Trinity 23.2026

We need some political talk this morning; none of us are tired of politics this time of year. I thought there'd be more groaning. Politics, a game we grow weary, even abhor; who isn't fed up, all the ads, weary of all the lies, half-truths; looked forward to Nov. 4, it's over, but now the aftermath. Most important politic question: **Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not**? Evern more, Jesus response, **Who's likeness, inscription is it?** What irony the appointed readings this day from the Early Church, political.

In Jesus' day, Israel/Jews ruled by Rome, they hated that. So Pharisees, religious leaders, got with Herodians, Jewish political supporters of Rome. Pharisees, Herodians don't like each other, but 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend,' both wanted to get rid of Jesus. Set trap. It's holy week. 3 questions are fired off at Jesus and they all we be silenced. The 1st one today, then the 2nd, Sadducees who mock any resurrection, ask about marriage and heaven, and the 3rd one, **What is the greatest commandment**? which was the appointed lectionary reading Sept. 26 and you all remember Pastor Burgdorf's sermon.

So today, after their hypocritical flatter, they asked, **Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not**? A trap. If Jesus says "no," He's a rebel, guilty of treason against Rome. The Herodians report Him. If He says "yes," pay taxes, He's guilty of disloyalty to his own countrymen, the Pharisees use that to turn people against Him. 'He can't be the Christ, He favors Caesar' the Roman godless empire. Yes or no Jesus. Jesus calls them hypocrites, pretenders to be God-fearing people, **Why do you test me? Whose likeness, inscription is on the coin?**

Tiberias image was on the coin, the ruling emperor, Caesar. Jesus doesn't say "Render to Tiberias." Tiberias was cruel, without honor, but he was the ruler. **Render unto Caesar**. Render to the office, not the person. Great scene in Band of Brother series of the 1st Airborne in WW2, Captain Sobel, who has history with Major Winter (a Lutheran from MN), Sobel walk be him without a salute. Major Winters calls him to attention, "We salute the rank, not the man." Scripture, Jesus teaches we have a duty, honor to the government as God's gift. So **render to Caesar**, government, taxes and service and obey laws not contrary to God, for by doing so you're actually honoring God, serving God. Even your taxes.

But **Render to God what is God's**. Which should make all of you a little uncomfortable. What part of your life, your stuff, your money is not His? How have you rendered, given of yourself, how have you rendered your time, prayers, devotion to Him? How you've rendered service, offerings for His kingdom, how has your love for others been? He sees your heart. It's not pretty. You put Him to the test, try to trap Him with plenty of excuses. He knows, you live so often, for you, as if you matter most, that it's your time and money; you shouldn't ever be inconvenienced or sacrifice. You render to God in selfishness, self-center ways, reluctant giving of self and your resources. Repent how you rendered unto God.

Render to God what is God's. Also means rejoice, you belong to God, He endears you, your life. It means rejoicing to live forgiven, live your life unto Him, unto others and not in sinful bondage to self, to your stuff, to money. In Christ, who has rendered all for you, that Law, simple as impossible, is now perfect freedom. It is fulfilled. It is finished.

The Kingdom, reward is yours. You belong to God; means He has bound Himself for your good, you pray **Thy will be done** for He has your cause.

Render to Caesar, God. How you live your life. You look around, you see wars, evil, moral decay and resentment, hatred for the things of God- His Word, His church, the body, babies, and who isn't concerned for the future of our family and country. Our hope is not with men or governments, the world, or any number of evil leaders like Tiberius or those after him, who take action against our homes and churches. Do you not realize in spite of all the vain politics of man how God takes care of His people? That's not to say we want any leaders who spite God's word or will not act in virtue, and we vote and contend for what is best for our neighbor and community. But stop. God will even use unjust rulers, evil times for your good, to strengthen your resolve, draw you closer to Him.

Look how God has caused faith to endure, even prosper in midst of the worst trials or persecutions of world history. Even, how good God was to David even after David's great failures and even after David's Kingdom and legacy was being ripped out from underneath His people and see the mercy that endures forever. Look how good God was to Joseph even when he's in the pit, even when prays seem to go answered for 15 years he's in prison, how God uses Joseph against evil. Look how St. Paul, murderer of Christians, even women and children, found mercy and grace in Jesus, an answer to the prayer of St. Stephen and becomes chief of all apostles. So many more examples. Look ultimately to your Lord there. God's word itself, His promises made to you. These are the things that endure forever. This is how we live, we render; by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We confess with Job, **the Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed be the Name of the Lord**.

Jesus says, **who's likeness, inscription is this?** Whose likeness, inscription do you bear? In baptism, you're minted with the image of Christ, you bear His likeness in your body. His name inscribed upon you. Thus your identity, your worth, you are His treasured possession. His love for you so great, so complete, so embracing. The crucified, risen Lord holds nothing back. He came and comes and comes again to render to you all that is His. This gospel happens just days before He renders to the Father, Himself upon a cross, renders His perfect life, in order to have you. He bought you, your life. Paid for you with precious blood. He wants what belongs to Him. You. His chosen, His likeness, His image on you, baptized into His death, to render, give you to His Father for eternal life.

So rejoice. Live out your holy vocations unto Him. **Render to God** all your life. Your life is not the Sunday morning parts and then other parts. All is to be His. And always know bad things always work out for good for God's people. He allows suffering so that He can bring a greater good for you. Always. That's not just an attitude but our reality, **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things**. Enjoy the blessing of His kingdom, foremost forgiveness of your sins, eternal life; rejoice in all of it, enjoy family, friends, being tired of work, crying babies, dirty diapers, taking out the trash, leftover meals, vain politics. Rejoice, render, give Him your burdens and tears, render your sins, and this Ruler renders to you all things of His kingdom.