

Today we have baptized a baby and now we are going to talk about money. The two don't seem to go together. We celebrate a baptism. There is joy. We endure sermons on the stewardship of money and are glad they come only twice a year. But there is a connection between the two. The obvious connection, of course, is that babies cost money. Lots of money, what with medicines, food, toys, clothes, school, college, etc. We willingly part with our money so that our children can enjoy all these things. But there is another connection between children and money. Both are gifts from God to us. They come to us, not because we deserve them, but because God loves us. Children, of course, are far more valuable than money. Who would not gladly exchange all he or she has for the health, welfare, success and salvation of his or her child? Kidnappers bank on this. Black-market adoption agencies cash in on this fact. Both children and money are talents given to us to be used to God's glory.

With this in mind let us look at our text from Psalm 119:35. "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight." Look first at the last phrase in that verse, "for therein do I delight." Certainly, anyone who has children knows that they can be a delight.

"Therein do I delight" in my children. But think of some of the other things we delight in. Certainly, for most of us, money in itself is not something we delight in. We delight in the things that money can buy. But we also delight in things which can not be bought. There are all sorts of things I delight in. I made a very short list of some of them. I delight in ice cream. I delight in seeing Penn State win a football game. I delight in Family and thanksgiving dinner. What are some of the things that you delight in? If you are unmarried and dating someone it may be that you delight in going out with a boyfriend or a girlfriend. You may delight in going to parties. What is it that you delight in?

Now ask this question. Do you have to be made to do any of these things that you delight in doing? I do not have to be made to eat ice cream. No one makes me sit in front of the TV to watch a football game on Saturday afternoon. When I was a little kid an older playmate might command me to do something I didn't want to do and I would respond defiantly, "Make me!" The retort that was standard was, "You are <sup>are</sup> already/made. You can't be made twice." In short, we don't have to be made to do something we delight in most of the times.

But there are exceptions. Sometimes I have been made

to do something only to discover that I really delight in it. For example, in college I was made to take geology or some laboratory science. I didn't want to but I was made to in order to graduate. But I discovered once I was into the course that I was really delighting in learning about the earth, its origins, and the forces at work in its history. I think also of our youngest son, Mark. Often I will <sup>place</sup> ~~set~~ him in his high chair to feed him. He is so interested in everything else that he doesn't want to eat. He pushes the spoon away. I tell him, "Mark, if you just taste this you will like it." Finally, I hold his head and hands and force feed him the first bite. His eyes light up. He likes it. Everything else is forgotten and all he wants to do is eat.

A lot of things in our spiritual lives are like that. Only when God makes us do we realise that we really delight in them. And the old school ground saying, "you're alrday made, you cantt be made twice" I discover is not altogether true. We can be made twice. We can be born again by the power and grace of God. Our tastes can be changed. We can discover that we delight to do what God wants us to do once he makes us. So before we even become a Christian we need to cry out to God, with the Psalmist, "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight." And through-

out the remainder of our lives as Christians we continually cry out to God, "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight." This is especially true when it comes to tithing.

If we have never tithed the idea of beginning is not a very delightful one. How could we ever live happily if we gave a tenth of our income to the work of the church? How could we manage? It seems a sure formula for unhappiness. How could anyone delight therein? But once God brings us to the place ~~whm~~ in our spiritual lives that we do tithe we discover that we actually delight in it. I have met many an uncheerful giver who complains about the way the church asks for money. But I have never heard a tither complain about the money he or she gives. The tither is nearly always a cheerful giver. He or she delights therein.

The psalmist goes on to say, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way." What is it that inhibits us from tithing? The Psalmist spoke of covetousness and vanity. Aren't we afraid to tithe because we have an inordinate desire for more than we have? Isn't <sup>it</sup> because our eyes behold all the vain things that advertising merchants try to sell us. <sup>?</sup> ~~But~~ John Newton wrote ~~and will sing a little later.~~ "All the vain things

that charms me most, I sacrifice them to His blood."

