

## “Authorized by Jesus: to give”

### **Scripture: Matthew 22:15-22**

Graphic: all access pass, restricted area, giving, money, taxes

Key Verses: 21b Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Theme: Through Jesus, we are given a full access pass to the kingdom of God. With that, comes great responsibility...to love, to give, to live, to bear fruit, to come, and to go! God has given us the ability to discern what is of the world and what is of God. We are authorized to exercise that ability for the sake of the Kingdom.

### **1) Introduction**

- a) If it’s OK with everyone, I’m going to talk about Jesus today...
- b) Everyone on board with that? Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew Chapter 22...
- c) We’ve been hearing parables from Jesus for the last three weeks that have been focused on challenging the religious leaders of his day... challenging us, really. People who THOUGHT they were faithfully serving God, but who, in reality, were blindly and arrogantly serving their own power and religion.
- d) And Jesus told them, point-blank, “that unless you repent and believe in Him, you will not enter the kingdom”...that the kingdom, which was designed BY GOD to be theirs - it was God’s gift to His people - that would be taken away...that when the kingdom was ushered in fully when Jesus returned, those who haven’t accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior would not inherit eternal life with Him.
- e) And if we recall last week...the great news is that we all get the invitation to come. Every person here today has been invited to the wedding feast with Jesus. The invitation is IN your mailbox RIGHT NOW. And it will be available until Jesus comes back.
- f) But don’t be looking for that invitation after He returns... because the only time to RSVP to the invitation is now... Don’t be thinking that you’ll be calling up heaven on the day Jesus comes back and say, “Yeah, I, ah, didn’t get that invitation.” Not going to happen...this is something we are invited to NOW for eternity. Don’t wait to say yes to the invitation. Why would you?
- g) Back to the text...by this time, the Pharisees are pretty mad! Jesus has taken them to the woodshed three times...he’s made them look like FOOLS! He’s told them some deep truths about the living in and for the Kingdom of God.
- h) And they are in a bind, right? ...and they have a choice to make, really. They can (A) deny all that they have learned, and all they have built up to be their purpose and their identity to repent, and follow Jesus...or they can (B) get rid of Jesus and go back to the life they have built up around themselves.
- i) Which did they choose? (B)! And we’re like, “Stupid men...”
- j) But I think about our lives and how we DO this, even today, don’t we? Each of us wants to be the true and complete person that we know ourselves to be – the one God created us to be – but

life gets complicated and we build up faces that we show the world...we hide some parts and reveal other parts to only the people we want. We become something that is sometimes more lie than real. When our persona is challenged by someone, we tend to defend the world we've created, however irrational that is.

- k) But JESUS knows you. Jesus KNOWS you. Jesus knows YOU. The real you.
- l) And the life He called the Pharisees to lead when he was talking with them...the life he was calling the tax collectors and the prostitutes to lead...the life he called the disciples to live with him...the life he is calling you to lead is a life that is true to God's design for YOU as you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. That's why we come to church and read the Bible and spend time ministering to each other and the world ...to be honest about our sin (the sin we reveal and the sin we hide)...to be true to the Holy Spirit...to be obedient to God's Word and growing as a follower of Jesus...
- m) Today's text is not a parable. Today's text, if you've scanned it and thought, "O crud, we're talking about tithing today, and I forget my checkbook." Today's text is not about giving money or time or anything else that we sometimes feel guilty into doing in the church. This is NOT about separation of church and state...
- n) Today's text is about receiving the authority to discern what is of the WORLD and what is of GOD. Inside me...inside you...in our families...in our community...and in our world.
- o) And when we DO THAT, then we pray to GOD to give us the courage, grace, and wisdom to DO something about it.
- p) Right now, I'm fired UP! I pray that we are starving for the Word today...ready to be jolted toward Jesus...
- q) Let's pray...

## 2) Scripture

### a) Read verses 15-18

- i) The Pharisees were angry at Jesus. They, obviously (say obviously) had made the decision to reject the truth and protect their man-made house of religion. And because they made this choice, their only reaction and their only course was to get rid of Jesus.
- ii) I mean, what was the alternative? Continue to allow Jesus to chip away at the foundations of their house? To systematically deconstruct every single part of their religion that seeks to satisfy the Law but never offer hearts to the One who can change them?
- iii) They REALLY wanted to get rid of Jesus.
- iv) And so, verse 16, says, they sent their disciples to Jesus...along with the Herodians.
- v) Have you ever heard the phrase, the enemy of my enemy is my friend? Ever heard that? Like if someone doesn't like the person I don't like, maybe we can work together and NOT like the person together and then we'll be justified in being petty and sinful. Right?

