

20th Sunday after Pentecost  
October 18th, 2020

“True and impartial \_\_\_\_\_” (Matthew 22:16)  
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Today’s text is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 22:16

**“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.”**

Here ends our text.

I. The face of the kingdom of power - Caesar

Have you voted yet? The news reports are saying that early voting in many states is substantially higher than it was four years ago. Today’s political arena is definitely supercharged by divided opinions, as we saw in the first Presidential debate and just this week in the judicial committee’s Supreme Court hearings of Amy Coney Barrett, or ACB for short. As our nation draws nearer to election day on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the question for each of us is, of course, “where do your loyalties lie?” Who are you loyal to, our incumbent President Trump or his challenger, former vice-president Joe Biden?

It’s an either/or question, isn’t it? These are the two main competitors. Of course, you could vote for the outsider Green party candidate, Howie Hawkins, or the libertarian, Jo Jorgenson. Or, you could just not vote at all.

Jesus was confronted with an either/or question by a group of Pharisees and some Herodians.

**“Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” (Matthew 22:77)**

Yes, 2000 years ago, taxes were an important issue of the day, just like they are in our upcoming election where one main candidate says he will raise taxes and the other main candidate says he won't. One candidate will use your tax-payer money to fund abortions and the other is pro-life. Yes, there are night and day differences between President Trump and Joe Biden, and you get to exercise your voice in two weeks. It's an either/or question of loyalty, isn't it? Some people show their loyalties by putting up a sign up on the lawn, hanging a flag, sending a political donation, or participating in a rally. The ultimate show of your loyalty comes down to whose name you mark on the ballot, right?

Jesus wants your absolute loyalty to Him alone. He wants you to trust in Him alone, and with faith, give to God that which is God's. And that means everything – loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength!

The Pharisees and the Herodians come to Jesus with a question about earthly matters, paying taxes. And this is important, of course. For, we will see that Jesus' answer, in fact, exhorts Christians to live responsibly in the here and now of the Kingdom of Power, that is, the Kingdom of the left hand. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's.

Yes, Jesus supports earthly governments. He instituted them. They exist by His power. The Christian should use his or her vote to bring about the godly use of the taxes paid to Caesar. The Christian should vote for the candidate who trusts in God and who promotes justice and appoints God-fearing judges.

**“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.” (Psalm 33:12)**

“In God we trust” is a phrase our nation inscribes on its currency. But, above all, God wants faith in Him inscribed on all people's hearts. God's gift of the Kingdom of the left strives to curb disorder and chaos by the rule of law and power. In this sinful world it will never be perfect. There will never be a utopia on earth, and it cannot save a man's soul. As important as God's Kingdom of the left hand is for godly living in the here and now, the most important question for each of us is who is the president in your heart? Who rules your heart?

There are but two candidates who are vying for your soul, Jesus and the devil. One will give eternal life – the other, eternal damnation.

As we heard last week, Jesus wants His wedding banquet hall to be filled with believers loyal to Him. Jesus has a get out the vote campaign that sends His messengers, you and me, to the highways to invite as many as you can find. The Holy Spirit, through the proclamation of the Gospel, turns callous hearts into believing hearts who say “yes” for Jesus! For **“no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)**

Jesus wants all to have what He alone can give – salvation and eternal life. This is no empty promise! Jesus has already defeated the other candidate, the devil, by His death on the cross and His resurrection is the proof! Jesus tells us that all is ready. Come to the wedding! Believe in Him!

The defeated candidate, the devil, wants you to believe that Jesus is not the Messiah, the Savior of the world. If he can convince anyone of this, he has gained a vote and the condemnation of a soul. Whoever will follow this candidate, the devil, will come to God’s judgement seat without a wedding garment. And there will be no victory party, only weeping and gnashing of teeth, as we heard last week.

The Pharisees and Herodians did not come to Jesus to give their loyalty to Him as the promised Messiah. They came seeking earthly power as so many do in this life. The Herodians were a political party seeking to cultivate the dynasty of Herod. The Pharisees accompanied them so that they would serve as a camouflage for their sinister designs. A question about taxes wouldn’t seem so out of place in the presence of a group of Herodians. The Pharisees had put their keenest minds to the task of coming up with a question that they thought would pin Jesus down and trap Him.

