

FIRST FRUITS

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THE FIRST FRUITS OFFERING

As taught by Pastor Melissa Scott from the Los Angeles University Cathedral

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The minute people hear the word "money" or "giving" they just tune out. And you know what? I don't blame them. And I don't blame them for this reason: If you have not been taught on why you should give, giving will not make sense to you. I want you to learn why you should give. I want you to get a Bible and read it for yourself. And if you can't understand it, come back to the Sunday Service or go to the website where we've got twenty-four hour programming that will teach you about all the subjects.

I need to talk about money. How else can change happen and how else can I tell people out there in TV-land that giving in its truest form is inextricably tied to Christianity. You cannot separate them. I don't need a gimmick. All I need is for people to be taught in the word. And if you have not been taught in the word by this ministry do NOT send any money. Did I just say that? Absolutely! It's been said here for more than thirty years and I'll keep saying it. If you have NOT been taught in the word from this ministry, do NOT send any money. BUT

once you've been taught, Galatians 6, "If you've been taught in the word, you share materially with the one who taught you." Galatians 6.

So, let me ask how many have ever seen those ads on how to become a millionaire? I'm talking about the secular, not the church world. "Become a Millionaire, make money now!" Come on, show me your hands. I know you've all seen those ads. That's the secular world preying on a few dumb people. "Oh boy! That guy on TV's got how many houses and how many Ferraris? Wow!" I guarantee you if we were to statistically look at that whole, we'd find that maybe less than five percent of the people who enter into those get-rich-quick schemes ever get rich. And usually it's the guy whose collecting the tickets at the door. No brainer. Right? So, let me ask you the million-dollar question. Why would you go to your church and enter into a Ponzi scheme? Why would you go to your church and say, "Well, at my church we're having a meeting next month on how all the saints of God can make more money so we can give more."

There are so many people that are so gullible, and they're coming from a perspective where the world's view must fit into the church. I'm sorry, but I've never read anywhere (in scripture) about how to "get rich quick." If you want to get rich, by golly, go out and get rich in the world. Just don't put a halo around it and bring it into the body of Christ and act like you're doing something special for God, because the only thing that's being done is a clever play on people's greed. It's how people in the church are manipulated and conned.

I've taught on the taxonomy of the church's reason for being and I heard one person say, "Well the reason why we've inverted our reason-for-being is because our ministry is so big now, we have to feed the machinery of the ministry." Well if your ministry's gotten so big that you've forgotten what the Founder and Creator set it out to be, then you don't have a ministry. You have a business. So take it out in the world and conduct your business. The church cannot conduct itself as a business.

We actually have new people who hear teaching from this ministry, and they say, "Wow! This is good Bible teaching. But I go to a church across town, so there's no way that I could support your ministry." And this ministry (the one that is feeding them their spiritual food) suffers financially because patrons aren't doing their part. Now I have a body of people sitting in front of me, and across the country, who have been taught how to give. They understand when they give God's way, it is the highest form of worship they'll ever do. It's the highest and greatest thing you can ever do, as long as you understand why you're doing it. But, we've got patrons that bring their worldview with them. The worldview says: "donate." I've said this before and I must say it again. The church is not a charity! That's why when people say, "I'd like to get a tax receipt," we tell them, Dr. Scott fought for the right to give you a tax receipt, but in order to keep your giving private between you and God and this ministry, we don't give tax receipts. Don't double dip! .

God speaks about charity. He does. But not as a part of your tithe. If we were going to talk about the tithe today, I'd say the tithe is the Lord's. It belongs to God. You bring your ten percent. That's your tithe. "Why should I do that? Why should I even give a tithe? The church has plenty of money. You guys have a nice building..." You tithe because God said to do so. Now, there's a paradoxical frame of reference that must be understood. When you are giving to God, you are not giving to God in a reluctant way. You're giving to God because God sees the heart and knows the mind and because this is what pleases Him. God gave us the tithe as a governor to prevent us from giving it all. He doesn't want us to give everything.

You'll remember Moses coming out of the mount after forty days and forty nights and is going to go talk to the people and God says, "This is what I want you to tell the children of Israel. Take an offering." That's the first words. If the modern churchworld could rewrite the Bible, they'd have Moses coming down after forty days and forty nights and have a holy convocation. They'd have a "holy-ghostified" meeting. They'd have prayer time. They'd have an agape feast. They'd have all kinds of other things and then maybe, maybe if all of that was all good, they'd take up an offering. God says take up an offering FIRST.

