

The 21st Sunday after Pentecost
“Jesus’ Harmonious Gift of His Kingdoms of Power and Grace”
Matthew 22:15-22
October 18, 2026
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 21st Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 22:15-22.

**“15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.
16 And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.
17 Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”
18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the tax money.”
So they brought Him a denarius.
20 And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?”
21 They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”
And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” 22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.**

So far our text:

Pharisee disciples and Herodians came together to pose Jesus a question. Religion and politics came together with the common goal of eliminating Jesus, their common foe. Herodians were a political party of Jews who supported King Herod Antipas. They were disliked by most Jews for their support of Rome, but even greater was their disdain for Jesus, for Herod wanted Him dead.

The question was actually a trap. If Jesus answered, “No,” the Herodians would charge Him with treason against Rome. If He said, “Yes,” the Pharisees would accuse Him of disloyalty to the Jewish nation, and He would lose the support of the crowds. To pay taxes or not to pay taxes? The question was designed as a Catch-22.

But Jesus saw through their evil designs because He is the omniscient Son of God. He recognized their wickedness and called them what they were – hypocrites.

For with all their flattery designed to disarm Jesus, they failed to say the important truth – that Jesus is the Son of God.

“Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.”

Yes, Jesus always speaks the truth. And Jesus doesn’t ever show favoritism. He associated with the outcasts of society. He showed love to all people. In fact, Jesus had just spoke the parable of the wedding banquet that we heard last week. In the parable, Jesus wants heaven to be full with people from all walks of life. He wants all people to repent of their sins and receive from Him through faith the needed wedding garment of His righteousness.

Yet, these Pharisee disciples and Herodians would not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They acted like they cared for Jesus but their intent was the opposite – hypocrites!

But Jesus doesn’t shy away from their question about taxes. For all things belong to God – the civil, political kingdom of the left and the kingdom on the right of God’s grace and forgiveness in Jesus. The Christian lives in both kingdoms simultaneously for they are gifts from God.

What do I mean? God gives us governments which He wants to maintain order and peace in society and protect us from those who would do us harm. God provides things through the government that He establishes like public schools, roads, fire departments, police departments, armed forces and the people who run all these public works. Should they be supported and honored? Well, let’s listen to Jesus’ answer.

Jesus doesn’t shy away from talking about politics, does He? And neither should Christians and pastors. What does Jesus do? He asks for a coin. Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription is on it?

21 They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”

And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Render, that is give, to the governing authorities things that are theirs and to God the things that are God's. In this perfect answer, Jesus reveals the harmonious gifts of the two kingdoms of the right and the left, of power and grace.

In order to give something, a person must first receive something. And God graciously gives the kingdom of the left which He establishes for our daily use. But most importantly, God gives us His kingdom of grace which gives a person a new spirit that is guided by the Holy Spirit. And this new spirit in the Christian is called upon to live in the kingdom of the left with spiritual wisdom!

A Christian is to honor and obey those whom God has placed over him or her in society to maintain peace and order. That is the fourth commandment. We are to give honor to our elected officials, obey the police and not cause them harm. We are to pay our taxes. This is giving to Caesar what is Caesar's. And this pleases God that we do it.

Jesus Himself was asked to pay the temple tax in Matthew 17. Did He do it? Yes, Jesus sent Peter to go fishing for the tax money.

“27 Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”

This miracle shows that Jesus is the giver of all things temporal and spiritual for only God could do what Jesus did. When tax season comes around in April, Jesus isn't advocating us to go get out our fishing poles. No, He is showing us that He desires a harmonious union between the two kingdoms that God has established.

The kingdom of the left, however, is far from perfect, unlike the kingdom on the right. For the kingdom on the left is ruled by sinful men who are not all Christians and don't always make godly decisions, that is, they do not always give to God the things that are God's.

So, we will sometimes be overtaxed. Sometimes there will be unjust decisions which penalize innocent parties. In the name of equity, there is sometimes over reaching and injustice done to those who don't deserve it.

