

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Give to God what is God's!  
Proper 24  
Matthew 22:15-22**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

God promises us justice,  
**and teaches us persistence.**

God promises us compassion,  
**and teaches us not to lose heart.**

God promises to be with us  
**and teaches us to tend to each other.**

So let us worship our God of comfort and challenge,  
**We will offer prayers and praise to our God of hope and healing.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit,  
you breathe life into all things and nourish your whole creation.  
You are a rock and refuge for your people,  
for you are trustworthy in all things.  
Your desire for peace with justice can never be defeated.  
You alone can bring life out of death,  
and restore wholeness to broken lives,  
so we praise you and rejoice in the hope you offer.  
For your love is the power at work in every situation,  
seeking goodness and revealing truth,  
a love that will never let us go.  
In our time of worship, we offer you our love and loyalty  
through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn #324: “Great is Thy Faithfulness”**

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;  
there is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;  
as Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided:  
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest;  
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
join with all nature in eloquent witness  
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. [Refrain]

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow:  
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! [Refrain]

**Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
Let us make our confession to God.

**Prayer of Confession**

**God of our hopes and our hearts,  
You provide the gift of faith but we lose heart quickly.  
Troubles weaken our trust and  
disappointments eat away at our commitment.  
Forgive us and create in us clean hearts and in  
your love, give us peace and perseverance.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Remember the promise St Paul declares:  
What will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword?  
No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the God who loves us.  
Neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come  
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.  
Let us rejoice that, no matter what is happening around us,  
no matter what we have done,

God's deep love will never let us go.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Music Ministry: "The Waters of Grace"**

### **Responsive Reading**

10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!  
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;  
he will judge the peoples with equity."

**11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;**

12 let the field exult, and everything in it!  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

**13 before the LORD, for he comes,  
for he comes to judge the earth.**

**He will judge the world in righteousness,  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.**

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 96:10–13.

### **Children's Hymn: "I'm in the Lord's Army"**

I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery  
I may never zoom o'er the enemy but I'm in the Lord's army.

I'm in the Lord's army. I'm in the Lord's army.

I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery,  
I may never zoon o'er the enemy but I'm in the Lord's army.

### **Children's Lesson**

**Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Scripture**

**Matthew 22:15-22**

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

**Sermon**

The Scripture we have read today is still a continuation of the dialogue that Jesus is having with the religious leaders and the people gathered around him at the synagogue in Jerusalem. After the parable of the wedding feast, in which Jesus condemns those who do not answer the call of God, the religious leaders go off and begin to put their plan to kill Jesus into place.

Jesus had been warning those gathered religious leaders and all of the followers about the dangers of not having a true faith. In each of the parables we have looked at over the past few weeks, Jesus has not hesitated to condemn those who claim faith in their words, but do not live out their faith in their life.

The religious leaders recognizing that Jesus was speaking about them, and decide that the only course of action that they can take is to kill Jesus. Instead of looking at their own lives and comparing it to the Scripture, with honest and open hearts, they lock themselves into the idea that they are correct, and therefore Jesus must be wrong, mostly because they do not want to give up their own personal power and pleasures in this world. They lash out against the Messiah because through his parables he has exposed their pride, their hypocrisy, their self-righteousness, and their lack of compassion. The religious leaders were angered because Jesus had spoken truthfully about their lifestyles, based upon the Word of God, and even though it was true they could not accept it.

So, they begin to plan out ways to convict Jesus as a blasphemer and by doing so, gain the permission of the Church and the people to execute Jesus.

**Matthew 22:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. <sup>16</sup> And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. <sup>17</sup> Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”**

There is a lot for us to unpack to get a better understanding of the Scripture in these few verses. Luckily the most important of them is laid out in the first few words of the first verse.

**‘The pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words.’** The Pharisees were seeking a way to entrap Jesus, to take his words and teachings and use them to turn either the people or the Roman government against him. The religious leaders of Jerusalem do not want to confront Jesus directly, because when they had tried, he had scripturally pointed out all of their sins, and now they are fearful of another confrontation where the people could be further solidified in their support of Jesus as the Messiah.

So, they send disciples to him to confront him, to try to have him say something that will either cause him to lose followers, to lose his standing with the people or to somehow get the Roman Government angered with him, so that their legal system would deal with him, and their hands could be kept clean. This is why the disciples bring the Herodians along with them.

Once again, the historical understanding of relationships in the region during Jesus’s time is important. The Pharisees are the spiritual leaders of Israel. Like all Israelites they hate the fact their land is under the rulership of the Roman empire, in fact they are constantly seeking ways to circumvent Roman rulership and rebel against it within their communities.