Giving in its truest form is inextricably tied to Christianity. You cannot separate them. The MUST for people to understand is that when you are changed from glory to glory; you're not changed from glory to glory for some other purpose. You're being conformed to Christ's likeness and in doing so, you become like the greatest Giver of all time; you don't become more like you. You become more like Him. Things of the earth will

kind of fade away and you'll begin to set your eyes on the bank of heaven. You'll begin to realize the same Creator that spoke and breathed into Adam takes our last breath away. You've heard me say this before, like Zsa Zsa, "You can't take it with you, darling..." She was right. You start to figure out once you hit a certain age where, you know, you passed the age of emancipation; you're suddenly at the age where you're at the top of the mountain looking down. Everything's downhill from this point forward folks. Looking from the top of mountain down saying, "Now what is this all about and what matters to me?"

I know the promises of God. And I'm going to talk about the promises of God today regarding money. I know this flies in the face of many, but I'm not dealing with horseshoes. I'm dealing with souls. And if you think it's enough to be close to heaven's gate, wait until you get to the gate and find out that close was not good enough. I so desperately want people to get away from these schemes that prey on their natural desire for fleshly things. Do you know how many promises are in this book, spoken by God Himself, about prosperity for the people? I don't need to come up with a scheme. I just need people to learn and understand what's theirs to claim. Corinthians says, "All the promises of God, all the promises of God are yea and amen, in Christ." I have the right to claim everything in this book. This is not a tithing message. If it was a tithing message, we'd be here another couple of hours. Today's message is about FIRSTFRUITS.

FIRSTFRUITS, why is this important? The concept of firstfruits is not so you can go and get blessed. There is a first concept before your blessing comes. God says, "You take the first of whatever comes in your hands, the first of your harvest, whatever it is and you bring it to the priest." That's before blessing. Blessing afterwards. Too many people don't understand because they come with a social or moral idea of what patrons are supposed to be. They think that somehow if they are not earning money on a regular basis, they ought to not be giving. No. In fact, that's the time when you're supposed to be giving. That's faith! You give when you can't give. "Augh! I can't believe she said that!" Some people say, "Well I can't afford to bring first fruits offering. I can't afford that." Maybe you can't afford NOT to.

What I find interesting is most people who teach First Fruits want to teach on the blessings. But I've never heard anybody teach on the curses that God also provides for rebellion. Everybody wants to talk about the tithing principle out of Malachi. It's a true principle. It's absolute. And God says, "You DO this and you get blessing. You DON'T do this and you get cursing." What type of God do you serve? An all-powerful God, He can decide, He sees, He knows, He watches, He knows our heart. He says very specifically, "The tithe is the Lord's. The firstfruits are the Lord's." Deuteronomy spells it out. Deuteronomy 18 for those folks who want to go check me out. You do the research. God's trying to tell us something. That's why when people make giving some tack-on-thing at the end, like the most distasteful, disdainful thing that you could ever think of, they are actually inverting the purpose of giving.

I've tagged in my Bible thirty different passages on firstfruits alone. And these are not ambiguous. There are at least another five firstfruit concepts that come in God's book. Here in Deuteronomy 18, the priests, the Levites and all the tribe of Levi. For those who are not familiar with the Old Testament, the Levites were those who were designated to the priesthood in the Old Testament, *"The Levites shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offering of the LORD made by fire, and His inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as He hath said unto them. And this shall be the priests due (right) from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks and the maw."* Don't laugh you maws out there. You paws are excluded. It's okay. Just the maws. *"The firstfruit of thy corn, of thy wine, of thine oil, the first of the fleece of thy sheep, thy shall give him."* Who? The priest. Now I don't see any blessing here, yet. I just hear instruction on what we're to do. *"For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister to in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever."*

Now you might say, "Well that's Old Testament." Right. And Paul in the New Testament says out of Philipians, out of Corinthians, that this Old Testament priesthood is what the preachers and teachers of the Gospel have now become. That's not a caricature. Go check me out. Go check out any theological place you want to look at and we become a priesthood. We have become a priesthood. Now there's no blessing attached to that scripture. It just says bring it. Okay. Exodus 23. Now this is good review for some who have heard this a bazillion times. For others we're going to go to a few different places.

Now if you begin to read, you'll see it starts with the Feast of Unleavened Bread and a reminder of the Passover. It goes down to the feast of Pentecost, which is being called the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of thy labor. There are two concepts of firstfruits. There is the feast of firstfruits that occurred as feast within a feast and firstfruits though the whole Bible, which was, if it happened in the middle of the year. If you got a new job in the middle of the year, you brought the firstfruits of your job. People just comingle this and make it sound like it's one big melting pot. No. God separates the two. One specifically, feast of firstfruits and firstfruit. We work by the calendar where now we are in 2008; therefore, the firstfruits of the year, going by our calendar says this is firstfruits month (January). Those who understand, who have been taught will know what to do. Listen carefully to what it says. Verse 19, the first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God." Let me stop there. It says the first of the firstfruits. There are two different Hebrew words. The first of the firstfruits, when we read this in the Hebrew, "In the beginning," this reads, I'll write it phonetically and I'll write it this way because I'm writing English. *Berishith, berishith, berishith, bara, Elohim*. That's the English phoneticized of the Hebrew. Be in the Hebrew makes it, "in" and *rishith* is beginning. The two words being used for first of your firstfruits, one of them is *rishith*, this word here *rishith*. All right, *rishith*. The first or the beginning, the best of your firstfruits and let me write the English word for firstfruits: *bikkur, bikkur, bikkur*, the beginning or the first, the origin of, the top portion of, the best of the best of your first; of what first came in, your first harvest of the land.

