

## Render Unto Caesar

Luke 20:19-26

November 26, 2023

As we return to our study of the Gospel of Luke, we come to Luke 20 and come to what has to be one of the most iconic of all of Jesus' sayings, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar and to God what is God's." Many are familiar with that saying, "Render unto Caesar." In fact, they just use that as shorthand, kind of referring to the entire passage, "Render unto Caesar." It seems like a bit of a mantra, but it seems to me that many have abstracted that saying from its actual context, and that allows people to make that saying, "Render unto Caesar," mean whatever they assume it might mean, and particularly about the relationship between God and government, or the relationship between the church and the state. Some people see this as a call for radical division between the church and the state. Some people see it as a call to do whatever the state tells you to do.

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And so you have these widely divergent views that come out of that same saying, "Render unto Caesar." Some say "Render unto Caesar" requires unquestioned obedience to civil authority as an authority ordained by God. And so this text goes beyond just paying taxes to the duty to salute whatever the government says, and whatever mandate comes out, we do a, whatever the state says.

Others say we shouldn't neglect, and they rightly say this, we shouldn't neglect the second half of Jesus' saying, which is "render unto God what is God's." And so Caesar, too, must bow before God. And then they go this far, and they say if he fails to do so, then citizen-kings have a right to resist, a right to protest, a right to refuse to follow Caesar. Some say "Render unto Caesar" simply means pay your taxes. That's all. Others say this really has nothing to do with legitimizing taxes, but simply giving back to Caesar what he created, namely the coin itself. So if we're going to use Caesar's money, we have to pay his taxes, too. But if we forego using his money, well, we don't have to pay his taxes. Then you say, which view is right? One of these, none of these? Something else? Is this even important? Why wrangle over the text at all?

First of all, I just want to say from the very start, this text is important to understand. It's really seminal to understanding our duty to Caesar or to the government, Caesar's role before God, our duty to both. All of this is important to understand, and we understand also as we read through Scripture and read through what happened in Jesus' life and his teaching, this is not the only place that Jesus commented on the role of government. He didn't often speak about the role of government in the life of the, of the individual believer, but he did refer to it. This is a very direct text, a very direct saying, and it's seminal, as I said. It's a, a basis for other teaching in the New Testament.

But we also see in places like John 18 and 19, as Jesus is on trial, as he stands before Pontius Pilate, who is the very image of Caesar, the face of Caesar in Jerusalem, in Judea. In John 18:36, as Jesus is standing trial, he told Pontius Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting so that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this world." If you take that text out of its context, and from that

text alone, it might seem that the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world don't have any intersection or interaction with each other at all, promote some kind of a, a radical, two-kingdoms theology with one, the one having nothing to do with the other.

But if we keep reading, we see that Pilate told Jesus in John 19:10, when Jesus is looking at the cross, he's looking at execution before him, and Pilate looks at him in bewilderment because Jesus is not answering his question; he's not defending himself, and Pilate says, kind of in exasperation, he says, "'Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?' And Jesus answered him, 'You'd have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above.'" So Jesus clearly sees Pilate's role, clearly sees Caesar's role. He sees God as reigning above all, over all, as the true sovereign over all human kingdoms and all human authority on earth, which is what he is teaching in Luke 20:25 as well, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

And thus here in this text, Jesus distinguishes between God and Caesar with the obvious point that Caesar is not God. God is not wrapped up in everything Caesar is doing. They are distinct. And yet, as Caesar is an authority ordained by God, Caesar himself is to be honored and to be obeyed. The rest of the New Testament bears this out in passages such as Romans 13 and 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Peter 2, all of them and others resting on this foundation of Luke 20:25.

So it is important to go back to this foundational text and interpret the text in its context. If we follow sound principles of hermeneutics, following rules of grammar, studying the facts of history, paying careful attention to the context, trusting in the perspicuity of Scripture, that is to say, the clarity of Scripture, which causes us to prefer the simplest meaning over the more complex meaning. And by the way, there are many people who make a hash of this text by turning it into this great complexity. They love to insert their predetermined theology into the text and make the text, then, say whatever they want it to say.

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I remember talking to a, a young man who'd visited our church, and as he was walking out, he sort of, and this is during, you know, right after COVID. A lot of people were flooding into churches that were open because, not because they really loved the truth and loved the Gospel; they just loved a church that was open because we seemed to be defying Caesar. And so they said, oh, we're going to go there, and we're all going to come together and wear MAGA hats and, and take over.

And, and this is one of those, you know, one of those young guys, and he sort of boasted on the way out that he refused to register his vehicle with the county, wouldn't register his vehicle, wouldn't pay the taxes because obviously the county is not in submission to God's law. And I said, well, do you, do you pay taxes? He said, well, yeah, but I shouldn't. And I just thought, well, that's interesting. You're driving on the government's roads, roads that they require to be maintained through the tax money that you want to withhold.

And as I challenged him to think about these things, he went off in a huff and he hasn't returned. But he quoted this

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passage to me and said, Caesar is under God, and if he doesn't obey God, if Caesar doesn't obey God, we don't have to obey him. Well, again, inserting your own theology into the text is going to make hash of the text every single time. And so we want to do our best to interpret this text, paying careful attention to the context, not, not distorting its simple meaning by adding our own preconceived notions. And I think in humility before the Lord we'll come to a right understanding of it by his grace.

But since it's been a while since we've been in Luke's Gospel, let's go back to Luke Chapter 20, verse 1. Okay? Luke 20:1. And we'll remind ourselves about the controversy that erupted when Jesus came into his own temple and he cleansed the temple. Well, that provoked the temple leaders and the Sanhedrin. Notice what happens here.

"One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, 'Tell us by what authority you do these things or who is it that gave you this authority?' And he answered them, 'I also will ask you a question. Now tell

me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?' They discussed it with one another, saying, 'If we say from heaven, he'll say, "Well, why did you not believe him?" But if we say from man, all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.' So they came back, and they answered that they did not know where it came from. And Jesus said to them, 'Well, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'"

The question of authority from the temple leadership, these are representatives, we understand, from the Sanhedrin, and they had already decided to destroy Jesus, as we read in the previous chapter, Luke 19:47. So it's a question of authority. It's a legitimate concern, but we can see it's not an honest question. And they're, they're not after an honest answer, so that they can pardon Jesus, so they can bow before him. They are trying to entrap him.