Yet here we see the disciples bring along Herodians, people who are loyal to Herod, the Roman authority over the region. These are the supporters of the same Herod that had killed John the Baptist because of how John had spoken up truthfully and scripturally about the sin that was in Herod’s life. Herod was not a friend of the Israelites and Not a friend of the religious leaders, but here the religious leaders feel it is better to align themselves with their enemy, as long as it removes Jesus.

They begin with flattery, **‘Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.’** They begin with teacher, **‘didaskale’**, a word that was reserved for only the most revered of the Rabbis, a word that was only used to describe the religious teachers who were distinguished men of God who are known to be excellent instructors to their disciples on how man is called to live their lives in faith and in service to God.

The reason they start with such strong flattery is because that is what they enjoyed themselves. The religious leaders loved it when the people would come to them and call them a great teacher, they had a lot of pride in their position. They loved when the common person would approach them in reverence and respect saying Rabbi, Rabbi and they believe that Jesus will love the same, they want to appeal to Jesus's pride and vanity, and they hope by doing so they will make him falter in the words he uses.

Ironically in their desire to cause him to stumble, they actually speak truthfully when they say that he teaches **'truthfully'** meaning that he teaches God's Word without adding to it or taking away from it. They say he does not **'care about anyone's opinion, [because he is] not swayed by appearances.'** Essentially saying that he speaks the Scripture as it is meant to be taught, not caring about his own personal opinion, or welfare, not caring if he is loved or hated, only caring about the truth of the Scriptures.

Having buttered him up, they decide it is time to lay their trap, **'Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?'**

The religious leaders had carefully chosen this question and it was critical to their plan that the question be asked precisely this way and in the presence of the Herodians. They believed that by phrasing the question in such a manner they had trapped Jesus, forcing him to give an answer that would either turn the people against him, or turn the Herodians, and therefore the Roman empire, against him.

Tax was a point of contention, no one enjoyed paying taxes to the Roman government, the same way no one today really enjoys paying taxes. In Jesus's day the tax of the Roman empire put a lot of financial stress of the Israelites, and the tax went to support the Roman empire, and the Roman armies in their land. The tax was 10% of all grains that were produced, 20% of all wine that was produced, and 1% of any income that a person made. The Herodians fully supported this tax, and the people of Israel fully hated this tax.

The question was asked thinking that there were only two ways in which the question could be answered. If Jesus said that the people should lawfully pay the taxes, he would lose favor with the people who are against the tax. However, if he said to not pay the tax, he would anger the Herodians, and they would charge him with inciting rebellion against the Roman empire, which had a penalty of death.

Jesus answers in a completely different manner.

**Matthew 22:18-21**

<sup>18</sup> **But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?**

<sup>19</sup> **Show me the coin for the tax."** And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup> **And Jesus**

**said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” <sup>21</sup> They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”**

Jesus knew their intent; he did not fall for their flattery, when he sees two enemies that would normally be at war with one another come to him in friendship he knows that they are up to deceit. So, he calls them out on their behavior, he calls them hypocrites and asks them to bring him a denarius.

This is important to note, because there were many forms of coin at use in Jerusalem during Jesus’s time.

Jews used the Hasmonean lepton, this is the coin that we see the widow give in the temple, called a mite. This was the coin used in the market, a coin used to pay wages between Jews, and to tithe to the temple.

There were also the bronze coins of Pontius Pilate, a coin used in the general marketplace of Jerusalem. On one side it bore the image of the lictor, the Roman augural staff.

There were also the coins of the various traders from the lands surrounding Jerusalem, the coins of the Greeks, the Syrians, the Nabateans, and the Egyptians.

So, when Jesus calls for a Denarius, he is doing so with a purpose. The denarius was a very special coin. The denarius was the equivalent of one day’s wages, and it was also the coin that was the only form of money that was acceptable to pay the Roman taxes.

Jesus takes the coin and Jesus bluntly asks them whose image is inscribed upon the coin. On one side it had the bust of the Caesar and on the other it had Caesar dressed in god like attire. It is important for us to remember at this point that the Roman emperors saw themselves as Gods walking upon the earth, and many people in the Roman empire worshiped the Roman emperors as if they were Gods. This is one of the reasons that the Israelites dislike the tax of the Romans so much, because they believed to even hold onto a denarius was to hold onto the image of a false idol and be in violation of God’s commandments. The strictest Jewish religious leaders argued that to make use of a denarius was the same as worshipping a false God and the coin should be forbidden among the Jews.

The depth of the question that Jesus asks is meant to confound the disciples that had asked him about the tax. Jesus has once again gone and turned the truth of the Scripture against the ones who were seeking to entrap him.

Three of the institutions established by God for his people are government, marriage, and church. Paul reminds us of this in the book of Romans where he establishes.

**Romans 13:1-2**

**13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup>Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.**

Which built upon the teachings of Daniel.

