

Immerse Day 58 :: April 21

*“But be careful not to treat the holy gifts of the people of Israel as though they were common. If you do, you will die.”*

The Levites didn't get the blessing of land like the rest of God's people did. Each of the other 11 tribes, when they conquered the promised land, got a section of land that was theirs. If they sold it, they got it back on the Year of Jubilee. And for a nation of freed slaves, who had not owned anything in Egypt, land was an incredible gift. But it was kept from the Levites.

Instead, the Levites got the tithe from the other 11 tribes as their portion. While the other tribes got to raise crops, livestock, and sheep to feed their families, they brought a tithe, 1/10, to God as an offering, and that was collected and then given to the Levites, God's representatives. Instead of land, the rest of the people took care of the Levites.

But the tithe was not about feeding the workers. If that were so, then the people would have power over the Levites (“do what we want or we won't feed you!”) and therefore God. No, the tithe was about worship, about returning to God what He had given in the first place. Nowhere is this more evident than in the fact that the Levites, after receiving the tithe of the people, had to tithe on the tithe, and in so doing, they worshiped God as well.

But, God says, your offerings, whether given to the Levites or coming from the Levites, must be the best of what you have. If you give the best, then your gift will be holy. If not, it will be considered common, the very opposite of holy.

When we bring our own offerings to God, be they our tithe (10% of all of our income sources) or our time (2.4 hours of every day?) or our talents (um, what's 10% of all of our talent?), God calls us to give the very best. This is what makes our offerings holy. To give the leftovers of our income after we've spent all we want to on ourselves is just common – everyone does that. To give whatever time we have left after we've worked, eaten, played, watched Netflix, posted on Facebook... that's common, too. But when we give the best of what we have, and often that means the first rather than the dregs, then these gifts are holy.

We consider ourselves “good Christians” just for giving anything to God at all – an hour on Sunday, \$10 in the offering plate (is that term anachronistic now, an idea from a bygone era?), or an afternoon cleaning the church. But God doesn't just want us to give; He wants us to give the very best. And God is worth our very best, don't you think?