"Behold I send an Angel before thee." I want you to notice that the word Angel starts with a capital letter. We translate Angel as a messenger. But this is just a little bit more than a regular messenger and I'm going to tell you why. We get that by verse 21. It says, "*Behold I send an Angel before thee*" (this is in obedience to the firstfruits) "*I send an Angel before thee to keep thee in the way,*" number one. Not to keep you in YOUR way. Listen carefully and read it properly. It doesn't say to keep you in YOUR way. It says, "to keep you in THE way." Thank you. Other people have selective reading, "Ah, God's going to send a Angel before me to keep me in my way so I can be comfortable." No. He's going to keep thee in His way, THE way. "*and bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*" Okay, here we go. These are the instructions rightly translated. It says, "*Beware of him*" (no) "*Pay attention to him.*" I did the translation out of the Hebrew, "Pay attention to him, to the Angel, to My messenger. Pay attention to him, listen to his voice." Then it says, "*Provoke him not.*" (Do not rebel against him). Now the Angel's going to take you in the way, (which is God's way not our way), and you're not to rebel against those ways. "*For he will not pardon your transgression,*" (He won't forgive the rebellion of you) "*for my name*" (scratch out "is") "*For my name in him.*" Not just any angel. A messenger of God carrying the name of God on his chest and going before you to keep you in THE way. "Oh man, but I wanted to be in my way!" Well listen carefully because THE WAY is not that bad. "*But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy to thine enemies, I'll be an adversary unto thine adversaries.*"

I like that! Well that's a good promise right there. He's going to send an Angel before me to keep me in the way, the place, to bring me to the place. "*For mine Angel shall go before thee and bring thee unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites and I will cut them off.*" They're all a bunch of "ites." All right. Listen. There's more to this promise. It says, "*Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them.*" Read verse 25, "Ye shall serve the LORD your God each one of us in our capacity," translated to New Testament, "does what he or she is called to do." There'll never be another you to do it. There'll never be another me to do it.

"*And He shall bless thy bread, and thy water.*" I like that promise! God's going to bless my food on the table "*And I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.*" I know there'll be people that will say, "But I've done all this and I'm still sick. I've done all this and my provisions haven't been taken care of. This is why I said, don't listen to somebody selling you a promise of God without explaining what has been absolutely made clear for us in the New Testament. Don't treat me like a child and expect me to believe something that some person that comes up with, supposedly in the name of God, and that same person doesn't tell me the full picture. Do you ever notice this? There will be people that will peddle a promise, "Your barns are going to overflow. It's going to be great. You're going to see if you do this, you'll get that..." And we end up with a bunch of disillusioned people saying: "But I've done all this and none of the good has happened."

I had probably thirty different places I wanted to take you to, but we'll go to Hebrews 4 to make my point.

The tragedy is not explaining to people that what God blesses, He can also curse; what He gives He can take away. We have sick people in the church and across the country. We've got people who don't have money who need provision. We've got everything under the sun. I don't want to hide it. I want to show it. I want to share it. I want you to know that of all the people of God, there's no one who does not suffer something. If somebody tells you, "Well since I've been a believer, I haven't suffered anything. I have no poverty anymore, etc." Somebody had the gall to say to me, "Well, the reason why your church has problems is because you preach a poverty Gospel." No! Let me tell you what I preach. I preach that while Jesus Christ, who had everything in the whole universe, who was rich, became poor for a loser like me. And I'm the pattern after that. My riches are stored up there. Everything I have down here can be stolen, burnt or taken away, but nobody can take Jesus Christ away from me.

I want you to get to know me. I don't care if you don't like my delivery. I care for your soul, and take care that you not to be deceived. I may speak a different way. I may say certain things that are what we call shades of the meaning of a word. And I'll come back and say, "These are shades of a meaning or this is my opinion." God's only interested in one righteousness that comes from Him. And the Spirit of God in you, that is His deposit of righteousness, His righteousness flowing through you. Once you grab hold of that, you move a far distance from a world that says, (like Judas and the Alabaster Box) "Why this waste?" And you instead say, "My hand is on that plow. I'm not letting go." Hebrews 4 paints the picture and explains clearly. When people say, "But I've done this and I'm still here." Listen carefully. *"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise"* (any promise because Second Corinthians says all the promises of God in this book, in Christ are mine and are yours, any promise) *"being left on one day too long of entering into His rest."* That word we've corrected. If you haven't corrected it, please do so. "Rest" is not anything but in the New Testament sense "promise obtained." There are two types of rest for the Christian in the New Testament realm. In the Old Testament we had the Sabbath. In the New Testament we have the rest of PROMISE OBTAINED. When you faith something daily, you keep faithing, you keep laboring in faith to obtain it. Once you obtain it, you don't sit back. You then start again on another one, another of the promises of God. And the second rest, which is that permanent rest, that we call Sabbath rest, happens when we enter into heaven. No more rewards being accrued. No more wrestling down here. It's all over.