A couple years ago I came across a cartoon that illustrates how covetousness and vanity rob us of the delight of tithing. In the first frame of the cartoon picture a car salesman with a sales slip and a pen in his hand which he is handing to a prospective buyer. The salesman says, "You're getting a real buy here... Nothing down, 48 months to pay and almost no interest... Just 12%." The prospective buyer eagerly reaches out to take the saleslip and says, "Where do I sign? Where are the keys?"

In the next frame picture an appliance salesman showing ~~a man and his wife~~ <sup>The same man +</sup> a brand-new electro-wave oven. He says, "We'll even give you five years to pay for it at 18% interest. What could be more fair?" The husband is sold on it and responds, "Nothing could be more fair! Where do I sign?"

In the third frame we see a real estate agent standing in front of a beautiful house with a "for sale" sign. <sup>The same</sup> ~~A woman~~ <sup>and woman</sup> and her ~~husband~~ listen to the salesman's spiel. "Isn't it beautiful? And just think. Just one quarter down. Thirty years to pay. Interests rate at the unheard of rate of 14% We'll even put the closing costs and the insurance in your payments!" Both husband and wife are elated and exclaim, "All we ask is, 'Where do we sign?!'"

Finally, in the fourth frame imagine a pastor sitting in a ~~parishioners~~ <sup>Two couples new</sup> living room explaining the ~~new~~ <sup>church</sup> budget and the need of increased pledging. The pastor says, "Now about our expanded church program... It will require the support of every one of us. How about \$14 a week for 52 weeks from you?" <sup>2</sup> "That's only a little more than 700 dollars a year. ~~Less than a good dinner out, Less than going to a football game with your wife.~~" The shocked parishioner jumps out of his chair and shouts, "What? Tie myself down for 52 weeks?! No, sir, not me! I never pledge! No, sir! That's suicide! The future's too insecure! No, sir, not me!"

You see, everybody is willing to sign on the dotted line for the things that delight them. We are willing to go into hock for cars, and appliances, and clothing, and homes. But we need to ask God, "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight." "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine ~~eyes~~ from beholding vanity;" And when we pray that prayer and begin to tithe we begin to realise that we really delight in obey<sup>ing</sup> God's will, in giving our tithes and offerings. Then we are able to sincerely sing, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my sould, my life, my all."

I'm going to close my sermon now with a story. Once upon a time there was a man who had nothing and God gave him ten apples. He gave him the first three apples to eat. He gave him the second three apples to trade for a shelter from the sun and rain. He gave him the third three apples to trade for clothing to wear. He gave him the last apple so that he might have something to give back to God to show his gratitude for the other nine.

The man ate the first three apples. He traded the second three for a shelter from the sun and rain. He traded the third three for clothing to wear. Then he looked at the tenth apple. It seemed bigger and juicier than the rest. He knew that God had given him the tenth apple so that he might return it to Him out of gratitude for the other nine. But the tenth apple looked bigger and juicier all the time. And he reasoned that God had all the other apples in the world. So the man ate the tenth apple... and gave back to God... the core.

God has given you and me enough apples to supply all our needs and many more to supply our wants. He has given many of us children, homes, clothing, cars, furniture, friends and above all he has given us the Lord Jesus Christ to be our saviour. God has given us all we need plus more and he wants us to return to him just one tenth of what he has given us.

If <sup>we</sup> you were to go to a store and see a sign saying that there is a 10% reduction on a new suit we would say, "10%! That's not much. I can do better than that." So we wait until there is a sale with a 20% reduction or more. 10% doesn't seem like very much off when we go out to buy something. But sometimes the 10% that God wants us to return to him looks terribly <sup>give or pledge. Now I don't know how much any of you</sup> big. <sup>but I want to ask you,</sup> Will you tithe? Will you at least move in the direction of tithing as you fill out your pledge card this week? Maybe some of you have already filled them out. You look at the figure you have written in and you think of how much God has given you and how far short of the tithe you are returning to him. Maybe you want to scratch out what you wrote in and increase your pledge now. The choice is yours. Will you return to God the largest and juiciest of your apples-- or only the core?

Let us pray: "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn ~~away~~ mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."