Their ulterior motives were masked with fake, hypocritical flattery that we read in our text. Yes, everything they said was correct...Jesus is true, He teaches the way of God in truth and He’s completely impartial. He favors no one.

But, they didn’t mean a word of it. And in their description of Jesus, they purposefully omitted to say what was most important. I left a blank space in the sermon title, because the Pharisees left this blank. Jesus is true. He is impartial. But, most of all, Jesus is the Son of God! The Pharisees would in no way admit this. In fact, that was the very reason for their entrapment scheme.

This was no gathering of friendlies. These were haters of Jesus and they wanted to find some way, any way, to get rid of Him. They were looking for a chink in Jesus' armor, a process crime, anything to pin Him down!

The Pharisees thought they had their gotcha moment. If Jesus says that it's lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, then He would lose favor with the people. If Jesus said it wasn't lawful, then He would, of course, have to deal with Rome.

Show me a coin, please. Whose image is it? Caesar's. **"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's."**

Yes, we are to honor the Emperor, the President and all elected leaders. This is your 4<sup>th</sup> commandment duty to honor parents and all authorities, living as good citizens in the government that God has established. As Peter writes in his first epistle chapter 2,

**13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.**

For the Lord's sake, Peter says. "Give to God the things that are God's. All things belong to God who in His mercy gives mankind governments to keep peace and order in this world.

But God has much more to give to mankind than good governments. For there is another kingdom, another realm, that is much more important than the earthly kingdom of the here and now. And to enter this kingdom, one must look not at the face on the coin, but upon the face of the One who is speaking.

## II. The face of the kingdom of grace – the Son of God, Jesus

Whose face do you see? The most important question is...whose face are you looking at right now? Who is Jesus?

He is the true Son of God! And teaches the truth of the way of God. For Jesus said, **"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6)**

In His great love for all people, Jesus tells us that the way to heaven is through His death and resurrection. His party platform is the Bible. His inerrant Word of God that tells us that **“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”** **Romans 3:23-24** Jesus invites us into His Kingdom of Grace – the Kingdom of the right hand.

Jesus doesn't play any games when He teaches the truth. He doesn't say that we don't deserve to know until after the election. He tells us now before it's too late. **“He that believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16)**

A believer's baptism seals His faith so that a Christian is counted among the righteous. There are no doubts or hanging chads. God's word is true and assures the believer who is loyal to Jesus that heaven awaits. The ultimate victory party awaits the baptized believer.

Yes, Jesus is true and He is impartial as the Pharisees correctly said. For, Jesus gave His life for all people. Peter tells of God's impartiality at the house of the Gentile, Cornelius.

**“Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. 36 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—” (Acts 10:34-36)**

Politicians with no backbone put their finger up in the wind and change their views depending on what is convenient at the moment. It becomes comical nowadays because everything is caught on tape. You were for this and that six months ago and now you're against it? Why? Because an opinion poll showed that you better change or you won't get elected.

But Jesus is impartial and not swayed by men. As the Pharisees noted in our text, **“You do not regard the person of men.”** Jesus' word is impartial for all men. All who reject Him will receive their just punishment of condemnation. But all who believe in Him will receive the gift of eternal life, the denarius of salvation.

Yes, Jesus does not regard the person of men, but He regards all men so much that He died for all men. He cares for you and me so much that He gives a gift for His

church which we receive this day in the sacrament of the altar. Jesus gives us His very body and blood for our forgiveness and eternal salvation.

So, with grateful hearts, we to give to God what is God's – our souls, our lives, our love. As we wait for our final glory, we cast our vote for Jesus, early and often with a life of continual repentance and service to the King. In His image we were created and in His image we are redeemed! Whose image do you see with your eyes of faith? Jesus!

Jesus has voted for us first. He cast His vote for you and me and all sinners when He came down from heaven, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died and rose again. He ascended into heaven and will come again to take us to our heavenly home as citizens of His Kingdom of glory. Yes, on the final judgement day, Jesus once again confirms His vote for every loyal believer that we are His sheep of His pasture as He invites us into His eternal Kingdom.

**“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:’ (Matthew 25:34)**

Amen.

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