

Sunday Order of worship on October 22, 2023

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Stephen Knowles)

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 626 Lord of all power
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song – BOP 625 See ye first
- Prayer with children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Exodus 33:12-23
- Second reading: Psalm 99 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 22:15-22
- Sermon: Reasonable life
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830 Praise God from whom all blessings vs. 1) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 637 Take my life, and let it be consecrated

We Serve

- Benediction

Responsive Call to Worship

Let us sing to the LORD a new song.

We will bless God's name from day to day.

Let us declare God's marvelous deeds among all the people;

For God is great and greatly to be praised.

Let us praise God for God's strength and beauty.

We will bring God honour and glory as we worship God's holy name.

Praise song – BOP 626 Lord of all power

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Holy God, your mysterious presence stretches to the furthest reaches of the universe, yet you draw near to us in Christ Jesus. In him, you walk beside us, guiding us with wisdom, loving us with boundless grace. We praise you that your love embraces the whole creation, yet you find a place and a purpose for us mortals. What are we that you are so mindful of us. Your Spirit gives us the energy and insight we need to serve you. Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, we are humbled in your presence. In our worship we offer you our love and loyalty, now and always.

Patient God, we confess that we need your mercy. We claim to be your people, but we forget to love as you do. We claim to seek your guidance, but we follow our own ways. Forgive us, O God, Amend who we are and direct who you want us to be for the sake of Christ, our Saviour and Friend.

This time we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Precious people of God, God knows us and still God loves us. This is good news! By God's grace, we are forgiven and loved and we are set free to start again. Thanks be to God!

May the Peace of the Lord be with you. Let us take few moments to greet each other and share our peace.

Praise Song: BOP 625 Seek ye first

Prayer with Children

Prayer for Illumination:

God of Word and Wisdom, as we turn to the scriptures, may we hear your voice calling us to deeper faith and truer devotion. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

- First reading: Exodus 33:12-23
- Second reading: Psalm 99 (Refrain 1)
- Third reading: Matthew 22:15-22

"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."

SERMON: Reasonable life

Today's sermon title is **"Reasonable life."**

Can you spell OFF? Now, can you spell ICE?

Now, can you read these two words together? O F F I C E – David taught me this joke.

But, when I realized this OFFICE, it was a great aha moment for me in looking at things with new perspective.

OFF is a tree and ICE is a tree. We can see **OFFICE when we look at the forest.** With a big view. I was so fascinated.

When we say reasonable, this means, we have sound judgement. We are fair and sensible. In other words, we have common sense. Being reasonable could be accepted widely by most of the people even with different perspectives.

At the time of Jesus, collecting tax could be seen in different ways. Even today, taxation is one of the biggest issues. Palestine was a colony of the Roman Empire, and the Jews, who lived there at that time, were paying taxes that supported Roman army and government that occupied their own country. The Jewish people had anger against Roman government and their taxation system.

In this background, Jews, the Pharisees plotted to endanger Jesus with the sensitive issue of tax. These Pharisees asked Jesus, v16 **“Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality.”**

Surprisingly, these people who wanted to deceive Jesus proclaimed the truth about Jesus. But, at the same time, they were pushing Jesus in the corner. They are framing Jesus. “You are this good, so what you say is very very important.” So, here comes the question that will put Jesus in trouble... **“Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?”**

Either way Jesus answers, he gets into trouble. It is a “gotcha” question.

If Jesus advises NOT paying the tax money, Jesus will be accused of sedition. The Roman Emperor wouldn't allow Jesus leading uprising. In this way, Jesus will be arrested by the Roman Government. On the other hand, if Jesus advises paying the taxes, he sets aside the law of God. Jesus' reply brings about a challenging reflection.

“Give to the emperor what is due, and to God what is God's.”

Jesus knew their intention and requested to bring the coin used for the tax. It is a denarius.



Showing this coin to everyone, Jesus asked. “Whose head is this? Whose title is this?” People answered, “It's the emperor's.” “It's Caesar's.”

Jesus said, v21, **“Give therefore the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's.”**

It is not difficult to understand. But, what does it actually mean in our day to day life?

What is Caesar's? And What is God's??

In Matthew 21, there is **a story of wicked tenants**. A landowner leased his vineyard to tenants and went far away. When the harvest time came, the owner sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But, the tenants refused to give the owner the profit. They beat up the servants and kicked them out. So, the owner sent more slaves. But, same thing happened. Lastly, the owner sent his own son, thinking, ‘they would respect my own son.’ However, these wicked tenants said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him and get his inheritance! We're gonna take over this vineyard.’ They killed the son as if it were taking their chance.

