	He Can Be Trusted, Lordship = Faith
 **BIG IDEA**	Fear is the door money uses to get into our hearts, and the way to break its grip is to put God first before we feel safe. God asks for our first and our best, not our leftovers, and He has already shown He can be trusted by giving His own firstborn for us. Giving is not another tax, it is a response to His grace.
 **ICE BREAKER**	1. What is something that has gotten noticeably more expensive lately that you really feel? 2. When prices go up, what is the first thing you tend to cut back on? 3. Has a "first" in your life, like a first paycheck, first car, or first gift, ever taught you something about trust?
 **MAIN POINTS**	Fear is the door money uses to get into your heart. Pastor Shan pointed out that prices are up about 45% since 2013, and when prices go up, so does fear. Jesus put treasure and worry side by side: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21), and four verses later, "Do not worry about your life" (Matthew 6:25). Most people don't hold back from God because they are stingy, they hold back because they are afraid there won't be enough. Fear always says wait, until there is more or until things go back to normal, but prices aren't going back to 2013, and if we wait for fear to give us permission to give, it never will. Firstfruits: give God your first and your best. "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing" (Proverbs 3:9-10). Fear says take care of yourself first and see what is left for God, while firstfruits says God gets the first, not what's left. Firstfruits means before: Israel gave before they knew whether the harvest would be good or bad, and that is trust. For us, it means giving to God before the mortgage, the car payment, or Amazon, which is why a recurring gift can help. Firstfruits also means best, like Abel, who brought "fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock" while Cain brought only "some" (Genesis 4, Hebrews 11:4). God deserves our best because He went first and gave His best in His firstborn Son, Jesus, and because the tithe, the first ten percent, "belongs to the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30), which is why Scripture usually says to bring, offer, or return it, since you can't give something that was never yours. Jesus asked, "You cannot serve both God and money," so if money isn't your god, why does it keep getting the final say? Grace is never less than the law, and tithing is worship, not tipping. Some say tithing was the Old Testament law and they are under grace, but Jesus told the Pharisees, "You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things" (Matthew 23:23). Pastor Shan asked two questions: is fear causing you to look for loopholes, and if Jesus told you to tithe,

would you? If people under the law gave ten percent, why would we give less? He also drew a line between tipping, which is how you thank someone who serves you and depends on how good the service was, and tithing, which is worship of God as King. You don't tip a King, you bow to Him. He shared how he and his wife realized they had been tipping, committed to give first and best without knowing how the math would work, and discovered that you will never overcome fear and be able to tithe until you tithe. The promise is real: "Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38). This is not the prosperity gospel, we don't give to get. God stays true to His promises and honors those who honor Him, often in ways beyond finances, like joy and opportunities.

Take one step up the giving ladder. Pastor Shan described generosity at Central as a ladder of discipleship. A first-time giver makes a first gift off the top of the next paycheck, going from nothing to something. A consistent giver moves giving to payday and sets up a recurring gift, going from something to something consistent. An intentional giver takes the next step toward the first 10%, going from something consistent to something specific. A catalytic giver asks God whether He is calling them to invest in eternity in a bigger way, going from something specific to something sacrificial. He was not asking anyone to jump to the top, only to take a step, so that God can give us stories to share, we experience His blessing, money stops controlling us, and worry loosens its grip. And it is not about making a line go up, it is about people, the next generation, and this Valley. Before deciding anything, remember that God never asks for anything He has not already done: He gave His first and His best for us.



DISCUSS

1. Why do you think Jesus put treasure and worry together in Matthew 6?
2. Where do you see fear gaining a foothold, stronghold, or chokehold in how you think about money?
3. What does it mean to give God your first and your best, and what makes that hard?
4. What is the difference between tipping and tithing in how we approach giving?
5. Which rung of the giving ladder are you on right now, and what is one step God may be asking you to take?



NEXT STEP

Jesus First: Read Matthew 6:19-34 this week and ask God, "Where is my treasure, and what fear is behind my holding back?" Then name where you are on the giving ladder and ask Him what next step He wants you to take.

People Always: Talk honestly with your spouse, if you are married, or a trusted friend or your Group about your giving and any fears behind it. Don't carry it alone.

Made for More: TTake your step. Make your first gift come off the top of your next paycheck, set up a recurring gift on payday, take the next step toward the first 10%, or, if you already tithe, ask God if He is calling you to be catalytic.



Matthew 6:21, 25 Proverbs 3:9-10 Leviticus 23:14 Leviticus 27:30 Hebrews 11:4 Matthew

SCRIPTURE	23:23 Luke 6:38
NEXT WEEK SNEAK PEAK	Join us next weekend as Pastor Cal continues our series on Money with "Return to Me: Lordship = Returning" from Malachi 3:6-12. Invite someone to join you and don't miss the journey ahead! Questions or Feedback? Email Groups@CentralAZ.com