Jesus answers them and, in an indirect way, and he presses their conscience. He ties his own authority to the authority that had commissioned John the Baptist, that had commissioned



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his ministry. And so if they'll acknowledge divine authority in John's ministry, well, they'll acknowledge that same authority at work in his ministry. If they refuse to acknowledge divine authority in John's ministry, well, it's a moot point with Jesus as well.

They discussed with one another, thinking, seeing that Jesus had caught them. They refused to acknowledge either side, refused to answer Jesus' question, so he provided them, as he often does in Scripture, he provided them with a warning in telling them a story, delivering a parable that recounted the history, really, recounted the whole history of Israel's response to prophetic authority, Israel's response to divinely commissioned authority.

Basically, their track record was not good. When divinely commissioned authority came to them, they resisted it and wanted to put it to death. Look at verse 9 and following, "Jesus began to tell them," the people, "this parable. 'A man planted a vineyard, let it out to tenants, and went into another country for a long while. When the time came, he sent a servant to the

tenants so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but they also beat and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed. He sent yet a third. This one they also wounded and cast out.

“The owner of the vineyard said, “What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Perhaps they will respect him.” When the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, “This is the heir. Let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.” They threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.’ When they heard this, they said, ‘Surely not!’ But he looked directly at them and said, ‘What then is this that is written? “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces. When it falls on anyone, it’ll crush him.’”

Israel's tragic history of rejecting the servants that God had sent to the tenants of the vineyard, their history of

rejecting the prophets, it provides a warning to this current generation, the ones who are receiving the son of the vineyard owner. Receiving, they're the one, this is the generation witnessing the coming of the Messiah. Jesus is the very Christ of God. He is God's chosen cornerstone, and Jesus warns them that all who resist him will be either broken to pieces or utterly crushed. Either way, a wrong response to Jesus will result in your tragic loss. Verse 19 says that the scribes and the chief priests knew that Jesus told this parable about them and even though, they wanted him dead, they'd have grabbed him right there if they could, but his popularity with the crowd restrained them from taking action against him.

And this is the problem that brings us into the text today. It is the what-to-do-about-the-Jesus problem that they're facing. They're troubled, they are angry, they have murderous intent. They intend to drive him to the cross, and yet their hands are tied. They feel this great tension because Jesus has such popularity with the people. Oh, what to do? What to do?

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Let's look at the text, starting in verse 19 and reading through verse 26, the text for today. "The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour for they perceived that he had told this parable against them. But they feared the people, so they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

"And so they asked him, 'Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not?' But he perceived their craftiness and said to them, 'Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?' They said, 'Caesar's.' He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said. But marveling at his answer, they became silent."

All three synoptic authors, Matthew, Mark and Luke, all three of them draw attention to the reaction, this reaction of the spies, namely, that they marveled at Jesus' answer. It was, it was a stunning answer to them. Luke's summary, here, is the fullest, not only drawing attention to their bewilderment, but also noting their failure to entrap him, and then the resulting silence, the stopping of their mouths, the stopping of their plans, the exposure of their pretensions. And obviously we could see from the text that Jesus didn't mean pay your taxes. But that's not all he said, here. That's not all he meant, either. Whatever he said, and whatever he meant by what he said, it caused his opponents, all of them, to marvel and then it completely silenced them.

And so what was it that left his enemies so awestruck that they shut their mouths and could not respond? Was it a treatise on the relationship of the church and the state? That's like, whoa, I've never heard such teaching. No, not merely that. What is going on here is far deeper and far more penetrating and soul-searching in the text. So I'm going to use several points to kind of guide us through the text. And these points aren't, you know, particularly striking, or they don't even rhyme, you

know, it's not even good for, good for me. They don't even kind of, they're not even alliterated.

But we'll just start with number one, number one, the setup, the setup. And we go back for the setup to verses 19-20. The setup and the main point I want to emphasize here in the setup of the whole text, and this is Luke's setup, helping us to understand what's going on kind of behind the scenes, what we need to see here in the setup is that this section represents for the leadership a change in tactics, change in tactics. Same, same goal, same strategy, but this is a change in tactics.

Look at verse 19 again, "Scribes, chief priests, they sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they perceived that he had told this parable against them. But they feared the people." So change in tactics, "they watched him and sent spies, spies who pretended to be sincere." Pretended to be, the word is actually, righteous. "Sent spies who pretended to be sincere, so that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor."

So these chief priests, these scribes, they want to get their hands on him. And as Luke tells us, any desire that they had to take action, and by the way it's a murderous action, it was thwarted by a competing desire, they had to maintain the favor of the people. After all, it's maintaining the favor of the people that put them in positions of power. If they lose the favor of the people, they lose their positions of power. So the goal though, is the same, they must have the destruction of Jesus.

And we can see on a human level, we can see all of the pride, and all the covetousness, and all the greed, and all the things that that drove them and motivated them. But we also know from Scripture that this is satanic. There's a satanic conspiracy afoot to, to drive human beings to commit the greatest crime of all human history, to condemn this pure, innocent, holy man, put him on a cross, dying a death that he did not deserve. Their goal, though, is the destruction of Jesus. No matter how ludicrous it seems, they want to destroy him.

Luke also tells us how the Sanhedrin planned to make use in their plan, now, of Roman authority. In fact, this is revealing to us, that they calculated this. They understood that under Rome, they, the Sanhedrin, had no legal authority to condemn anyone, no right of capital punishment, no power to execute a death sentence. And so the governor's involvement was a key requirement, a prerequisite to accomplishing their goal. So the strategy then is to get Jesus to incriminate himself, to say something that goes too far and gets him in trouble with the state, and then go and report it to the governor, who will arrest him, try him for sedition, and lights out. That's their plan.