When the owner comes back, what will he do to those tenants?

Matthew 21:41, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

What is mine? What is Caesar’s? What is God’s?

And in **Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”**

What are we driven by? Like the story of wicked tenants, many are driven by money or by their own desires. The denarius, the coin, which was used for tax, whose image was on? Caesar. He put this face on because it was his. When I send my children to school, I put names on their items. (Picture Water bottle with names) Why do I do that? So, they can distinguish whose is whose. Caesar put his face to identify his money. We put our own names because it’s ours. Then, what about God? God put his image in us. Like the coin bears the image of Caesar, we bear the image of God.

Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; ...’

1:27, “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.”

Twice in one verse, the Bible mentioned the same thing. This means every person carries the image of God. Period. What does this mean? **“You are mine.” – God.**

Isaiah 43:1, “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” V7, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

One day, in the kitchen, there was a new lunch bag. By mistake, David brought his friend’s backpack. His friend’s water bottle, his friend’s lunch bag, his friend’s everything. His friend had David’s everything. They have the same bag, so they were confused. So, what happened, the next day, they exchanged. Give David what is David’s, and give Eric what is Eric’s. Reasonable solution.

Tax money? Whose is it? Caesar’s. Period. So, give Caesar what is his. And Give God what is God’s. Reasonable life.

As Isaiah 43:7 states, we are created for God’s glory. For this, we are formed and made.

Jesus allows room for loyalty to Caesar, but subordinates it to loyalty to God. Jesus gave authority to Caesar, but it does not exceed the authority of God.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus the question, they said, **“Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?”**

“Lawful” When we hear this “Lawful,” we are kind of obligated to accept the authority of the law. In other words, we know that we need to keep the law. It is reasonable and it is a common sense keeping the law.

The Pharisees liked the law. And Jesus loves the law. Law of love, law of grace, love of justice..

In Matthew 22, a Pharisee, who is a lawyer asked Jesus a question, v36 **“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (Matthew 22:36)**

V37 [Jesus] said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

This is God’s law. “You who love you own laws! Listen to God! You who are carrying the image of God! Know and realize that whose image you are carrying! Realize where you are belong to! **LOVE GOD with your everything. LOVE PEOPLE as you love yourself.**

God is saying to live with his knowledge, live with his law, live with his perspective, live with his ways, live with his image and his likeness because he made us that way.

Give God what is God’s. This week, think about what are God’s in our daily life. And decide to give God what is his.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Prayer for the people:

Creator God and personal God, thank you for giving us life. Thank you for being with us. Thank you for opening the door for us to come to you. It is easy and difficult at the same time to live reasonable life. Help us have you in the centre of our hearts, so we follow your guidance. Help us have guts to follow your image we have in us.

We pray for Palestine and Israel. O God of life and love and peace, we witness the violence and injustice in your Holy Land. And our hearts break.

Our hearts break for the people on Israel. For the victims of violence attacks of Hams. For those who live with fear and insecurity. For those who suffer from the inter-generational trauma of violence.

Our hearts break for Palestinians. For the victims of violent attacks by the Israel military. For those being denied water, electricity, and medical care. For those who are refugees, long displaced from their homes.

We pray especially that weapons of war be laid down, that walls of separation be dismantled, that prisoners be released, that demonizing of “the other” cease, that political leaders seek the good of all people in Palestine and Israel.

O God, whose heart breaks for the world, may your justice dwell in the land. May your righteousness abide in fruitful fields. May the effect of righteousness be trust in you. May the effect of justice be peace that will last always.

Also, give peace upon the war in Ukraine and Russia. Be gracious to them and help them. Also, please be with the people in Afghanistan.

Gracious and glorious God, we are your people carrying your image. Help us open our hands for them, just like you reached your hand to help us. Use our hands, feet, and resources we are able to share, to show your love and care for your people.

We, as your church, want to give you glory and honour. We are formed and made for your glory. Be glorified, God, through our daily lives. We praise you and love you. In Jesus’ precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: Jesus reminds us to give to God the things that are God's. God has been so generous to us, that truly we owe God our lives. Let us return to God what God has shared with us, so that God's goodness can spread in the world in the name of Jesus. Let us praise God and honour him with the Doxology BOP #830.

Doxology 830 & Offering prayer:

God of abundance, we bring what we have to share, a portion of your goodness to us. Bless our gifts and our lives, so that generosity and justice will join hands, and your goodness touches those in need, in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Song for the Journey BOP 637 Take my life, and let it be consecrated

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. We are bearing the image of God. We are like the coin for God. Let us give our hearts to God in love and in love for the people around us. Let us live with God's common sense.

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.