

Theme for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, October 16, 2011

“MUCH OBLIGED”
MATTHEW 22: 15 – 22

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” Sounds fair – doesn’t it? Jesus concludes the now-famous saying with the words “and to God the things that are God’s.” I guess that makes sense too. So what is it that belongs to Caesar? And what belongs to God that we are obliged to give Him?

Introit

Selected Verses from Psalm 24

- L: The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof,
C: The world and those who dwell therein,
L: For He has founded it upon the seas
C: And established it upon the rivers.
L: Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
C: And who shall stand in His holy place?
L: He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
C: Who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.
L: He will receive blessing from the LORD
C: And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 45: 1 – 7

(Again and again, the Ruler of All goes to great lengths to assure fallen people that His promise of deliverance is certain for all who believe. The Lord even chooses to use a foreign ruler to persuade the doubtful to believe His proclamation of their liberation.)

¹Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: ²“I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ³I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. ⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. ⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, ⁶that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.”

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Epistle Lesson

1 Thessalonians 1: 1 – 10

(The ruler of all continues choosing foreigners [the Thessalonians] as He turns unbelieving hearts to Himself by the preaching of the Gospel, *“in power and in the Holy Spirit”* [verse 4].)

¹Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

²We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ⁹For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

The Holy Gospel

Matthew 22: 15 – 22

(Coins bearing the image of Caesar should be rendered to him. In the same way, Christ says what is God's must be rendered unto God. Ultimately, this divine tax is paid for us by the Lord Jesus, the image of God in the flesh, by His self-offering on the Cross. From His Cross, as the Lord's Chosen, He reigns as the true Caesar over all nations.)

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” ²¹They said, “Caesar's.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” ²²When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.



Connecting Points: Our Vision in Action

Think of some of the different ways you “render to Caesar what is Caesar's”. Have you been tempted to avoid your “rendering”? If so, confess it and receive God's gracious words of forgiveness.

The second half of Jesus' instruction is more challenging: “Render to God what is God's”. Ask for the Lord's help to recognize that all you are and have belongs to Him, and make one change in your life that reflects your new understanding of this passage in Matthew's Gospel.

Connecting People to Christ Now and Forever