Tactically, there's a change, here, because it had once seemed to be a good idea for the leaders, especially the scribes and the Pharisees, they liked to confront him personally, and they liked to make use of their skill in debate, in rhetoric and logic, their knowledge of Scripture, hoping to embarrass him publicly before the people. And that, as we've seen in the Gospel account, that's backfired repeatedly, hasn't it? Over and over again, as they try to embarrass him, they end up embarrassing themselves, leaving them looking more and more



foolish before the people, disqualified before the people,  
discredited before the people.

So new tactics. "We're going to go about this in a different way." Whereas the religious leaders had once been involved personally in confronting Jesus, well, no more. Now they recede into the shadows. They take a different tactical approach. They're going to surveil him, and they're going to send their agents to confront him, not they themselves, but agents who basically do their bidding. They're going to avoid personal confrontation at all costs as it reduces the risk of embarrassment, reduces the risk of them losing face before the people, and them diminishing their credibility before the people.

It's interesting, here, how we can see in the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, the Pharisees, leaders of the people, we can see how these guys are political animals. I mean, they would have fit in very well in Washington D.C. or any other political context. These guys are adept politically, from a strictly political point of view, in the fleshly way that they

think. They think Jesus thinks like they think. They assume that Jesus sees his own advantage as his popularity with the people. He's the people's man. He's a man of the people. He's got popular appeal, and in the ranks of the crowd, in the ranks of the people, he's got protection. He's got their protection because he's got their favor. That's how they think. They assume that's how Jesus thinks as well.

So they calculate that, and then this kind of maneuver of a political judo or political jiu jitsu, they're going to turn, plan to turn his advantage, popularity with the people, to their own favor. They want to use his popular appeal, the weight that he has, and use his weight against him, use it as a pivot point, gain leverage over Jesus, and use the momentum of popular appeal to cause Jesus to go too far; too far, so he can't over-correct, get him to say what will please the people, which is, don't pay the tribute to Rome. That would lead to his arrest and conviction and death. Well, we're gonna see how the tactical shift works out in just a moment as we look at our second point.

But I want to mention something quickly that Luke passes over in our text. He, he doesn't mention something that Matthew and Mark point out and that's this, that behind the spies and their, this pretension of sincerity here, behind them is those who acted as coaches and sent these men to confront them. Our translation uses a pronoun to talk about them. They, refers back to the scribes, the chief priests of verse 19. It's they, who sought to lay hands on him at that very hour. It's they, who perceived that he told the parable and told it against them. And it's they, who feared the people. So the, they, refers to the Jewish leaders, the chief priests, the scribes.

But Matthew and Mark add another element, another component. They tell us about the involvement of the Pharisees behind this tactical change. And not only that, but in Matthew 22:16 and Mark 12:13, we discover another party at work with the Pharisees. There's this unlikely coalition joining together of competing political parties coming together to engage in this subterfuge.

We've got the Pharisees, and we understand that they are staunch Jewish nationalists. They are anti-Roman to the core. They hate paying the tribute tax to Rome because they hate having the, just the duty to acknowledge Rome's authority over their land. They are nationalists who want to return the rule of the land back to the Jewish people. And so they have a relationship with the populace, a relationship with the people, which is what burns them so much that Jesus has kind of stolen the affections of the crowd. They want him dead because of it.

But these Pharisees, nationalists, they have forged this unlikely alliance with this party called the Herodians and that's what Matthew 22:16, Mark 12:13, tell us about, the Herodians. Who are the Herodians? The Herodians are Jews and probably other Idumeans, you know, a mixture between Edomites and Jews, and they are in league with Rome. The Herodians are those who are willing to play ball with Rome. They courted the favor of Rome.

In fact, that was the strategy of Herod the Great from the very beginning. He came to power by courting favor with Rome. He

was a pragmatist. He played for the favor both of Rome and then in the land, played, played for the favor of the Jewish nationalists as well. But when push came to shove, Herod always capitulated to the power of Rome. He knew who kept him in power, and it wasn't the people, it was Rome. But he tried to play both sides. He was a pragmatist. He tried to ingratiate himself through his building projects and all those kinds of things, tried to ingratiate himself with the people of the land because he's right there in their presence. He understands that just one assassin can take him out. And so he was a thoroughly suspicious man. We all understand that about Herod the Great.

But complicity with Rome is what characterized this entire Herodian dynasty. Complicity with Rome is what kept them in favor, kept them in power. And they had learned, this Herodian party had learned the art of compromise. They shrewdly played the politics to stand firmly in the middle of the Jews in the land and the Roman power in Rome, doing the bidding of Caesar. So their penchant for compromise, their comfort level of complicity with Rome, this is why the Pharisees and the scribes despised the Herodians. They hated these people, and the Herodians returned the favor. They did not much like these petty

nationalists either. The Pharisees, they thought of them as foolish and unsophisticated because they didn't understand the art of compromise. They're committed, the Herodians were committed to playing the political long game, to retain their power, and that meant staying in good standing with Rome.

And so it is truly a wonder, isn't it, that these two competing opposite, but thoroughly evil forces align and they join together. And we see that no matter how polar opposite people are, if they're unbelievers, they will be susceptible to compromising and joining together. We've seen this in American politics, Canadian politics, as even conservatives vote on the side of bills that disfavor conservative causes.

Why is that? It's because they don't have a renewed heart. They don't have a regenerate heart that keeps them fixed to unchanging, an unchanging God and unchanging principles taught by an unchanging Spirit of God. Without regeneration, people are susceptible to breathing in and out the spirit of the power of the air, and they will compromise and let you down every time.

And so even these Pharisees, die-hard nationalists, will compromise when it comes to, when push comes to shove, they will compromise with their political enemies, aligning these two evil forces. And that old adage comes into play yet again, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. They conspire together, both parties watching Jesus, both parties waiting to see if they can catch Jesus in something that he says, use his words against him so that they can hand Jesus over to the authority and the power of the governor; by the way, the only power and authority in Jerusalem who can do their bidding, who can accomplish their will by putting Jesus to death.