- vi) This is exactly what was happening. The Pharisees are smart, people! They took some TIME to plan this thing.
- vii) Here's the deal. The disciples of the Pharisees were Jewish experts of the law...religious...pious...they would resist and reject the Roman occupation of Israel that was present at the time...they would not like anyone telling them what to do, nationally or culturally. They were all about Israel.
- viii) Now, the Herodians were not especially liked by the Pharisees because the Herodians were loyal to King Herod. King Herod was appointed BY the Roman government to oversee the doings in the region of Israel. King Herod, even though he was probably Jewish, was loyal to Rome. He was the accountable to Rome. He was paid BY Rome.
- ix) And so, these two groups didn't like each other. BUT...BUT...
- x) They had a common enemy...and that enemy, emerging from the crowd to preach and teach was...TA DA... JESUS.
- xi) So the Pharisees decided, in a brilliant plan to entrap Jesus, to send two groups of people to ask Jesus a question that could not be answered without making one of the two groups trap him into either heresy or antiestablishmentism (you know what that is right? I'm against the government). Either way...Jesus is in trouble...
- xii) These two groups, now working together, start by buttering Jesus up. (DRAMA) "Oh Jesus, we KNOW you are sincere...we KNOW you teach the way of God...we KNOW you tell the TRUTH...we KNOW you don't play favorites..."
- xiii) GAG! I'm sure it was all Jesus could do to not LAUGH in their faces. Don't you hate it when people slather on the compliments right before they are going to tell you something bad or criticize you? Just say it!
- xiv) So, blah...blah...blah...you're awesome...you are totally the man...QUESTION (!) : Is it LAWFUL to pay taxes to the emperor or not?
- xv) Simple question, right?...but here's what's behind it. The Pharisees' disciples would say, NO...because LAWFUL in THEIR minds means according to the Jewish law...or TORAH. And anything that is not of GOD is not LAWFUL. So if Jesus were to say YES, they would accuse him of blaspheming and sacrilege and have him arrested.
- xvi) The Herodians, the politicians loyal to Rome remember, would, of course, say YES. They support the occupation...and the tax that went to Rome.
- xvii) Now, this tax was a head-tax or census tax. So for each person in your household, you paid a certain amount to Rome. The Jews hated it. The politicians LOVED it (still do today, right?)
- xviii) And so not only was it lawful, according to the Herodians, but it was expected and right.
- xix) And if Jesus said NO, then THEY would do the same thing that WE do today to people who refuse to pay their taxes...(pirate voice) we THROW 'EM in the slammer.

xx) Jesus is way too smart and Holy Spirit way too alive in him to fall for this lame attempt to trap him, right?

xxi) So he calls their trick and then calls them hypocrites! Sweet! I love when Jesus gets tough and manly...

xxii) And THEN he said...verse 19...

**b) Read verse 19**

i) Now, the tax could only be paid in Roman coin and most had the inscription that said, "Tiberius Caesar, august son of the divine Augustus, high priest". Show me, literally in the Greek, the LEGAL TENDER that is used to pay this tax you are talking about.

ii) See, Jesus is setting them up, right...

iii) They brought him a denarius, which is about a day's wage for a common laborer...I'd say, what, \$100, maybe?

**c) Read verses 20-22**

i) He shut 'em down! They had no chance...

ii) In reality, Jesus' answer to the question was what? Yes! It IS legal to pay the tax to the emperor. It IS OK to do what the civil government is asking us to do, because we have agreed as citizens of the country to live within the boundaries of the rules set BY the country.

iii) Give to Caesar what is Caesar's.

iv) But...AND...give to God what is God's...

**3) Applications**

i) And this isn't really about the contrast between what is owned or owed to the emperor in Rome and what is owed to God.

ii) First of all, Caesar probably needed the money from the tiny little nation of Israel like God needs a new Craftsman lawn tractor.

iii) Second...God doesn't need a lawn tractor.

iv) So, for Jesus to SAY this, we KNOW that he is pointing to a bigger truth about bigger things.

v) And even though this is not a parable, Caesar and God represent other things in our lives.

vi) Caesar represents the WORLD...things OF the world...the ways of the world that are either in opposition to the ways and things of Christ or that aren't of any use in the kingdom of God.

vii) And Jesus' reference to God point us to the kingdom of God, especially because this, for Matthew, is falling in line with the previous three parables about the kingdom.

