

**SERMON NOTES: 10/01/23**

**SCRIPTURE READING: Deut 12:1-6 & Malachi 3:6- 10.**

**MESSAGE: Serving Through our Giving: As Obedience and Worship.**

Today, we start a series on stewardship that will take us four Sundays by looking at how we serve the Lord through our giving and as obedience and worship of God. In the coming weeks, we will look at giving as being from a thankful and generous heart, a mark of excellence and devotion, and finally, a mark of a transformed heart.

The issue of giving is one that many Methodist pastors try to talk less about because we assume that all Methodist congregations are well-informed about it. The denomination has given well-thought-out structures on many church ministries and how we support them throughout the year. Even when disaster strikes anywhere in the world, our UMCOR takes the needed help to people in need, like during Hurricanes, Tornadoes, earthquakes, and other calamities.

But how do Methodists engage in so much that goes on in our communities and the world? It is through the incredible generosity of the people called Methodists. These people know the word of God and faithfully obey it by opening their wallets in support of the many ministries and missions of the church.

In today's scripture lessons, we first hear from the book of Deuteronomy, the centerpiece of which is laws and regulations covering worship, justice, and family life. Here, God was preparing Israelites as they entered the promised land by instructing them to destroy all pagan shrines. Then, in **v6**, God tells them to worship with offerings, sacrifices, tithes, and other gifts. Scholars believe that Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy towards the end of his acts as the Lord appointed. As such, he was preparing a new generation of the Lord's chosen people as kingdom representatives in the land they were moving into, Canaan.

<sup>3</sup>However, in Malachi chapter 3, we find God accusing his people of robbing Him through their failure to pay tithes to the Temple's storehouses. Why? Because they knew their scriptures but disobeyed their God. When people fail to worship God with this and offerings, they steal from the one who, in the first place, gave them everything they have. So, God challenges them to test divine generosity by obedience in their worship.

If you look keenly, many church ministries are struggling today because we forgot God's word on worship through giving. Like Israelites, we have settled in our promised land and might easily forget the instruction to worship with our substance. It is so sad that we tend to spend so much on ourselves, our families, and our friends during festive months while forgetting our obligation to God.

In closing, the bible says in **1 Samuel 15:22** that obedience is better than any sacrifice we give, and listening is better than the fat of rams. We might be wondering, like the Israelites, how we could rob God. You see, God is self-sufficient, and hence, he does not

need us for him to exist. However, we need God to live. Friends, God's love language is obedience; that is how we show our honor and worship. We must destroy every altar that takes away our worship of God. So, let us not rob God. Remember, if we test God through our giving, he promises to open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing without measure. Are you willing to be obedient in your giving?