And so that's the setup. That's the setup as we come to verse 21, we see the spies get to work setting their snare. They're laying their trap, and they fully expect Jesus to step right into it. And so here's a second point, number two, the trap. First, the setup; number two, the trap. "So they asked him, 'Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and you show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not?'" Try to hide their true intentions behind a mask of sincerity. In fact, the word for pretend there, *hypokrinomai*, is, is the word for hypocrite.

This is, this is the word that means, really, to wear a mask. It came from playing a role on a stage as an actor.

And so what's the role that they're playing? Here, they're playing the role of the sincere, literally, as I said, the word is righteous, *dikaios*. They, they come to him as righteous men, only having the cause of justice and equity, equity in mind. They pretend to have questions for him having to do with righteousness, because their conscience is really bothered by this, by this persnickety issue, this abiding issue in the land. What do we do about this?

How could any righteous teacher, how could any righteous teacher like Jesus resist the sincerity of such righteous students who are asking such righteous questions about matters of conscience and righteousness, right? Especially when they ask so nicely? "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly." They're buttering him up. "You show no partiality. You truly speak the way of, teach the way of God." Such polite boys, right?



And no doubt when I say boys, I'm not being just disparaging. No doubt these spies are young, bright, eager theological students under the tutelage of the scribes. They know that their handlers are watching not only for what Jesus does, but watching them, how they perform, watching from the shadows, seeing how their students do, how their young protégés fare. And so they're eager to please their, their masters. They're eager to please their, their mentors. They're exhilarated by this opportunity, thrown into the big stage, into the arena with this popular Galilean teacher.

"Speak and teach rightly," the word, rightly, is the word *orthos*, which means, straight or in a straight line. From the word *orthos*, we get the English words, orthodontics and orthopedics. So, straight dontics and straight pedics, I guess. Straight teeth, straight bones. Orthodoxy, orthopraxy that is, in a straight line with God's revealed glory, *doxo*, and a response, a right response of obedient practice, *inpraxi*.

Jesus always spoke the straight truth, didn't he? He always taught the straight practice of the truth. They're not wrong

about this. They're saying something true about him. True, but with false intent. Jesus speaks the truth and he teaches the truth literally. Not receiving the face, is the next expression. That's an idiom that means, Jesus is no respecter of persons. He doesn't regard people's faces. He, he pays no attention to his audience. He doesn't try to read the room before he speaks. He shows no partiality. He just lays the truth out there and lets the chips fall where they may.

And then to seal off this perfect Eddie Haskell level of flattery, these spies, pay Jesus, the very highest compliment they can muster, "you truly teach the way of God." Now it's not just the truth of God, not just revealed truth; they're not just disseminating facts from God, but this is the way of God. And so they're acknowledging that Jesus has not just the, the true facts coming from God, but he actually understands, he has a sense of God. Jesus is very familiar with who God is, who he really is, what he's actually like. He not only knows the truth, but he lives out the truth. He demonstrates truthfulness in how he lives. He, he's got a perfect orientation of life and mind and habit. He's consistent. He's constant.

Well, this is what makes this flattery so despicable, isn't it? Because these spies, they really, truly in their hearts, regard none of what they commend. They say true things about him, but they have no respect for him, no honor for him, no regard, because they're simply buttering him up in order that they, hope they can cook him in an oven. They use the truth like a weapon. Proverbs 29:5 says, "A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet." That's what they're trying to do. They intend to see Jesus decline in popularity, fall before the people. They intend to find something that their masters can use and deliver Jesus up to the governor.

One commentator says the Sanhedrin knew that Pilate would have to condemn Jesus if he were to put to death, if he were to be put to death. So then all their plans focus on this point as this, as the single goal, one goal, Jesus' death, that's what we want, that's what we're after.

So after buttering him up with flattery, after laying a net for his feet, they pose to him a seemingly straightforward question, which is really like bait for the trap. "Is it lawful

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for us to give tribute to Caesar or not?" Now, this is not the broad question about the lawfulness of taxes. The Jews paid taxes. They paid temple taxes. They paid all kinds of taxes: customs taxes, poll tax. They paid all kinds of taxes. This isn't just about the principle of taxation. The Jews accepted the principle of taxation, practiced taxation in their own land, paid it to their, their Maccabean rulers back in the intertestamental times. They had no problem paying taxes.

The question here is more specific. Is it permissible according to Moses, is what they're asking. Is it a permissible, lawful, acceptable to Moses, who made us free people to pay taxes to these overlords? Not just overlords, Pagan overlords. Those who violate idolatry laws. Should we be paying taxes to them? Mark 12:14 records, "Should we pay tribute to Caesar or should we," that is, we the Jews, "should we not?" Simple question, right? Straightforward question.

Now with Luke's preparation, we know it's a trap, and when we investigate the historical background a little bit further, we discern what's at play here. Back in Luke chapter 2, we read

about the historical background which, by the providence of God, remember, sent Joseph back to Nazareth with his pregnant wife Mary to really to fulfill prophecy. And that situation, that historical background continues to play a very significant role in the region, not only in our text, but beyond, leading all the way to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and beyond.

But Luke 2:1, you remember that referred to a, referred to a census that was decreed by Caesar Augustus that all the world should go to be registered. That's the first census, overseen personally by Caesar Augustus, so it makes it stand out among others. And he decreed that in the year 8 B.C. Took a few years for this decree of registration to be implemented in Judea when, and it was when Quirinius was governing, not the governor. Tech, and this is a technical point, but I won't go into it all right now, but it's when he was governing or leading in Syria, Luke, 2:2 says, and that was around 4 B.C.

So Luke is very specific, helping us narrow down the date. Quirinius, in what you can call political wisdom and expediency, he worked with Herod the Great. He took Herod's advice to kind

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of work through the customs of the Jews so as not to anger them and cause revolt or rioting. And that custom of the Jews was to allow the Jews to return to the towns of their birth for registration according to family, clan, and tribe. And that is what set up the events leading to Jesus' birth, as we know. We know the story, we're coming into the Christmas season, we're all reminded of that story.

