

Service for Week 5th -11th October

2026 By Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Sovereign God, we thank you that in all the uncertainties of life we find you are the one who is unchanging: a rock on which we can base our lives, a shield to defend us in the journey of life.

We praise you that nothing can ever overcome your purpose and you will lead us safely through into your eternal kingdom.

Amen

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 trespasses
as we forgive them who trespass
against us. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory
for ever and ever.

Amen

Bible Reading Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.

Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. When they heard this, they were amazed. So, they left him and went away.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Our bible text raises the question of loyalty and duty to those in political power. Government taxes are, and always have been a contentious issue. In 1709 the then Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger introduced Britain's first income tax to fund the war against Napoleonic France. There have been several times when laws and the imposition of taxes by the government have been questioned and demonstrated against for religious reasons. The main objection, principally by the Quakers, has been against tax raised for financing warfare.

It was the American statesman Benjamin Franklin who coined the phrase 'In this world nothing can be

said to be certain, except death and taxes" In New Testament times various taxes were imposed by the Roman occupying authority including land taxes and a form of poll tax. The right to collect regional taxes was auctioned off to the highest bidder, who employed local tax collectors like Zacchaeus -remember him- the short man who climbed in a tree to see Jesus - to collect the tax while increasing the amount due to make a larger profit for themselves.

The Pharisees fiercely opposed the taxes imposed by the Romans especially the personal or poll tax. They thought that paying tribute to Caesar who considered himself a God was idolatry because the Roman denarius coins bore his image and divine titles. They argued that God was their true sovereign.



That was the background to their asking Jesus "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" It was we might say a trick question. If Jesus said 'No' he would be seen to agree with the Pharisees that their Roman rulers had no right to impose the tax and he would be seen as a political agitator. If he said 'Yes' he would lose support

from his followers.

But Jesus does not fall into this trap and asks them to show him a denarius. This was the Roman silver coin with which the tax had to be paid. It could not be paid with the copper coins they used in Palestine. Their coins had to be exchanged for denarius in order to pay the tax.

Jesus' answer "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." does not evade the question. Jesus' message is that although they may not like the imposition of the tax they are under the authority of the Romans and have an obligation to them. But Jesus adds that they should give to God what is God's, meaning that man is made in the image of God and we should give him all that we are.

We are today under the authority of our governments and law courts and have to pay our taxes even though we may moan about it. That does not lessen our first obligation which is to reflect and represent God who made us for that very purpose -in his (spiritual) image.

Closing prayer

Loving God, I rejoice in the knowledge that you are not distant from my situation, removed from my daily experience, but here by my side. Help me, Lord God to dedicate every part of my life into your sure keeping.

Amen

Prayers inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett