six weeks ago; and a week or so later she was wonderfully converted. She had been a member of a church before; but she had not known what it was to look to Jesus as her Saviour. I rejoiced with her; and then she said something that I have never heard in my years of experience as a minister. She told me that she was a working woman; that she worked for her living; and she had nothing but that which she earned. "But," she said, "you know I have been reading the Bible; and I have come to see that when one is converted, if he has wronged a neighbour, so far as it is in his power, he should make restitution." But she said, "I do not know that I have anything to do on that account. The Lord has not shown me anything there; "but," she added, "I have come to see from the study of God's word, that it is our privilege to give a tenth of all that God gives us; and I have not done it. I look back over the years; and I feel that somehow or another I should make up, so far as God enables me to do it, the tenth I have not paid. I am going to ask the Lord to do that—to help me to make restitution to Him in this matter of the tithe. Now," she continued, "I should like to be baptized next Sunday." And I said, "Well, will you come and meet the committee on Saturday evening?" She said she would.

We had our Prudential Meeting on Saturday afternoon. We went home about seven o'clock; and I came back again to the prayer meeting, and found her waiting for me. She put an envelope into my hand; and she said, "I want you to read that." She said that she had placed this matter before the Lord, and before her baptism she desired to put upon the altar what she was able to give, as some expression of her gratitude to God, and as an act of restitution in the matter of the tithe. And there was a cheque enclosed; it was a cheque for \$150 which she desired to give to the Lord before she was baptized.

I had a feeling that there was some very close connection between our afternoon meeting and that act of hers. We had much prayer in the prayer-meeting until about half past ten. Then God laid upon a large number a great burden of prayer, and they wanted to stay—and they did stay until between one and two o'clock this morning. And the burden of the prayers of many was that we should be led to bring our tithes into the storehouse; and as that prayer was presented to God again and again, with no suggestion from anyone but from the Spirit of the Lord, I said, "Well, Lord, I have never preached from that particular text; but I will take it in the morning and talk about it, if it be the Lord's will."

I should like to add, that as we prayed about this offering, one young man said, "I have not much money with me; but the lad brought five loaves and two fishes, and there are two dollars." And he came forward and put it on the table. Another young man, who is not a member of this church—just a student, and students have no surplus money—said, "I

want to give a little too;" and he put down one dollar. Another Brother said, "I want to put one hundred dollars on top of that." And we felt the Lord was leading us out; and there was a spirit of hilarious giving in all hearts. That was between one and two o'clock this morning. And those who did not contribute then wanted to face this matter before the Lord, and give as the Lord has prospered.

In this text the Lord asks a question, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me." They then say, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" And His answer is, "In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." He is speaking to the people of Israel.

I. Let us begin by endeavouring to understand the principle involved here—that **God Demands of us a Recognition of His Proprietorship**. He is not speaking now of what our Anglican friends would call works of "supererogation," or something that is over and above our necessary duty; but He is speaking of a simple obligation, of the rendering to God of that which is His own; and He declares that the tenth is His: it is not ours at all.

I read to you this morning from the New Testament a passage which refers to the priesthood of our Lord as being similar to that of Melchisedec,—that He is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." We do not know who Melchisedec was; but I am inclined to the belief that He was none other than the Lord Himself, Who appeared in that ancient day, "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of years; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." And when Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, Melchisedec, king of Salem, the King of peace, met him, and to Him Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And the chapter I read to you this morning teaches us that in that act Abraham recognized the superiority, the Lordship, of Melchisedec. "Consider," says the writer, "how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils." The giving of the tenth was a recognition of Melchisedec's kingship, of His superiority to the patriarch.

Then you will remember Jacob's wonderful dream: he registered a vow when he set up the stone at Bethel, and said, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God . . . and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Later still when the children of Israel possessed the land of promise, God set aside the tribe of Levi to minister to Him in the priesthood. Therefore, when they went into the promised land, and they divided the land by lot among the tribes, Levi was given no portion. Levi had no land: it was divided among the other tribes. And every one of them was instructed to give a tenth of all they had to the Lord for the Levites; and so the Levites had a portion in all their brethren. But they had no land. (Num. 18:20-21). And then in turn the Levites also were required to tithe the tithes: they also had to bring into the offering of the Lord a tenth of all they received from their brethren of the other tribes; but the tithe of all, and the tithe of the tithe, was "holy unto the Lord.

I have not time this morning even to enumerate the instances in which spiritual revival and quickening accompanied the act of recognition of God's proprietorship, by the rendering of the tithe. This, however, I must say, the thing that is fundamental to all spiritual prosperity is a right relation-ship to God.

One said to Jesus: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Do you remember the question? And Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But Jesus did not mean that the first commandment was merely first in order: He meant that God Himself was to be regarded as the chief Creditor, as the King, as the Lord of all: and that a recognition and acknowledgment of that fact is the sine qua non of all spiritual good.

In our day the emphasis is laid upon the second table of the decalogue; and as long as men live in right relationship to their fellows, even though they ignore God, we are told that all will be well: if a man is merely normal; if he pays his debts, and recognizes and discharges his obligation to his fellows; even though he never bows his knee to God, all will be well. A half truth is an untruth; and the thing that we need to learn to-day is that God will be God; that He demands recognition as God. And it is our duty and privilege as Christian people so to recognize God that it shall appear to all that we accord Him in all things the pre-eminence. He is our chief Creditor: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." It is the Lord who giveth thee power to get wealth." There is nothing we have which is our own. From Him "every good and every perfect gift" proceedeth; and if He withdraws His hand, then we are poor indeed.

That, in principle, is what God demands of us: that in our business, in our temporal affairs, we shall recognize God by giving Him the first place. A tenth of the flock, and of the herd, and of all the fruit of the land, God claimed for Himself; and it was for Himself alone. It was to be reserved and dedicated to Him; it was "holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27: 30-33). In this case the people had withheld their tithes. They had not recognized God; and God actually charges them with having "robbed" Him. He does not say, "You have not been generous:" He says, "You have not been honest with Me."

There is a terrible story in the New Testament also,—one of the most terrible stories in the whole Book—of the taking of a collection; and of a husband coming and laying down at the apostles' feet that which he declared was the price of a piece of land he had sold. Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" And he fell down dead at the apostle's feet. When his wife came in later, Peter asked her whether they had sold the land for so much, only to discover that they had conspired together to be untrue to God, to be dishonest with God, to mock God; as if He could be deceived! And she too fell dead at the apostle's feet.

My dear friends, it is a very serious matter. It is important that we should give God His rightful place; that we should put Him first; and that we should recognize that whatever we have, be it little or much, God demands that His claims be given recognition.

Of course, the principle of the first commandment applies to more than the giving of the tenth: it applies to everything; but I am dealing with this especially this morning. And I am not speaking of this in order to make an appeal to you. I am just bringing you this text; because I could not get away from it. I have not had time to unlock its treasures. I just want to leave the text with you; because the text is far mightier than any exposition of mine could be. I am persuaded the more we give the people of the Word of the Lord the more effective our ministry will be. Some one may go away and say, "The preacher did not say very much to us this morning." No, he did not. I have told you that I am merely thinking aloud this morning; speaking wholly impromptu, from a text laid on my heart by being quoted in several prayers between one and two o'clock this morning. But God has said a great deal. "Will a man rob God?" Will you rob Him? Will I? Shall we any of us rob Him? or shall we resolve here this morning that there shall be an end of that; and that we will from this forward recognize God in our temporal affairs; and we will do what he has required?

It may be that somebody here this morning will say, "But sir, you are preaching from an Old Testament text: do you know that 'we are not under the law, but under grace?'" Yes, I know that; but let us consider the relation of these two principles, of the two covenants, of Law and Grace. Ponder this text, for instance: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The ceremonial law was abolished; and the law, as an objective standard, and as a means of salvation, is declared to have failed: but the decalogue is not abolished: "the righteousness of the law" is to be fulfilled in us "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "Thou shalt not kill;" "thou shalt not steal;" these and other requirements of the moral law are as binding as ever. The gospel does not license us to do these things. The difference between the law and the gospel is that God has taken the objective law from the tables of stone, and He has written it in our own hearts, making the renewed soul to desire what God wills.

The tenth is a useful minimum; but my contention this morning is that the standards of the New Testament are, in their spiritual import, if possible, even higher than the standards of the Old: that the gospel requires far more of us than did the law. It demands the submission of the whole man—spirit, soul, and body—to the Lordship of Jesus Christ; and a recognition of Him in all our affairs, spiritual and temporal.

II. But let me now remind you that **There is Always a Place for Repentance.** The Lord uses some hard words here. I should not have thought of taking this text, because really I must confess that I have been filled with gratitude for the way God has supplied our need; and for the generous way in which the people have given. And it never occurred to me to think that we were among those who rob God. I do not know that we are. I am not saying that this has application to you. When this young woman came to me last week to tell me of her new-found hope in Christ, it did not occur to me to say, "Look here, what have you been doing with the Lord's tithes during the past years?" It would never have occurred to me to speak like that; but when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon a man or upon a woman, and enlightens the understanding, and quickens the conscience, and takes the first place in our affections, it is perfectly marvellous what God can do.

When, and following upon that, He seemed to open the hearts of the people in prayer; and to lead some of them to quote this text, it seemed to me that it would be wise for me to bring you the text, even though I was unprepared to give you a studied exposition of it. I do not want to lessen its force at all: nor to suggest to any one that we should seek to escape from its tremendously searching inquiry. Let us open our hearts to the Holy Spirit's scrutiny.

"Will a man rob God?" Well, if you have, it is for you, my friend, to acknowledge it. If any of us are conscious of having failed in this particular thing—in our relationship to God; then I remind you that He comes in tender grace to say, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." As though He should say, "If that is what you have done, let Me tell you what you may do from this hour, Recognize Me: it is not too late, bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, begin to make amends, bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and prove me now herewith, said the Lord of hosts."

I do believe that **God desires to be proved as Lord of the material realm.** Modern science has almost excluded God from the realm of the material. The evolutionary hypothesis has become, shall I say, atmospheric. And this atmosphere has coloured all our thinking; so that many who profess to believe the Bible to be the Word of God, are unconsciously influenced by the prevailing miasma, and led to conceive the universe as a machine governed only by processes of inexorable law; and that God has so wound the thing up, that it has to go on in its appointed course, and that God is something apart from His universe; or otherwise, that He is locked within, in the sense of the divine immanence; that He has shut Himself up within the things He has made; and He cannot Himself suspend His law. And out of that comes the denial of all miracles. "Why," says the man of science, "it is nonsense to talk about Jesus opening the eyes of the blind, and healing the leper, and raising the dead, and making water

into wine, and multiplying the loaves: it is contrary to law, and He cannot do it." But God waits to prove that He is the Source of law; and that He is superior to law; that while He is immanent,—everywhere present in all His works; He is transcendent too—Sovereign of everything that He has made; and He can stop the machine if need be: for Hezekiah He made the shadow return backward on the dial of Ahaz; and at the word of Joshua the sun stood still. God can lengthen your day if He will: the sun and everything above and beneath it, are still subject to His personal, sovereign sway.

Now, said He, in the realm of the material, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and prove me now herewith, said the Lord of hosts,—give me a chance to show that I am Lord in My universe." Do you not think that the Lord desires to glorify Himself in the finances of a church? Do you not believe that He desires to show what He can do with poor people? I do not know that there is any special virtue in being poor, especially if our poverty is due to our indolence; nor do I think it is specially wrong to be rich; if wealth comes as the gift of God, as the reward of honest toil; and provided that God is recognized. We should serve God where He has placed us; and thank Him for everything He has bestowed upon us. On the other hand, it is true that God has "chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." Oh, you have dreamed about somebody remembering you in their will, have you not? If I were to ask all those who have not dreamed such dreams as that to stand, I do not think anybody would stand. We have all dreamed of being rich. But, my dear friends, the Lord of glory has remembered you in His Will; and the poor of this world may be "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" and God loves to take hold of a congregation of poor people, and show the world what He can do. He loves to take, as I have often said to you, "the weak things of the world . . . and the things which are despised—I think that means a church—and things which are not." Why somebody said the other day, speaking about Jarvis Street,—so somebody told me,—"Nobody goes there." I do not know whether they meant we were a congregation of nobodies. We are at least a congregation of humans of some sort; and if we are nobodies there is a probability of our being used of God. He desires to manifest His grace and power in the realm of the material. Therefore, however poor we may be, let us be ambitious to be "rich in faith."