At the same time, meanwhile, back at the ranch, there are two Galilean Pharisees, one by the name of Judas of Gamala, which is a town in Galilee, there were two Gamalas, and this is the one in Galilee, and then another Galilean Pharisee named Matthias. These two Galilean Pharisees vehemently opposed paying the tribute. They vehemently opposed getting registered, and they called fellow Jews to refuse to be registered. Judas of Gamala, also known as Judas of Galilee, he said that the Jewish state was a Republic that acknowledged and recognized God alone as the king. God alone is our sovereign. His laws alone are supreme. That's what Judas said.

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We read in Josephus that Judas called his fellow Jews, anyone who would capitulate to Rome and pay the tribute or be registered even, he called them cowards, quoting Josephus, here, "cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans and would after God submit to mortal men as their Lords. End quote. So he gets very harsh with his fellow Jews, not just for paying the tribute, but even being registered.

Josephus and other historians trace the origin of the Zealot party back to these events in A.D. 4 and beyond. Also the Sicarii, which the Jewish assassins, trace the, the Sicarii back to this time as well. These Zealots, who were aided by the Sicarii, a group of, of assassins, according to Josephus, he says this, quote, "They got together against those who were willing to submit to the Romans and treated them in all respects as if they had been their enemies, both by plundering them of what they had, by driving away their cattle and by setting fire to their houses." End quote. These guys were radical. Serious.

So Judas of Galilee, Matthias, all their Zealot disciples, the criminal gang of the Sicarii, they treated their own people

as they would the Romans. They terrorized them. They considered the payment of tribute as tantamount to betrayal, a betrayal that perpetuated the slave, enslavement of Israel to the pagan empire of Rome. How could you, could you turn your back on God?

Well, Judas and Matthias led this group of zealous young men in open revolt against Herod the Great. They went, stormed Herod's garrison, tore down the Roman eagle that adorned the gate of Herod's temple, attacked his armory and lots of sparks, but very little came of it. Rebellion was crushed by the professional soldiers that Herod had at his disposal, and Herod had Judas and Matthias burned alive.

But that didn't end the matter. We remember Gamaliel referring to these, this uprising in Acts 5:37. He said, "Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too, perished, and all who followed him were scattered." So, scattered. Yes, they were scattered, but like dandelion seeds that blow in the wind, these who were scattered carried their resentments with them, and they infected fellow Jews with the same views. They fed resentment



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among the population, among the common people. They fomented anger, and the spirit of rebellion led to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as I said, and the massacre at Masada just a few years later.

So all this is in the background, all this is kind of boiling among the population, all this is troubling, all these tensions are there. This straightforward question from these spies, well, it's a loaded question, isn't it? After they've set a net for Jesus using this effusive flattery, they bait him with the question, is it lawful for us, us Jews, "is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not?" Again, again not about paying taxes, not about the principle of taxation. It's a very specific question having to do with paying taxes to a foreign power who's ruling over them.

This question is loaded with feeling, a popular sentiment that favors Jewish nationalism, that really sees Judas the Galilean and Matthias as national heroes. And so the people listening in, these people, the crowd has national sympathies, and they are inclined very deeply to oppose Rome.

So the spies have set their snare. They've laid their trap. They've intend, they're intending to catch Jesus on the horns of this dilemma because if Jesus goes against the people, which they don't expect, they and the Pharisees are going to eviscerate Jesus as one who's in league with Rome as no Messiah at all. If Jesus sides with the people, though, this is what they expect will happen. This is what they hope will happen. This is what all their flattery was, was calculated to ensure would happen. Is it, Jesus would tell the people, yeah, don't pay taxes. Don't pay your taxes to Rome, that that Pagan power. Well, then they have the Herodians standing by, ready to report Jesus to the governor. And since the governor will tolerate no insubordination, it will broker no sedition, Jesus' execution will soon ensue shortly after. That's the plan.

Now, it is never wise to set a trap for Jesus. Okay? Just, if that's ever an open question for you, just kind of write that down, maybe jot it in the margin of your Bible. Don't set a trap for Jesus. Bad idea. Don't ever try to entrap the Son of God in the horns of a dilemma, because the rebellious of heart will end up being impaled by those horns, and that's what we see in point

number three, number three, the reversal or if you prefer, the impalement. Luke says in verse 23, "But Jesus perceived their craftiness." The word, craftiness, *panourgia*, literally, ready to do anything. This refers to men who have no principle, no integrity, no shame, and they will do anything it takes.

Matthew tells us that "Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?'" Mark writes something similar, he says, "Knowing their hypocrisy, Jesus said to them, 'Why put me to the test?'" They've even said he shows no partiality. He doesn't look at the face. He doesn't hear the flattery. He sees straight through them, through the mask, and down into the depths of their wicked hearts. He knows exactly what's going on here, reminds us of the words of Job, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end."

That's what happens here. He perceives their craftiness and their cunning, and he says to them in verse 24, "'Show me a denarius.'" Show me a denarius. "Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" And they said, 'Caesar's.'" If you listen

closely, you can hear the spring of the trap activate, the door slam shut, he has got them. As soon as they say, as soon as they produce that denarius, and they admit whose inscription and likeness is on it, boom, they're his. Obviously, the denarius they were able to produce, according to Matthew and Mark produce it quickly, so that the pacing of Jesus argument didn't stall or lag at all by waiting for them to produce the coin. Some commentators say, "Well, these, these men were pious Jews and they would not have carried around a denarius." Oh, yes, they did. They had a denarius.

This denarius is equal to a day's wage, and that's the annual tribute owed for each male from 14 years old and upward and women as well had to pay a tribute, a denarius, for each head. It was a head tax, is what it was called. So the one denarius tribute wasn't an exorbitant amount. But considering the politics, considering the climate, considering the cultural, social issues here, what this one denarius represented was an irritation. It was a, it was a, a rubbing in their face that this pagan authority was their overlord. It was basically, this one denarius tribute sent every year was a sending a signal to

every male and every female, reminding them Rome's in charge. And they hated it.

