



ALL SAINTS

## Sermon Discussion Guide

### Practices of a Missionary People for a Secular Age: Tithing & Fasting

FEBRUARY 29, 2016

#### **INTRO Questions:**

Why should we tithe and fast? What are some proper & improper motives?

#### **Background:**

Tim's been focusing on what the spiritual practices require of us. He connected hospitality to tithing and fasting, with self-denial as the link. To do these or any of the spiritual practices with the right motives—obedience to and worship of God—we must learn to deny ourselves. We must learn to care more about pleasing God than pleasing ourselves, and discover therein a beautiful paradox: in God's pleasure we find our own deepest pleasure. We must learn, as Tim underscored from Mark 8:35, that part of Jesus finishing our salvation is teaching us to deny ourselves: "...whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." Paul resonates Jesus' teaching in Phil 2:2, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

**Read** the text aloud

#### **Discuss:**

- 1) vv. 14-21: These verses are a rebuke. For what? *Hint: v. 18.* It's not just lack of understanding but hard hearts, an expression used through the OT to reference Israel's lack of \_\_\_\_? *This* is the key to tithing with right motives.
- 2) vv. 22-25: Jesus illustrates the cure to his disciples' blindness in the story of the blind man. What do the man and his friends need to seek and find Jesus' cure?
- 3) vv. 31-33: Peter, as only he would, rebukes Jesus! Why? Tim said that unlike Peter we're ok with Jesus suffering/dying, as long as we don't have to; I agree. Discuss.
- 4) vv. 34-37: Herein lies the great paradox of discipleship, a paradox that many mainstream expressions of "Christianity" have tried to sidestep. Discuss how the contemporary church has influenced you on the subject of costly discipleship, i.e. biblical discipleship.
- 5) How can we, together, walk the path of true discipleship, the path that requires us to take up *our* cross and follow Jesus (Matt 16:24)? How can fasting and tithing help us?
- 6) vv. 34-37: Tithing is one of the most concrete acts of faith, and also an act of self-denial which might hurt. How does *acting* faith help our faith grow? Fasting certainly entails self-denial and pain. How does this pain help us grow in mercy, compassion?

#### **Conclusion/Application:**

Tim said 32% of our church members don't tithe at all; another 18% give < \$2,000. So 50% our members don't tithe to the biblical standard. We don't highlight this to guilt trip you but to challenge you to act out faith. None of us can cheat God, who owns ALL creation (Ps 50:10), but if we don't trust God we cheat ourselves—of peace, rest, joy. Giving money when we don't have much is hard; it requires real faith. But God *will* provide for us if we trust and obey him (Matt 6:25-34). And if we try not to deny ourselves (e.g. not fasting/tithing), we actually do deny ourselves the greatest fulfillment we can know: maturing in Christ, in faith, hope and love for God & others.

**Mark 8:14-25, 31-37**

**English Standard Version (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup> And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." <sup>16</sup> And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? <sup>18</sup> Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? <sup>19</sup> When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." <sup>20</sup> "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." <sup>21</sup> And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

<sup>22</sup> And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. <sup>23</sup> And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" <sup>24</sup> And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." <sup>25</sup> Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly...

<sup>31</sup> And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

<sup>34</sup> And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> For what can a man give in return for his soul?"