Those are the two RESTS in the New Testament. Right here, the understanding, PROMISE OBTAINED. *"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise"* (any promise being left a day too long) *"entering into any of you should seem to come short of it"* (to leave it there, to not pursue it by faith). Listen carefully, *"For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard"* (forget about the "it") *"in them that heard. For we which have faith"* (not believed) *"we which have faith do enter into rest"* (that rest, promise obtained) "as He said, I have sworn, As I've sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."

When God says it, He's awaiting faithers to claim it. But there's an erroneous idea that you reach up, grab this promise and then you spend the rest of your time beating God over the head with it. No. You are to labor into it. And laboring means you keep going. It's a day in, from faith-to-faith. You don't stop faithing it until you obtain it. "You mean to tell me I commit my firstfruits to the Lord, I commit my tithe to the Lord these things are going to come to pass?" Well that's what faith's about. The promise is you keep faithing to obtain. And once you've obtained it, you don't sit back and say, "Well, I've got that one now. Nothing else for me to do." *"For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of their unbelief"* (it says unbelief, it's disfaith). They were not faithing. They were not grabbing hold of God's word. Grab and keep grabbing and grabbing.

When I did the message on the promises of God, I described this like a child going across monkey bars or a jungle gym. You go from one bar to the other bar to get across to the other side. That's how we grab on to the promises. We just grab on. Some kids just can't hold on. They drop in the middle. That's like some of us who get so tired of trying to get up in faith, that we forget what it's all about. Completing the race seems so far away when you realize time and eternity. What time is, is nothing in comparison to eternity. But for this carnal mind that lives in this head. *"Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it*

was first preached entered not in because of disfaith."

"Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts," (It should read "Joshua" not Jesus, a mistake by the translators because using the name 'Jesus' doesn't make sense). "For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day." No. That should be translated as "Joshua," not Jesus, for he's speaking of those that were going to enter into the Promised Land, the place promised by God, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." We talk about sabbathing and rest, "For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labor" (let us keep going on in faith) "therefore, to enter into that rest."

So I'm going to say, I wish I could have gone into the rest of the examples of firstfruits. The idea is you can claim a promise of God attached to giving so long as you understand those promises are not genie-in-a-bottle. You keep faithing. From faith to faith.

Listen closely. If you want to claim the promise of firstfruits, there's a condition attached to it. Listen to the condition. Starting at Proverbs 3, verse 5, *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."* What does that say? Follow God. Follow God's person. Follow God's leader to explain it to you and listen, *"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."* Does that mean in my money too? Yes, it means in everything. *"In all thy ways."* That means everything that is compassed about you. Not some ways. Not a few ways. Not selective ways. *"All thy ways and He will direct your paths."* *"Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, marrow to thy bones."* I didn't even bother to translate this. *"Honor the LORD with thy substance"* (what does it say? It has a number 1 margin) *"honor the LORD with thy possessions, and with the firstfruits."* So there are two things being said, *"Honor the LORD with thy possessions, and with your firstfruits."* Aw, I don't like that promise anymore. I thought it just said one thing, now you're telling me two? Absolutely. *"All of thine increase."* Everything. Augh! And here's the promise: *"So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."* Well, Hallelujah! I like that. Wait a minute! Don't close the book, because if you like that, you'd better read the rest of it. Proverbs have been separated into little chapters and verses but what comes after is, *"My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary in His correction: for whom the LORD loveth He correcteth."*

So, how come I never hear the promise firstfruits preached like that where it tells me the good, the bad and the ugly? "I only want to hear the good stuff, wave the banner of all the good things the Lord hath provided for me and don't say what the other parts are." That's why I said to you, and I'm sorry but I make no apologies to those that listen who are looking to me to find the answers. I want to tell you the truth.

I want to tell you to the best of my ability what God's word says. And if it doesn't say it in His book I don't want to talk to you about it. My vocation is to teach people the word of God. And if you've been taught rightly, you won't be deceived by all these other things roaming around that sound plausible to the fleshly mind, but to the Spirit are an offense and an abomination to the Lord. Now for the rest of those that understand...it is January, Firstfruits month.

That's my message.

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