Even worse for pious Jews that the Roman coinage made use of pagan imagery and pagan symbology. On one side, the coin pictured the Roman emperor Tiberius in a laurel, laurel wreath on his head. That's the, the sign of victory. It's the symbol of a conquering power who's won and who's now at peace. He's won the victory, and that's crowning his head. And there's an inscription that reads, "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus." Oh, there's only one divine. It's Yahweh and it's not him.

Other side of the coin pictured emperor's, the emperor's mother, Livia, an earthly incarnation of the goddess Pax, which means peace. And they had this inscription, "Pontifex Maximus, High Priest." Oh, that's another irritation, a blasphemous assertion of pagan religious superiority over their religion, over their temple.

So some pious Jews did refuse to carry the coins on their persons, but many did. Many made pragmatic use of coins for ease of trade as they travelled along Roman roads. And the fact that these men were able to produce the coin upon request rather quickly, that's very revealing. The Roman denarius was minted from silver, and the silver mines and gold mines also were controlled by Rome. So what was extracted from gold and silver mines were controlled by Rome and it's, it's, it's disseminating, minting the coins and sending them out into circulation, that was all controlled by Rome. So all this controlled by Rome.

But the denarius, or like all coins and all money, you know, currency is a convenient for conducting commerce, for trade and, and goods and services. In fact, when you think about it, that's what coinage is, that's what a monetary system is. It's a government-backed convenience. It promotes trade of citizens and subjects. A monetary system actually facilitates accumulating wealth, building of wealth because you don't have to have a thousand head of cattle, you can have lots of money in the bank.

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Think about this, when you get some bread for your family, you got to go out to the market, would you rather drag your goat to the market and, you know, find a guy carrying a bushel of wheat and then figure out how to trade your goat for his wheat? I mean, what if you're not willing to accept his bushel for your goat, are you going to butcher your goat and give him the leg or something like that in exchange for a bushel because the price difference or the value differences is so vast? Obviously, we don't have to think like that, do we? Because we look to our, we just kind of take for granted the long-established inherited system of valuation, once was based on the gold standard, but as of 1971 no longer, so all of our dollars are not backed by gold sitting in Fort Knox.

Now our valuation of our monetar, of our money goes up and down and no one knows, right? Eventually, with inflation it becomes less and less valuable. It takes more and more of those little dollars to purchase the same loaf of bread or the same goat, but we just rely on these long established inherited systems of valuation, long established system of government-backed security of our monetary system, tables of weights and

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measures, all that so we can carry things like coins and bills in our pockets or credit cards or whatever you use.

These things are just tokens or symbols of value, and all they do is facilitate buying and selling in the marketplace. And as we go into the marketplace, you know, and I know, we're not going to accept our buddy's Monopoly money in exchange for our bushel of wheat or for our goat. We're not going to accept that. Why not? Because there's no authority backing Monopoly money. We look to a higher authority wielding actual power to back the monetary system we use. For example, if you take out a \$1.00 bill from your pocket, it says, should say on there, on your dollar, if it's not counterfeit, it'll say "This note is legal tender for all debts public and private," and then emblazoned at the top of that dollar on both sides of the bill, it says the "United States of America." That's your guarantee, the government.

And if my friend brings \$1.00 to buy my goat and insists that this \$1.00 bill is actually worth \$100, and he takes my goat by force, throwing the dollar in my face, well, I can go to



a duly established authority of that legal tender and make my complaint. And I can fully expect, reasonably expect, the authority is going to enforce the law in my favor and convict my friend or my former friend of theft.

I know we get all this, and it's very simple, but it's not actually as simple as we think. We need to go back and examine the principles of a monetary system and think about what we accept when we use money, and what we accept when we spend money, when we exchange money. We need to think about the conveniences that that affords us, things that we take for granted.

I'm just trying to spell out in very basic terms, something that we, and there's a lot to this, but this is just something we rarely think about, something we take for granted, I just want to make this point, that the right to mint money, the right to print money, the power to guarantee that money, the authority and the power, implies the authority and power of governance. And the authority and power of governance requires money to run that governance. And so that implies the right of levying a tax

or requiring a tribute. Those who use the money minted and printed by the issuing authority, they acknowledge the legitimacy of that issuing authority, and thus they have a duty to submit to the governance of the issuing authority.

We get this, that taxation, it's a legitimate function of government. It funds benefits for citizens and subjects, and the Jews had benefited from this money. It benefited from the Pax Romana, the, the peace that Rome enforced on the roads that Rome had bought and paid for, the roads that Roman soldiers had paved with their own sweat and blood, roads that Jews used and assumed safe travel and could appeal to the soldiers for safe passage. And they, those roads facilitated trade, and commerce, and goods and services exchanged. So instead of hauling goats and bushels of grain everywhere, and cattle and all the rest, they carried, you got it, money.

The Jews, and most notably the Pharisees, along with the chief priests in the temple, these guys loved money. They loved money. And they ridiculed, remember, they ridiculed Jesus' teaching on stewardship as being soft-headed and

unsophisticated, his warning against loving money, against worshipping the god of Mammon. Why? Because Luke 16:14 says, They were lovers of money, *philargyros*, literally silver lovers. They were denarius lovers.

So as users of Caesar's money and as lovers of Caesar's money, did these men really think that they could entrap Jesus about paying tribute to Caesar with a denarius? Well, evidently, they did. This is the trap that they tried to set up. And it brings us to the famous saying, which is turning the tables on these spies and unmasking them, "'Show me a denarius,' he said. 'Whose likeness and inscription does it have?' And they said, 'Caesar's,' so he said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar and to God the things that are God's.'"

