

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Prince of Peace, Everton Park, Queensland

18th October, 2020

Grace, peace and mercy to you from God our Father and
the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Text: Matthew 22:15-22

We Pray

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the
Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

What an appropriate text for us as we face the
upcoming state election. What do you think of politics?

Do you live out your faith in the way you speak of our
politicians or perhaps you are so passionate about the
policies of certain parties that you praise one and
condemn another. And yet what does God call you and I
to do when it comes to our leaders and government? To
pray for each and every one of our leaders and to respect
them. Even if you do not agree with the candidate that
gets elected – you and I are called to submit to their
earthly authority in humility and to pray and respect
them.

The text today seems pretty straight forward doesn't it?
The people in Jesus day were divided about the Roman
government. The Pharisees were very much opposed to
paying taxes and of course were very much opposed to

Roman authority full stop. The Herodians on the other hand supported the system so Jesus had both sides that came to trap Him.

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"

This is fantastic isn't it? So many people out to trap Jesus. Tough gig this is for Jesus. If He says of course

you need to pay, that is my opinion He would put a lot of people of side and of course how many poor people would have struggled with this Jesus saying I support this giving but if He says don't pay because Caesar doesn't deserve it then the Herodians would have just done a little report to Roman authorities about this teacher who is perhaps beginning and uprising. There was great punishment handed out by Rome against those who didn't pay tax.

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax."

What a great way to deal with this. Let the ones trying to trap Jesus answer their own question.

They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Easy text. Give to the government of our day what is theirs and to God what is God’s right?

If we think of our money, it is made with human hands for human purposes and we see this as it becomes an idol to so many. For the love of money is the root of all evil. You and me and all people have been made in the image of God, made and sanctified for the special work of God. To serve Him by serving others.

You might complain about paying too much tax. Someone once said praise God that you have earned enough money to pay tax. Yet you might complain, but we are called to live in the world and as people of God we serve God by serving others showing His love in Jesus in all we do. Our attitude to paying tax is one of a servant then and not one of complaint.

Of course Jesus does not tell us to live contrary to His kingdom as we live here on earth. We are to be salt and light, Jesus light in the community. If our government does anything contrary to the gospel we have a voice. If it is a topic that divides the community say abortion or same sex marriage or using marijuana for medicinal purposes you might oppose them all or agree with some and oppose others but one thing remains. In every word spoken opposing or agreeing with the touch issues never get tired of doing good. Always speaking the love of the gospel, the love poured out on the cross to set people free from their sin. Always sharing Jesus love with those around, yes the people who love you back and agree with your position in life and those who do not.

The currency you use is important. Which one do you use when it comes to those who are different, those who are suffering, those who are alone because they sit in the topic that you don't agree with? You could easily use the currency of the world and justify your feelings, comments and actions toward others by simply saying well the world says, or the worldly law says what a certain person is doing is wrong – end of story. Yet the currency of God is love. Give to God what is His and to Caesar what is His. So yes we love God but God loves us first.

Give to God what is God's. We know that all things are God's for He made all things. All the worldly possessions are His also for He is God, but God wants

you for you are His. He made you and has redeemed you in the blood of His only Son Jesus. This is not about giving a little back - like some of us who complain when we pay tax or even think about ways we can get out of the full amount. Give boldly to the government for the work they do for the community - it is God's anyway and that is why we pray that God will guide our leaders to use the resources they have wisely. When it comes to giving God what is God's let us boldly give too, but boldly give our full self to Him as He is our God and we are His children. Let us stop trying to cheat Him out of what we give. Let us not fall into the trap of only giving ourselves to Him on Sunday morning and maybe even Sunday evening but by Monday well we

can't give our self anymore as that is my time. Let us give ourselves completely to the one who made you and me in His image.

And as we give ourselves completely to our God He can use us to be like Jesus to those around us. Making a difference in the lives of all those who live, both in the world and of the world.

The greatest thing about giving to Caesar what is His and to God what is His is that God gives us all we need to do both. God gives us His spirit to renew us in His love in Jesus and we can give to Caesar knowing God has given to us first. But above all it is God who came to

us in Jesus, to restore and recreated you and I through forgiveness.

Sisters and brothers what a joy it is to sing a new song as forgiven children of God who in Jesus have eternal life, salvation and forgiveness. Then in every action and attitude people will see your good deeds those God has given us to do out of His love for us so that all will give glory to God.

We live the love of Jesus toward all people whether those in our Christian circles and those outside so that all will know we are disciples of the risen Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen