

Sunday Message

29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 22 October 2023 • Psalter Week 1

TAXING QUESTIONS

MATTHEW 22:15-21



Jesus' opponents in today's Gospel are a coalition of religious leaders (the Pharisees) and the supporters of the unpopular royal family who controlled parts of the Holy Land (the Herodians).

The challenge to Jesus is set up as though it were a well-intentioned request for guidance on a difficult matter made to a teacher who is recognised for his plain speaking. The question is about paying taxes to the Romans. But it is a trap. It only allows for a 'yes' or 'no' answer. If Jesus says it is permissible to pay taxes, he risks losing popular support. After all, these taxes were imposed by an occupying power which used the money to maintain its army and administration.

If he says it is not, then he is a dangerous political revolutionary who must be denounced to the authorities.

Jesus sees through the game these 'hypocrites' are playing and responds with a master stroke. He asks to see the coin used to pay the tax. Jesus and his disciples probably did not carry money simply because they didn't have any. The coin was a Roman coin, bearing the image and inscription of the emperor. Strictly speaking, observant Jews like the Pharisees should have avoided carrying anything, including a coin, with the image of a human being as it contravened the commandment forbidding idolatry. It was even worse to bring one into the temple precincts. Jesus' answer defeats his critics and exposes them as compromised by their support for the imperial power. ■

LEARN

Our primary allegiance is to God and God's values.

The Christian puts God first in everything.

The Christian uses the goods of this world to further God's kingdom.

DO

Think about your attitude to money. How important is it to you? Do you put it before everything else?

SAY

"Lord, help me to put you first always. Help me to use all I have to give glory to you. Amen."

PRAY

Pray for those in financial distress. Pray for those throughout our world who are caught up in poverty.



REFLECT

Money, money, money
Must be funny
In the rich man's world.
Ah, all the things I could do
If I had a little money
It's a rich man's world.

These lines from a song by Swedish super group, Abba, neatly describe humanity's fixation with money. Money is the answer to all life's problems, the key to happiness.

That's why the internet is full of get-rich-quick schemes; why we love 'rags-to-riches' stories of self-made billionaires like Jeff Bezos of Amazon; why we cling to the faint hope of winning the lottery or discovering an elderly rich relative. Finding ways to generate wealth

is what keeps the international monetary system going.

Even those of us with no desire to be featured in *Fortune* magazine or the *Wall Street Journal* can get distracted by money. Seeking happiness, security, stability, we become grasping, hung up on our possessions, preoccupied with material things. Money becomes our focus.

This is understandable, since the world of commerce and advertising and Instagram promotes envy and the desire to have at least as much as our neighbours. We can become attached to money without even realising it. But Jesus challenges this way of thinking. The Gospel invites us, in the words of Pope

Francis in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, "to peer into the depths of our heart, to see where we find our security in life. Usually the rich feel secure in their wealth, and think that, if that wealth is threatened, the whole meaning of their earthly life can collapse." But wealth ensures nothing, Francis writes. Wealth makes it difficult for us to have room in our hearts for what really matters.

As Christians, we know that everything we have comes from God. All is a gift. We depend on God at every moment of every day. We must live in such a way that we do not allow money or material things to supersede our relationship with God and our commitment to God's kingdom. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

To you I call; for you will surely heed me,
O God;
turn your ear to me; hear my words.
Guard me as the apple of your eye;
in the shadow of your wings protect me.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
grant that we may always conform our will
to yours
and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whom he has taken by his right hand
to subdue nations before him
and strip the loins of kings,
to force gateways before him
that their gates be closed no more:
'It is for the sake of my servant Jacob,
of Israel my chosen one,
that I have called you by your name,
conferring a title though you do not know
me.
I am the Lord, unrivalled;
there is no other God besides me.
Though you do not know me, I arm you
that men may know from the rising to the
setting of the sun
that, apart from me, all is nothing.'
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 95

Response:
Give the Lord glory and power.

- O sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.
Tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all the peoples.
(R.)

- The Lord is great and worthy of praise,
to be feared above all gods;
the gods of the heathens are naught.
It was the Lord who made the heavens.
(R.)
- Give the Lord, you families of peoples,
give the Lord glory and power;
give the Lord the glory of his name.
Bring an offering and enter his courts. (R.)
- Worship the Lord in his temple.
O earth, tremble before him.
Proclaim to the nations: 'God is king.'
He will judge the peoples in fairness. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the
Thessalonians.

From Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to the Church in
Thessalonika which is in God the Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ; wishing you grace and peace
from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We always mention you in our prayers and
thank God for you all, and constantly remember
before God our Father how you have shown your
faith in action, worked for love and persevered
through hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know, brothers, that God loves you and
that you have been chosen, because when we
brought the Good News to you, it came to you
not only as words, but as power and as the Holy
Spirit and as utter conviction.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Your word is truth, O Lord:
consecrate us in the truth. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 22:15-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

The Pharisees went away to work out between
them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And
they sent their disciples to him, together with
the Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you
are an honest man and teach the way of God
in an honest way, and that you are not afraid of
anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to
you. Tell us your opinion, then. Is it permissible
to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus was
aware of their malice and replied, 'You hypocrites!
Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the
money you pay the tax with.' They handed him
a denarius, and he said, 'Whose head is this?
Whose name?' 'Caesar's' they replied. He then
said to them, 'Very well, give back to Caesar
what belongs to Caesar – and to God what
belongs to God.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant us, Lord, we pray,
a sincere respect for your gifts,
that, through the purifying action of your
grace,
we may be cleansed by the very mysteries we
serve.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Behold, the eyes of the Lord
are on those who fear him,
who hope in his merciful love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that, benefiting from participation in heavenly
things,
we may be helped by what you give in this
present age
and prepared for the gifts that are eternal.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

It is the saying of holy men that, if we wish to
be perfect, we have nothing more to do than to
perform the ordinary duties of the day well. A
short road to perfection—short, not because easy,
but because pertinent and intelligible. There are
no short ways to perfection, but there are sure
ones.

St John Henry Newman