Now we said at the beginning, pay your taxes is part of Jesus answer, but there's a lot more, here. We can tell by the final verse and silencing of his opponents that they discerned a lot more, here, than just pay your taxes. Let me point out, before we move to the final point of our outline, the cruel irony of this. These scribes and Pharisees, these chief priests,

elders, members of the Sanhedrin, they all used Caesar's money. They all traveled on Caesar's roads. They all relied on Caesar's soldiers for protection. And all of that continued to build and accumulate their own personal wealth so that they could buy positions of authority and power and continue to enrich themselves and create laws that would favor themselves.

You know something else they were looking to Caesar to provide for them? A death sentence. We noted back in verse 20 that the Sanhedrin had no legal authority to condemn anyone, no right of capital punishment in the land, no power to execute a death sentence. These men intended to deliver Jesus up to the authority and the jurisdiction of the governor, a man who represented Rome, a man who sat in the seat of Caesar in the land.

And they have the audacity to try to entangle Jesus in a squabble about refusing to pay one day's wage every year to Rome in tribute. And that denarius, that they would withhold and teach their countrymen to withhold actually would contribute to the salaries of the soldiers under Pilate's authority, who in

three days will usher Jesus to the cross, where he will be crucified, which is their end game all along. Luke shows us how the Jewish religious establishment, they wanted to use Caesar's authority. They wanted to use his jurisdiction to accomplish their evil, but they didn't want to pay Caesar's bill.

Aren't all sinners just like them? Don't all sinners want the benefits that God provides, but they don't want to render unto God what is God's? They want God's stuff. They want good days, not bad days. They want pleasure, not pain. They want ice cream, not broccoli, not brussels sprouts. They want everything good that God would give them. But they don't want to render tribute. They don't want to subject their lives to his authority. They don't want to render unto God what is God's, that is, their very hearts and their very souls. They don't want to give him their lives. They want his stuff, and they want the autonomy to shirk God and do their own thing.

And that's where the greater obligation in this text actually comes is in the second half of Jesus' statement, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the

things that are God's." Whatever tribute Caesar requires, however much it might have been, it's a pittance compared to the claim that God has on every human being, is it not? We are to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our might," Deuteronomy 6:5. Who can repay that? Who has kept that?

And bear in mind, whether the duty is to Caesar or to God, Jesus uses a verb that expresses obligation, moral duty. The word the spies used is give. "Is it lawful to give," the verb *didomi*, as if paying tribute was a matter of their own personal freedom, something that they would give or withhold, an autonomous choice for them. When Jesus answered, he answered with the intensified form of the verb *didomi*, *apodidomy*, which means to repay, to pay back, to give back. It assumes a prior giving of a greater benefactor.

So for these Jews, rendering tribute to Caesar was a moral duty. It was something they were not allowed to neglect. They must repay the tribute because they have benefited so greatly from the Pax Romana, from Rome's rule, from Caesar's authority.

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In fact, they intended to use it to crucify Christ. Who is the one with the authority and power to enforce such a duty? Who is the one with the right to bind their consciences to this moral duty, this moral obligation? Well, if Caesar's image is stamped on the coin, and his inscription notes his authority, whose image is stamped on Caesar? Who has inscribed his law on Caesar's heart and on every human heart? Therefore, Jesus says likewise "render to God what is God's."

We have a moral duty to honor God as God and to give thanks to him, a moral duty to worship him and love him, a moral duty to obey him, to love him with whole souled devotion. We may not violate him, his image and his honor by committing the sin of idolatry, by elevating a rival in our hearts, to love anything more than God, our own pleasure, our own comfort, our own ease, our own autonomy, our own money, whatever it is. We don't have the right to do that. These duties of love, and worship, and obedience to God, they're not a matter of mere freedom and preference from us, not a matter of just giving and withholding. No, these are things we owe to God. These are things we must render to Him. These are things that every single human

individual will give an account for one day standing before his throne.

Well, any of the irony in all this is lost on these spies. They're, they're filled with their own self-importance, bloated with their own, their own pride, their own arrogance. What about the point Jesus' making? Did they get it? Is this what left, these men dumbfounded, unable to accomplish their goal? We come to a final point for this morning. Let's consider for a moment number four: the silence. The silence. "Jesus said to them then," the word is kind of like a therefore; it's based on what came before. If Caesar's image is stamped on the coin, if Caesar's inscription is written on the coin, therefore, "'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar.'" Oh, and by the way, "'and render to God the things that are God's.'" And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer, they became silent."

Again, why did they fall silent? Why did they recognize in Jesus' answer something that dumbfounded them and shut their mouths? Several things. First, they were silenced by the way



that Jesus effortlessly escaped the trap that they had set for him. The text says "they were not able," it's referring to their ability, their lack of ability. "They were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said." So he thwarted their attempt to trap him. These spies, they thought they'd set the perfect trap. They lured him into seeking popular favor by flattering him, by using cunning and since he didn't do as they'd hoped, that is, cater to the will of the people and shirk their duty of paying the tribute to Caesar, well, they couldn't send the Herodians to Pontius Pilate, who would return with soldiers, have Jesus arrested, tried for treason, then executed. So he escaped the trap in that way.

But also, he didn't flee to the opposite direction. He didn't do the opposite. He didn't bind the consciences of people to mirror human sovereignty, whether Caesar's, whether Rome's, or whoever. So they couldn't go to their fallback plan, either, in which the Pharisees would engage in a campaign of discrediting Jesus before the people because Jesus made the perfect point: Caesar is a gift of God, like all human government is. As Proverbs 21:30 says, "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord." Proverbs

1:17 says, "In vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird, but these men lie and wait for their own blood. They set an ambush for their own lives." That's what's happened here. Jesus is a divine Person. He is the Lord God himself. And as I said before, it is sheer folly to contend with Christ.

Second reason they were silenced. They were silenced, secondly, by the way Jesus schooled them in a lesson on moral duty, in the way he taught them to pay back what they owed as a matter of moral obligation. The text says very plainly they're caught up in marveling over his answer, that is why they fell silent. They owed Caesar the annual tribute he required. They had to pay him back for the use of his denarii, his roads, his soldiers, the Pax Romana that he provided for them, all the wealth that they accumulated underneath that system, they had to pay back. They had a moral duty to pay him what they owed, one that would be enforced by God, who is sovereign over them and over all human governments as well.