**Daniel 2:21**

**21 He changes times and seasons;  
he removes kings and sets up kings;  
he gives wisdom to the wise  
and knowledge to those who have understanding.**

God establishes those who govern over us for his own purposes. God appoints government and the people within those government and charges them with the purpose of caring for the people. The government is supposed to work for the benefit of the people that it governs over, this is why we are to submit to them, even when we do not agree with them.

Romans once again builds upon this idea:

**Romans 13:5-7**

**<sup>5</sup>Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. <sup>6</sup>For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. <sup>7</sup>Pay 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.**

As much as many of us might not want to hear this, to honor God is to be respectful to the government and the people who serve within it, even if we fervently disagree with them. This is something we all need to keep in mind as elections take place. The government and the taxes it collects are vital to the people; they are meant to build and maintain roads, to protect the people from harm, fire, and crime. They are meant to be used to educate the people and help them remain healthy.

This is why Jesus instructs them, '**Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's**'. God put the leaders there for a reason, and what you are supposed to do in obedience to them do in obedience to them, to honor God.

Yet he does not stop there, Jesus continues, '**and to God the things that are God's.**' This is a vital part of what he says, because Christian and Jews alike should all recognize that we belong to God.



**Genesis 1:26-27**

**<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”**

**<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**

God created mankind in his image with the purpose of overseeing God’s creation.

1 Corinthians teaches us that

**1 Corinthians 10:31**

**<sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

Jesus is making it plain, the things of this world we give back to this world, but the most important part of us, our very being, our loyalty, our praise and our worship are all meant to go to God and not to the things of this world.

As Christians we are taught pay taxes to the government and obey the government, even when you disagree. The only time that we can disobey is when the things that the government asks us to do and obey go against the teachings of God. When the laws of man go against the law of God we are expected to act as citizens of heaven and obey the law of God and stand firm in our faith.

This is exactly what the midwives Shiphrah and Puah did when ordered by the Pharaoh of Egypt to kill all the baby boys born of the Israelites. They disobey and because of their disobedience Moses grows to become a great leader of the people.

God’s rule about the sanctity of human life, even that of an embryo, overruled the commands of the Pharaoh of Egypt, the same way it should overrule the laws of man in our world today.

In the book of Daniel, three young men refuse to give into the commands of Nebuchadnezzar, they refuse to praise and worship the Golden idol that the government had created. For this reason, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are all thrown into a furnace, to be burned alive, because they disobeyed the law of man and obeyed the law of God.

For this same reason, obedience to the law of God alone, we see Daniel bow in prayer to God when the King of the land had decreed that people could only pray to the king.

Christians need to know that when the law of man goes against the law of God, we are always to obey God alone. As Jesus says, **'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'**

This verse has some very easy to understand and very difficult to obey applications for us in this world.

Christians are meant to be the Salt and Light of this world, the ones who give ourselves up into the service of the Lord even when it causes us to lose in this world. The ones who obey the Scripture even when the world tells us it is ok to sin, because the world makes it allowable in their eyes. We are meant to be the ones who are constantly seeking way to further the kingdom of God in our communities, it means we give ourselves to God as we study his Word, and as we engage all of those around us through our words and deeds showing others that while we may be in this world, we are followers of God and citizens of Heaven.

Giving to God the things that are God's means giving ourselves over to God; heart, soul, body and mind. It means we need to see beyond what we believe is right in this world, and instead go to the Scripture and seek the guidance of God in all matters.

Jesus gives the Pharisees and the Herodians an answer that moves way beyond their trap, and instead once again shows them how shallowly they are thinking about the truth of God's Word. Immediately they know they have yet again been defeated, because once again Jesus has spoken the truth to them. The kingdom of Heaven is so much more important than the kingdoms of this earth.

This is why they walk away amazed. They had approached him with what they believed was a foolproof plan to entrap Jesus, to cause him to lose favor with the people or to anger the Roman Government, and his answer had done neither. In fact, his answer had endeared him more to both sides.

Jesus did not engage them in an argument and try to prove either side wrong, instead he did what we are all called to do in this world. Jesus stayed focused on God and his Word. He did not engage them where they were but instead brought them into the word of God and showed them that they should not be focused on such foolish things, they should be focused on God alone.

When we look at the response of Jesus given here and we combine it with the parables we have been studying the last few weeks it becomes clear that Christians are meant to bear the Fruit of the Spirit in all we do as we work in the fields of this world, we are meant to be clothed in Christ as we walk among the people of this world and we are meant to be focused on him as we serve him every day of our lives.

We are called to be filled with love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control as we walk in the image of Christ among believers and unbelievers. We are called to be light bearers, the image of Christ that guides other Christians and also shines out into the darkness so that the lost can find their way to God.

