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Partakers of heavenly treasure

THE REV. ZELDA KENNEDY

The lessons for October 1 remind me of growing up in the Episcopal Church and how the people questioned God's faithfulness. How they dared to put God to the test. The test involved the tithe.

As an Episcopalian, it was a long time before I heard or understood the word "tithe." I first heard it while visiting a classmate's Pentecostal church. Being the dutiful Episcopalian that I was, I assumed it was a Pentecostal concept. Imagine my surprise to learn that tithing was scripturally based. Malachi 3:8 states: "Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, 'How are we robbing you?' In your tithes and offerings!" (NIV) Tithes and offerings? Indeed, one-tenth of everything earned.

When I discussed the concept with my family and friends, I was told it didn't apply to us (Episcopalians) because, somehow, we had a different understanding with God about giving and it certainly didn't include the tithe. Therefore, for many years, I forgot about the tithe. However, as I grew into adulthood, another Episcopalian told me about Malachi 3:10, which says: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.'" (NIV)

I began to tithe. I still tithe. In fact the tithe is the first thing I do when it comes to giving. I tithed in college and seminary, and it wasn't very much. I tell others that I should not have been able to attend seminary with a new, custom-built home, but I did. I

never lacked for anything, and I believed it was because I tithed. Today, with much more to give, it's the same story and I believe it is because I tithe.

Many believe it is too much to give. Let me tell you that it isn't. The collect for October 1 reads: "O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the

For reflection...

- When do you experience God's blessings most profoundly in your life? How has that experience impacted your giving?
- Some see tithing as a goal of their pledging to their church while others see the tithe as the foundation of their giving. How have you thought about tithing?

Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen." Let me suggest that you read this collect every day — especially the words that request that "we may become partakers of your heavenly treasure." Let me also suggest that you read and reread Malachi 3:8,10.

I'm a strong, strong proponent of tithing. When someone from another denomination asks about the tithe, I respond with a proud and definite, "Yes, we tithe in our church. Or at least we strive to tithe."

We know the importance of tithing because it is through giving that we receive so that we continue to do God's work, in God's time, for God's people, for the right reasons.



The Rev. Zelda Kennedy recently retired after 14 years as Senior Associate for Pastoral Care at All Saints Church, Pasadena. Before coming to All Saints, Zelda, a native of the Bahamas, served as an assistant priest at St. Patrick's Church in Mooresville, North Carolina. She holds a Masters of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School and Berkeley Seminary.