So the greater duty is to pay what they owe, not to Caesar, but pay what they owe to God, that's the greater duty, to pay

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the tribute that God requires. Pay him back. Pay God back for the Pax Romana. Pay God back for the privilege of using a monetary system rather than dragging goats and bushels into the marketplace. Ever thank God for money? Ever thank God that you can carry a credit card and not a whole bunch of cash? You ever thank God for bank accounts? You should.

They should pay God back for the Pax Romana he was pleased to provide by his providence, through the Roman Empire, through the rule of Caesar, by means of the govern, governance of Pontius Pilate in their midst. Pay him back for the, for the ease of trade that was provided by Greek, the *lingua franca* that Alexander the Great brought to the whole Hellenistic world. Pay God back for all that he had provided by the, his good and wise providence. Pay him back with honor and gratitude for the gift of human government, for the gift of order, for the gift of protection, for the gift of wealth and provision. Pay him back.

So they fell silent because Jesus escaped their trap, and then he schooled them on the way out. I'd like to offer a third suggestion of what may have caused them to fall silent, and this

is a bit on, on my part a bit of hopeful speculation, really, but it's one that brings this home for us today. Perhaps these men fell silent, and I'm hopeful in this, third, because they stopped and reflected on their greatest obligation and their lifelong failure to fulfill it, that is, to render to God what is God's.

Perhaps it began to hit home for some of them, a few of them, maybe? One? Maybe it began to sink in that they'd been niggling over a denarius' worth of annual tribute to Rome, all the while they've ignored their lifetime obligation to God. They've been caught up in debating picayune points of duty, and obligation, and taxes, and taxation, and obligation, and church, and state, and governance, and all that and they'd done all that, but they had ignored their obligation to love God with all their heart, soul, and might.

Some of their own associated with them, Zealots, some of the Sicarii, had treated their fellow Jews not just with rough treatment but with murderous treatment. Did that break their hearts? Did they see that they failed to love God by loving

their neighbors as themselves? Did they see the invading Roman occupiers as neighbors, because they were?

So perhaps these young men, caught up in the exhilaration of confronting the greatest teacher in the land, perhaps they stopped for a moment to be humbled, stopped for a moment to see that they'd been straining out a gnat but swallowing an entire camel: humps, hooves, and all.

We're so similar to this, aren't we? Quibbling over temporal issues of church and state, debating whether to pay taxes or not, fretting over what government is doing right and wrong, who's getting elected, who is not. We get so caught up in the things of this passing world, we forget about our daily obligation, the blessed moral duty of worship, to love God and to obey his Word. We strain the gnat and swallow the camel all the time, and I think that's why I feel impatient with so many debates, people who take up these same tired arguments, straining out gnats and swallowing camels, humps and all.

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It's, it's not that I consider the questions unimportant, but in light of eternal implications, in light of Gospel business, and in light of the, the duty and the commission of the church to make disciples, in light of the, the duty for us to be righteous before God and holy before him, in light of a husband's duty to his wife and a wife's duty to her husband and the parents' duty to their children, and all that spilling out into the workplace of slaves and masters and their relationships, and how we're to be salt and light in our, in our places of employment and in our neighborhoods and among our family and friends.

In light of all these weightier issues, I think so many, like the people of this day, so many people have lost perspective, lost sight of what really matters and what's truly important. We need to let these debates of history instruct us and teach us what it is to render our moral duty to pay the obligations that we owe without quarreling or controversy, with no spirit of rebellion, but a spirit of submission to God and to his order in the world.

Paul instructs Timothy to command the men of his congregation, men who are prone to this kind of cut-and-thrust debate, that they should “pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or quarreling, but offering instead supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, that they be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” Why is it godly and dignified? Because we go to God and we pray prayers of dignified Christians.

We read earlier from Romans 13:7-8, we're commanded to “render to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” And we are to, “owe no one anything, except,” what, love one another, right? To love one another. “For the one who loves one another has,” fulfilled, “fulfilled the law.”

So finally, if you're like these spies, maybe you've come to a moment of silence and a moment of self-reflection. And if you feel like I do, painfully fully aware of your lifelong

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failure to render to God the honor, and gratitude, and worship, and obedience that you owe to him, to love him with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, take heart friend because just as God provided Caesar to establish and enforce the Pax Romana, by his good and wise providence, this same God sent his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for sinners like you, to die for sinners like me, to forgive you of your sins and to give you the gift of eternal life, to cover you with a righteousness that is not your own, but the righteousness, the very righteousness of Christ himself. Full pardon, complete redemption, reconciliation to God, brand new life in Christ, all of that and more is on offer for you, for anyone who would repent of their sins and believe in him and trust in him for their salvation. Let's pray.

Father, I pray for all who would hear my voice in this message that through the explanation of this text, and so, there's so much more that can be talked about, but we've just really only scratched the surface of what's there, but hopefully it is a faithful rendering of what is there, what Jesus taught, what Jesus meant by what he said. But Father, we're all humbled before the duty, not just to render to our government what's



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owed to our government, but to render to you all the things that are owed to you.

And that is a comprehensive category, because everything that we have comes from your hand. Our very life, the breath that we breathe, the vision that we enjoy, the sensations that we feel, the experiences that we have, the things that we learn and know and understand, so much more, all these things are provided by your good hand. And so what do we owe to you but to do as you said, to honor you, to give you thanks every single day, to live our lives in wholehearted, whole sowed, whole-souled devotion to you, to love you with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

We must confess, along with every other sinner who has ever lived on this planet, we must confess that we have failed you. We've broken not only those two great commandments, and as they summarize the entire law and the prophets, we've broken all the commandments in some way, thought, word, or deed. And so we ask for, once again, your pardon, pleading the blood of Jesus Christ for our sins, but resolving to walk forward in his

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righteousness, that we may please you and render to you what you're owed, a life of wholehearted devotion to you. We pray that you would make it so by your Spirit, by your Word, by the leadership and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.