Jesus Himself received the greatest injustice of the kingdom of the left. He was unjustly tried by Pontius Pilate and crucified though Jesus was completely innocent. For that reason we say in the Apostle's Creed. "He suffered under Pontius Pilate". And in the Nicene Creed which we confessed just a short while ago, we said, "and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried."

Yes, Jesus submitted Himself to the governing authority though He was innocent. We remember the conversation that Jesus had with Pontius Pilate.

"10 Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"

11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above." (John 19:10-11)

Jesus gives governments power and submitted to the government and suffered unjustly. So, Christians must also give to Caesar what is Caesar's and sometimes suffer unjustly. Thanks be to God, Jesus suffering and death at the hand of Rome gave entrance into His Kingdom on the right! By Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus conquered all evil, all wickedness, all hypocrites, all injustice, all corruption, all death... that is present in our imperfect world in which we live in.

And graciously, Jesus gives us His eternal kingdom of heaven where there is no evil. He gives this kingdom of the right to us even now so that we can live in peace and joy in this imperfect kingdom of the left.

And He gives Christians a new spirit to give to God the things that are God's. What does that mean? It means that we should love God and our neighbor. This is of course God's law which the new man desires to live by.

So, speak about political things once again, but through the lens of the new man – giving to God the things that are God's. If the government enacts a law that gives permission to do something that is not Scriptural, the new man should not fall into the trap of following it.

What do I mean? In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that Texas Constitution was unconstitutional because it stated this:

“Marriage in this state shall consist only of the union of one man and one woman,” and “This state or a political subdivision of this state may not create or recognize any legal status identical or similar to marriage.”

But now, Texas allows for same sex marriages. Does that mean that the Christian is allowed to marry someone of the same sex? No, for God’s Word, Jesus Himself said in Matthew 19:

““Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ 5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

The Christian gives to God the things that are God’s and must not follow Caesar by marrying someone of the same sex.

On the same topic of marriage...Texas law allows for divorce without fault. A person who wants to divorce his or her spouse, petitions the government for this divorce and has the choice in Texas to prosecute the divorce either by “no fault” or by fault such as adultery or abandonment. “No fault” means that there was a conflict of personalities. The spouses didn’t get along so the state of Texas allows for the divorce.

The Christian, however, is governed by God’s Word. And God’s Word does not give permission to divorce unless there was adultery or abandonment. God does not say you have to divorce, but allows for divorce in these two instances.

But if a Christian divorces one’s spouse for a “conflict of personalities”, a no fault divorce, then the Christian is giving to Caesar and not to God the things that are God’s. The Christian breaks the 6th commandment. The Christian commits a grave sin that must be repented of for it causes much harm to the family, the church and society.

Again, different states still allow for abortion in all stages of gestation of the unborn child. Texas doesn’t except for the saving of the life of the mother. But, a Christian who goes to another state to have a legal abortion, whose life is not in danger, breaks the 5th commandment and does not give to God the things that are God’s...the very life of the unborn child belongs to God and God alone gives and takes life.

If one lives in Canada, then one can have a clinician or self-administer euthanasia. Again, this is not permitted by God, the killing of an elderly person because of an illness or disability. So the Christian in Canada must give to God the things that are God's and live with the hardship of health until God graciously calls him or her to heaven and gives a new perfect body when Jesus returns.

Yes, there are many examples, political examples that God calls the Christian to use God given wisdom to follow His Word and not the permissive government that goes against God's Word.

For all our disobedience and imperfect living, Jesus gave His life for us. He gave the things that are God's to God. He obeyed His Father's will perfectly and sacrifice Himself to pay for all our sins. Thanks be to God! Thanks be to God that He gives the Christian this comfort of forgiveness as we live in the midst of an imperfect kingdom of the left, anxiously awaiting His coming and establishing of the new world where there is no longer any sin, evil or hypocrisy. Amen!

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)