- viii) I tried to make a list of things that were Caesar's (the world's) and things that were God's (the kingdom's).
- ix) Here's what I came up with...see if you agree...
- (1) Money belongs to the world...and the financial systems that generate, control, and give value TO money. God doesn't tell us anywhere in the Bible what money we should use.
  - (2) Government systems and styles belong to the WORLD...God does not dictate to us what form of government we should have.
  - (3) The development and enforcement of laws are also NOT directly from God. In this country, they may have at one time been informed by God's principles, but God does not specifically tell us how to maintain civil laws.
  - (4) We could probably list other things like the goods and services we buy...the education we get...
- x) What about the things that are of God? I got to thinking about the list I made for the things that are of the world, and I realized that the things that are found IN the world, can also be used by Jesus people living NOW in the kingdom of God.
- xi) Eventually, when Jesus returns, the things of this world will fade away and will have no meaning...but we're not there yet...we are still living in the time between...
- xii) And a friend reminded me this week that a list of the things that are God is really short. And it includes one thing...EVERYTHING.
- xiii) But is that helpful to us today? Is that something that if we were to hear that and leave here today, we'd say we had a deeper understanding of God? I doubt it!
- xiv) So here's the beginning of a list of things that are God's and that are present in people living in the kingdom of God...things which Jesus would ask us to give to God...
- (1) Love – Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” The WORLD does not know what love is and never will...only God is love and those who have Christ living IN them can truly love. Give to God what is God's.
  - (2) True Worship – Jesus said, “...Worship the Lord God and serve Him only.” The world worships all kinds of things, but TRUE worship can only be directed to the One who created us TO worship. Give to God what is God's.
  - (3) Obedience – In Philippians 2, Paul writes, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross.” Christ was obedient to the Father because he loved and served Him...give to God what is God's.
  - (4) Faith – Jesus said, in Mark 11:22, “Have faith in God”...

- (5) This list can go on...
- xv) Give to the WORLD what is the WORLD's...give to God what is God's.
  - xvi)But check this out...even the things that the world would claim as its own...money, government, laws, goods and services...check this out – ALL THOSE THINGS CAN ALSO BE USED FOR THE GOOD OF THE KINGDOM.
  - xvii) And so, when we say everything is under the realm of things that are God's, it means everything.
  - xviii) It's up to US to discern what is of God for this moment and can be used for His purposes and what is of the world and goes against his purposes in our lives.
  - xix)This interaction between Jesus and these two groups that were seeking to oppose him resulted in Jesus giving US the task of following Him by using what we know and do for the kingdom.
  - xx) Sure, I would encourage every person and family in this room to give 10%, a tithe, of your income to the work that we, as a church, is doing for the kingdom. If you're not there right now, then pray that God would make a way for you to make the next step and work toward that.
  - xxi)Pray that our government would uphold the Biblical principles of justice, righteousness, and mercy.
  - xxii) Pray that our civil laws would conform to the witness of scripture...that marriage would not be redefined...that children would grow up and be safe...
  - xxiii) Those are the things of the world that we can press into God about.
  - xxiv) But it starts with our willingness and courageousness to love God and each other, to worship Him, to be obedient to Him, and to live a life of faith, repenting and believing the Good News.

#### 4) Conclusion

- a) Jesus held a coin in his hand and challenged the world to choose between the world and Him. Coins, as we all know, have two sides...heads and tails.
- b) Each one of us makes choices everyday about where to spend our money, what to say to our spouse and children and parents, how to act in the face of trial, and where to spend eternity.
- c) That coin represents the totality of life, either in the kingdom or of the world.
- d) Jesus is owner of the coin and all the choices it involves. Jesus is Lord over all of it. Everything we have is God's.
- e) We have been given the authority because of Jesus to fully access the kingdom of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the forgiveness that comes through Him.
- f) The choice is yours...giving the world what is the world's is the easy one. Are you doing that?

- g) What about giving to God what is God's...love, worship, obedience, faith?
- h) Trouble comes when we give what is God's to the world...any place in your life where that's happening? Give to God what is God's...
- i) What would happen if we give the world's stuff to God in addition to giving all God's stuff to God? Wow! Can you imagine?
- j) We've been authorized by Jesus to give...however we choose. As people of the kingdom of God, with full access to kingdom choices, discernment comes through the power of the Holy Spirit as we RUN after Jesus for life.
- k) Let's pray...