About three years ago a gentleman from this church came home with me one Sunday evening after the meeting; and as we sat together at my table I asked him about our unfinished building. I said, "Do you think it ought to be finished?" "O yes," he said, "I think so. I think we should address ourselves to that matter at an early date." Then he added: "I would be willing to give you \$10,000 towards it." I was thankful; I remember I was thankful both to God and to him for that generous promise. Of course it was only a promise, but I thought of it as cash; but it did not bring me half the spiritual blessing that that cheque for \$150 did last night. Somehow or another that came to me as something right down out of heaven from God: there was a spiritual accompaniment about it I cannot explain; and I think, as I have told you the story this morning, you have felt that it was the finger of God. Our Lord still loves to get the loaves and the fishes from the lad; and it is wonderful what He can do with them.

Now, my dear friends, I ask you this morning if we shall prove Him in the material realm; if we shall just accept, shall I dare to say, His challenge: "Prove me now herewith; bring in your tithes; recognize Me; and I put Myself on record—I give you My written promise: I will . . . open the windows—or, the flood-gates—of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

I believe that we have a right to expect material blessing. I believe the text has application there, that God will bless us even in the material realm; He will bless us in our business; He will bless us in our basket and in our store; He will really give us increase in material things. Now as a matter of arithmetic, if a man has a dollar and he needs every cent of it, and he gives ten cents to the Lord, he will be ten cents short. That is arithmetic; but it is not faith. The ninety cents mean more than one dollar when they are put into the hands of God; and I believe He would have us prove Him there: that is the only way by which we can accept this teaching. Otherwise, there are people here this morning who would

say, "Well sir, I can hardly pay my way. If I were to give the Lord a tenth I do not know what I should do." But He says: "Prove Me; take Me into partnership; make Me supervisor; make Me the head of the house; make Me the manager of the business; recognize Me; and see if I will not make the concern grow: I will pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

This is, of course, especially true in the spiritual sense. Somebody said last night, "Is that the reason why we have not had the floods of blessing for which we have been praying? Perhaps God in His providence has led us to see this evening, in order that He may open the flood-gates of heaven." I do not know. I just bring you this simple message.

"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sake." Do you know what the "devourer" is? Well, there were the locust, the caterpillar, the canker-worm, and these devoured the fruit of the field.

What is the "devourer?" There is somebody here this morning who says, "But sir, I have had sickness in my home. I have had all kinds of trouble." Yes, these things come; in the Providence of God they are permitted; but sometimes it may be that some of these "devourers" would not come; it may be that we should be saved from a good deal of expense, if only we gave God the first place. In the spiritual realm the seed is sown, and the birds of the air come and catch it away. Does it not mean that the Lord will build a fence about His garden; that He Who is the Gardener will take care of His vine? We shall not sow and another reap; but we shall sow, and ourselves shall reap; and we shall see the fruit of our toil in the name of the Lord.

I have not said much to you this morning. I have just given you the text, and I want to read it to you once more with a prayer that God may write it in our hearts: "Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts."

I told you that we would take the offering after the message this morning instead of before. It just occurred to me that perhaps the Lord has another plan—that to-day and next Sunday we may have this thousand dollars put on the plate; and that we may observe November 26th as a great thank-offering day to send the gospel to the regions beyond. But I do ask you prayerfully to take this message, and lay it on your hearts; and let us hear what God the Lord will say to us.

**Remember Everybody!** Three prayer meetings,—the tide is rising! Be sure to be on hand when the Wind of the Spirit brings the long-expected argosy of souls to port.

**Remember—Ladies!** Dorcas will meet Thursday at 2.30 to sew. She needs you, and so do the missionaries for whom she will work.

**Remember—Gentlemen!** Dorcas invites you to tea Thursday at 6.30 (Sh! Don't forget your purse!).

**Remember—Boys and Girls.** Wednesday 7.15.

## The Church Calendar

For the week beginning Sunday, November 26th, 1922.

### Sunday

10.00—**Prayer Service** in the Church Parlor, Mr. George Greenway.

10.30—**Communion Service.**

11.00—**Public Worship.** The Pastor will preach.

3.00—**The Bible School** will meet.

6.00—**Prayer Meeting** in Church Parlor.

7.00—**Public Worship**—The Pastor will preach. Baptism will be administered.

**Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday**—8.00—Prayer Service.

**Wednesday**—Junior Mid-Week Service—7.15.

**The Parliament St. Branch, 250 Parliament St. Sunday:** Bible School, 3.00; Evangelistic Service, conducted by Mr. W. L. McKay, 7.00.

**Wednesday, 8.00, Prayer Meeting. Friday, 7.15, Junior Service.**

Dorcas, Thurs. 2.30. Tea 6.30.