We are called to be like Jesus, when we are faced with difficult choices that seem to tear apart when looked at through the laws of man, we should be shifting our focus to the Scripture, to the law of God, and not responding with emotion, not responding at those things which tug at our heartstrings, but instead of passionately taking a side and alienating people, we should patiently taking time to go to Scripture and be seeking a way to find peace in the conflict.

Non-Christians can be as divisive as they wish, then can focus on cultural differences, political differences, economic differences, racial differences, ethnic differences, and all of the other differences that this world uses to divide and categorize people in this world. Non-Christians can focus on all of those things that seem so important to this world.

However, Christians are called to see beyond all of the things which divide people in this world. We are called to stand as the Body of Christ in this world, One Body, Christian First. Christians are called to be the hands and feet of Christ in this world. We are the servants sent forth to invite everyone to the wedding banquet, the good and the bad, we are the ones sent out to bring everyone to the banquet and make sure they that are clothed in Christ when they arrive.

For others to be changed, Christians need to be the ones who are different than others in this world. We need to be the ones who love the people we disagree with, the ones who sacrifice our time, talent, and treasure to help those in need and to serve those who do not enjoy the same things we enjoy.

So, let us all go forth and bear God's image in this world. Let us be the most loving, kind, peaceful, graceful, caring, and faithful people in this world. So, that when other people see us, they recognize Christ in us, and even if they do not agree with our beliefs and faith, let us love them as a brother or sister. Let us be a people that unifies under Christ! Let us pray,

**Holy Trinity, Keep Us in Your Grace**

Almighty and eternal God,  
God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit,  
you have shown your rich grace and mercy to us.  
Eternal Father,  
you created us at the beginning.  
Eternal Son of God,

for us you became truly human,  
 and for our sins you bore the cross.  
 Eternal Spirit,  
 you proceed from the Father and the Son from eternity,  
 and through your holy Gospel you give us faith and holiness.  
 O one, eternal and almighty God,  
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
 keep us in your grace until our life's end  
 in the eternal blessedness in the life to come.

*Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Trinity (1)*

**Hymn: "There is One Gospel"**

There is one Gospel on which I stand  
 For all eternity  
 It is my story, my Father's plan  
 The Son has rescued me  
 Oh what a Gospel, oh what a peace  
 My highest joy and my deepest need  
 Now and forever He is my light  
 I stand in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

There is one Gospel to which I cling  
 All else I count as loss  
 For there, where justice and mercy meet  
 He saved me on the cross  
 No more I boast in what I can bring  
 No more I carry the weight of sin  
 For He has brought me from death to life  
 I stand in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

There is one Gospel where hope is found  
 The empty tomb still speaks  
 For death could not keep my Saviour down  
 He lives and I am free  
 Now on my Saviour, I fix my eyes  
 My life is His and His hope is mine!  
 For He has promised I, too, will rise  
 I stand in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

And in this Gospel the church is one  
 We do not walk alone  
 We have His Spirit as we press on

To lead us safely home  
 And when in glory still I will sing  
 Of this old story that rescued me  
 Praise to my Saviour, the King of life  
 I stand in the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
 And when in glory still I will sing  
 Of this old story that rescued me  
 Praise to my Saviour, the King of life  
 I stand in the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
 Praise to my Saviour, the King of life  
 I stand in the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
 I stand in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

### **Invitation to Offering**

#### **Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewspert offering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

#### **Offertory Prayer**

#### **(Congregant Prepared)**

#### **Closing Hymn #332: "How Great Thou Art" (V 1,2,3)**

O Lord my God, When I, in awesome wonder,  
 Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made;  
 I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
 Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Chorus:

Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,  
 How great Thou art, How great Thou art.  
 Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,  
 How great Thou art, How great Thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,  
 And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.  
 When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur  
 And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze. (Chorus)

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing;  
 Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;  
 That on a Cross, my burdens gladly bearing,  
 He bled and died to take away my sin. (Chorus)

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Loving God,  
 together we have heard you speak to us,  
 welcoming us, forgiving us,  
 teaching us, challenging us.  
 And we have responded to you  
 with praise and confession,  
 listening to your Word,  
 praying in thanksgiving and intercession,  
 and committing ourselves to you anew.  
 It has been good to be together.  
 As we prepare to leave this place,  
 we await your blessing  
 so that we may be comforted  
 by the assurance that you will  
 be with us during the coming week.  
 Continue to speak to us as we seek your face.  
 Guide us by your Holy Spirit.  
 Keep us close to you, we pray,  
 in every aspect of our daily lives,  
 that we may seek your honor and glory  
 wherever we are and in whatever we do.  
 We pray, anticipating your blessing,  
 for we pray in the name of Jesus,  
 our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

May the grace of God,  
 freely given through Christ, our Lord,  
 and sufficient for all our needs,  
 and may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
 who testifies with our spirit  
 that we are God's children,

guide and sustain us this day  
and forever. **Amen.**