

# Will a Man Rob God?<sup>1</sup>

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Today, many thieves and robbers are confined in a certain place so that they will not have the chance to do their wicked activities during the Sinulog festival. The Cebu City government is trying its best to protect the visitors, not only foreigners but also locals or Filipino nationals, from these robbers. Why? It is because robbers can hurt the ones being robbed. Robbers may hurt the people physically. But even if there is no physical injury or harm being done, the victims are hurt in their feelings. I believe we know how it feels to be robbed.

Many people believe that they are not robbers. The politicians are good at accusing other politicians, but in reality, sa makauna lang (*it depends on who accuses first*). The people governing our city think that they are not robbers. They only know as robbers those that they confined in a certain place. I bet they are also robbers. Maybe we think that those who are dancing now in the Sinulog festival are not robbers. They think they are not robbers. But let me tell you bluntly that they are all robbers who are very free to move around and enjoy the Sinulog. Why can I say that?

Before we proceed, let us define what is meant by the word “to rob.” To rob is to get something that is owned by another person or being. Robbers normally enjoy what is supposedly to be enjoyed by the rightful owner. I hope we fully understand the word “to rob” now. The other night, Malou and I were trying to find an affordable lot that we could use as the new meeting place for the church. We were surfing the net, and we found an advertised property for sale inside a famous subdivision in Tisa. I told Malou, “We’ll not buy this one because the place is very dangerous.” She asked me, “Why?” I told her that the subdivision has “a robbing guard” as posted in the internet. I believe that person who posted it meant “a roving guard.” So we just laughed.

Why can I say that those who are now dancing in the streets are robbers? They are worst kind of robbers. Wow! How come that I said that? Those robbers who are now confined in a certain place are robbers of men. But those who are dancing including the onlookers are not robbers of men but robbers of God. Why? Can a man rob God? Well, let us check the Bible whether or not a man can rob God. Let us open our Bible and read Malachi 3:8. The LORD Himself said, “***Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.***” So it is possible that a man robs God. This is very dangerous because we cannot deceive God. He knows when we rob Him. Nothing can escape from Him.

Now let us examine carefully what the nation of Israel robbed from God? It is very clear. They robbed God of the tithes and offerings. Why did God say that they robbed Him of the tithes and offerings? Who is the owner of the tithes and offerings? In Leviticus 27:30, we can read, “***And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S. It is holy to the LORD.***” It is holy to the LORD, that is, consecrated to the LORD or separated for the LORD. So instead of giving it to God, the nation of Israel enjoyed it. So the Lord knew that the nation of Israel robbed Him. About offerings, I think we are all familiar that there were several kinds of offerings that the nation of Israel had to bring to the Lord. For instance, Leviticus 2:12 tells us, “***As for the offering***

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations in boldface are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible. Emphasis (underlined words or phrases) is from the author.

*of the firstfruits, you shall offer them to the LORD, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma.”* So if we enjoy what ought to be given to God, then we rob Him. But tithes and offerings are just examples. We can rob God of other things that rightfully belong to Him.

So what in what way the Sinulog dancers, and even those who are not dancing but are also celebrating the Sinulog festival, rob God? In Isaiah 42:8, we can read, ***“I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.”*** God does not like to give His glory to another. What did He mean in this verse? If we go to Isaiah 46:5-7, we can read, ***“To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal And compare Me, that we should be alike? They lavish gold out of the bag, And weigh silver on the scales; They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god; They prostrate themselves, yes, they worship. They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it And set it in its place, and it stands; From its place it shall not move. Though one cries out to it, yet it cannot answer Nor save him out of his trouble.”*** Are they not carrying the image of Sto. Niño? Do they not put the image in a certain place in the float so that it will not move? Are not the people crying out, “Pit Senyor?”

So with those two verses, do you think they rob God of His glory? Definitely, these people rob God. The people believe that they love God in what they are doing, but in reality God hates them. In Exodus 20:4-6, we can read, ***“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”*** In Romans 1:22-23, we can read, ***“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”*** So they are robbing God of His glory.

A Joke but true:

*Before we proceed, I mentioned that “to rob” means to get something that is owned by another person or being. In what way can you rob something from someone, but that someone does not own it? Guess what? It happens when you steal a kiss. The one you kiss will get angry, but she does not own the kiss. Her perfect guy owns it. But still it hurts the one being kissed. So don't steal a kiss.*

So do you think God is complaining right now about those people I mentioned above who are stealing the glory that belongs to Him? I'm sure He is. But are there times that God complains against us for robbing Him? In the Ten Commandments, God spelled out that Sabbath is holy to the Lord. In Exodus 20:8-11, we can read, ***“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”*** In Leviticus 23:3, we can read, ***“Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.”*** Please note the phrase: **Sabbath of the LORD**. So the Lord owned the Sabbath.

It is very clear that God owned a day every week in the Old Testament times. This day was the day of rest and a holy convocation. It was a day of rest from physical stress, which was good for the physical aspect of man. The holy convocation was good for the spiritual aspect of man. In the New Testament times, God sets aside Sunday instead of Saturday. Many scholars believe that the Lord's Day mentioned in Revelation 1:10 refers to Sunday. In Acts 20:7, we can read, ***"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."*** In 1 Corinthians 16:2, we can read, ***"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."*** So the Lord owns Sunday.

Brethren, let us strive our best to attend the Sunday gathering because it is the Lord's Day. The Lord owns Sunday. If we enjoy or use this day for other purposes, surely God is not happy with us, but is just complaining against us. That is why the writer of Hebrews is encouraging every Christian not to forsake the Sunday assembly because this is the day set aside by God so that we can encourage others and get encouragement from others. In Hebrews 10: 23-27, we can read, ***"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."***

As we can see, forsaking the assembly is sinning willfully against the Lord. Why? Because by doing so, we rob God of His day. We also fail to do our duty to encourage our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Let us remember that your presence alone is already a great encouragement to those who are present. Is anyone among you not happy to see your brothers or sisters around? Are we not encouraged if we see all members around? If all members are around, only Satan is not happy, because he is defeated. But if many are not around, Satan is triumphant and is very happy. But God is sad because we rob Him of His day. We are all under the curse of God if we rob Him. In Malachi 3:9, we can read, ***"You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation."***

Brethren, as one serving the Lord to lead people to Christ so that they obtain eternal life, I cannot be silent. But I will always encourage you to live a life pleasing to God and not to Satan. I will always encourage you to be faithful to Christ who died for us all. I will always encourage you to give to God what is rightfully His. Let us give the glory that God deserves. Let us not rob God of His day, and for all our efforts, He will surely repay.

Thank you very much. May we all strive to give to the Lord the glory that He deserves and not rob Him of His day!

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