24th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Parable of the rich man “who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” is a warning for us, a warning of what will happen if we put our trust in ourselves instead of being, as Christ puts it to us today, “rich toward God.”

What do Jesus, the Bible, and the Church Fathers have to say about tithing and giving to God?

"How much should I give?... How often? Why?" These questions are sometimes painful to ask and difficult to answer.

Fr. John Whiteford discusses the practice and meaning of tithing, ancient and modern.

Tithing was the practice of giving ten percent of one’s “increase” to God. By increase, this meant that whatever one’s labor managed to acquire, the first ten percent of it was the Lord’s. Tithing was included in the Law of Moses, but it actually predated that law, because we see in Genesis 14:18-20 that Abraham also tithed. To fail to tithe was to rob God. We know that [St. Vladimir](http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/63077.htm) practiced tithing because the first stone Church in Kiev was built with money he tithed, and was nick-named, “The Church of the Tithes” (Десятинна Церква).

We are created in God’s image. God reveals Himself as love and pours out His mercy upon us. He is a God who gives of Himself to us for our salvation. Then Christian stewardship is a loving response to a giving God. We offer up all of ourselves to Him in a loving response. The whole thrust of out liturgy is offering. We offer up ourselves, each other, and our entire lives unto Christ our God. “Thine own of Thine own, we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all.” The center of the Liturgy is an offering up to God, a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving that is returned to us as Christ Himself in the consecrated gifts.

We are stewards of all that God has given us, and this includes not only our money, but our time, and our talents. God has given them for us to use to his glory. Of course we have an obligation to take care of our families and to meet our own needs, but we also are to use these things to take care of others, especially the poor, and we also need to support the work of the Church, both on the parish level, but also on a wider scale so that the Church is able to do all that it needs to do to proclaim the Gospel and strengthen the faithful.

Giving is a spiritual discipline and we should give out of a need to grow spiritually. We rob ourselves of the benefit of spiritual growth by not giving. Thus, we see that giving is intimately connected to how we actualize the Gospel in our lives.

As we learn to put our trust more in God for our spiritual and physical needs, our dependence on this transitory world, and its temporal hold on us weakens and we are freed more and more from the illusory and false sense of ‘security’ that its possession brings. In being rich toward God and placing our reliance on Him, God fills us to overflowing with His joy and love to build in us treasure in heaven, giving us true and lasting fulfillment through contentment in Him, peace, and participation in His eternal Kingdom. Those who sow generously will also reap generously. This is Christ’s promise to all those who are rich toward God, in heart and mind, and, in deed.