

Giving towards our vision

Malachi 3.8-12

Key Points:

- Our vision as a church is (still) to be **'Beacons of Hope in our Community'**. It is the way in which we are pursuing God's promise to us given through a prophetic word at the very beginning of Springfield's journey - *for us to be a river ministry flowing through the town; seeing God's Kingdom flow out from us into Wallington and the surrounding area*. This is about overflow, about being so full of Jesus that we spill out into the community. Jesus brought hope wherever he went, and we are called to follow him. The exciting thing is that we have only seen but a trickle of what's possible!
- Malachi's prophecy, spoken to an unfaithful and unrepentant Israel around 500 years before Jesus is powerful. While rebuking the Israelites for withholding their tithe (10% of all they received), God also promises that if they bring their tithes to the storehouse, so that there's enough food for the temple, He will *'open the windows of heaven...I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in!'* That incredible promise is true for us too. God loves to bless us, and we can never outgive God.
- Malachi encourages us to believe that if we give God what is His by honouring Him with our stuff, He will in turn do things for us that can be visibly seen and felt at a material and natural level as well as (primarily) all of the blessings in the heavenly realms. Not just Old Testament - Paul in 2 Corinthians 9 - whoever sows generously will reap generously.
- In this season, we want to continue to resource all that Springfield is doing to be beacons of hope in our community, and investing where God is showing favour. One particular area is 0-11s & young families, and employing a Children & Families' Pastor is key to this. We feel led to resource this (with 'food' from the storehouse) and trust God to bless us! This costs money, and so I encourage each person to review their giving - working towards tithing (we're not bound to tithe, we *get* to tithe and 10% isn't a limit, it's a target).

Questions:

1. Take some time to share & celebrate some of the ways in which you have seen our '*beacons of hope*' vision become a reality in our community over the past 26 years. Where have you seen hope/the Kingdom of Heaven invade?
2. How had the people of God 'cheated' God? (v.8) Why was the tithe God's? What about the rest of their income?
3. Is tithing relevant today? (C.f. Tithing originated long before 'the law' - Genesis 14.17-24, and Jesus seems to support tithing - Matthew 23.23)
4. Is it easy to give to God through the church? Why/why not? Do you think it comes 'naturally' to us?!
5. Read verses 10-12 again. It seems to suggest that when we're obedient, God blesses us: when we give to God, He gives back abundantly more. How does this make you feel? Have you had any experience of this?
6. Dream together! What would 'God opening the windows of heaven and pouring out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in' look like (a) in your own life, (b) in the Springfield ministries your involved in, (c) in Springfield as a community?
7. Take time to pray (individually or with others if you feel comfortable) and ask God am I giving enough, could I give more, what will honour You Lord?