

Render Therefore To Caesar The Things That Are Caesar's, And To God The Things That Are God's.

Text: Matt 22:15-22

Suggested Hymns:

569, 793, 570, 619, 576

1) Note The Difference Between Church
And State

2) Do Your Duty To Both

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 22:15–22, ¹⁵ *Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.* ¹⁶ *And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.*

¹⁷ *Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”* ¹⁸ *But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?”* ¹⁹ *Show Me the tax money.” So they brought Him a denarius.*

²⁰ *And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?”* ²¹ *They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* ²² *When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.” What was it that made the Pharisees so angry with Christ? It was this. Jesus had told them a parable in which He likened the kingdom of heaven to a royal wedding.¹ The invited guests not only refused to come to the wedding, but even killed the king’s servants; whereupon the king sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

The Pharisees perceived the meaning of this parable. They knew that they were meant by the murderers. This incensed them against Christ, and so they

held a meeting for the purpose of devising some plan and concocting some scheme to take revenge.

Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, He had spoken of His kingdom, and since in their minds the Messiah's kingdom was to be a worldly kingdom and the Messiah was to oppose and conquer the Romans, the plan and plot was to get Him to say something against the ruling authorities, to propose to Him the question, "***Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?***"

They expected Jesus to answer in the negative. What could He do but answer in the negative, if He claimed to be the Messiah, the only Ruler of God's chosen people? They were so sure of Christ's negative answer that they had the Herodians go along with their disciples when they put the question to Jesus.

The Herodians, who were the police, would hear with their own ears that Jesus is an enemy of Caesar, a rebel and insurrectionist, and therefore would arrest Him on the spot.

"But Jesus," we are informed, ***"perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?"*** How great must have been their surprise, when they found that Jesus knew exactly what they were after! ***"Show Me the tax money,"*** Jesus said. ***"So they brought Him a denarius,"*** which was a silver coin, worth a day's wage. ²⁰ ***And [Jesus] said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"***

"Caesar's," they had to admit. They had to admit Caesar's authority over them. Caesar's image was on the one side of the coin, and a Roman superscription denoting the value of the coin, on the other; and even the Jewish Talmud says, ***"He is the king of the country whose coin is current in the country."***

And now Jesus lays down a general rule for all ages and generations, a standing rule of special importance, for us and for our country and times.

Jesus ***said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."***

With the Help of God's Holy Spirit, let us consider two lessons taught by this text. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The First Lesson Is: Note The Difference Between Church And State.

“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Here Jesus distinctly says that Caesar’s domain and God’s domain are two different kingdoms, that the Church and the State are two different spheres which must be strictly kept apart and not intermingled or mixed together.

However attempts are being made continually to encroach upon this principle and to have the State mix into matters of the Church, and the Church into those of the State.

Note the difference between Church and State as to their subjects, their statutes, and their aim and object.

Who are the subjects in the Church or in God’s kingdom? Who are those who have sworn allegiance to Jesus Christ and recognise in Him their King? Are all the inhabitants of a nation followers of Christ? Or should they be classed with the Christians because Jesus is the Lord of nations and because He rules in the midst of His enemies?

Does not Jesus say, ***“My kingdom is not of this world”?***² In the Church, therefore, the Christians are the subjects, and the Christians alone.

But who are the subjects in the State? All citizens, both Christians and non-Christians. The State, or the worldly kingdom, must recognise all people, and treat all alike, giving equal protection to all and not discriminating between the different classes of citizens as to their religious views.

In the State, the Jew and the unbeliever, should share the same rights and privileges with the Christian. In this respect the State is greater in number than the Church; it comprises more people; but the Church is always ***“a little flock,”*** as Jesus says.³

And what a difference between the governing statutes or laws of both! What are the governing statutes of the Church? What are the laws by which the followers of Christ must abide and by which everything must be decided in the Church? These laws and statutes are laid down in the Book of books, in the Bible. That is the code of laws for the Church, and the only code of laws.

The Church has no right to make additions to the Bible and to frame new laws for the followers of Christ. This was done under the papal rule, and the

adherents of the pope to this day are burdened with rules and regulations that have not the least foundation in the Scriptures. The Roman pontiff has been exposed as the true Antichrist, and we know that he has no power and authority to make laws in the Church.

All the laws that the Church needs are contained in the Bible. We have our Confessions also. But these are not additions to the Bible. They only contain doctrines that are found in the Scriptures. They are explanations; and we adhere to our Confessions because we know them to be the true and correct exposition of the divine Word.

And what is the character of these governing laws of the Church? Are they of a temporal nature? Do they impose penalties and bodily punishments on the transgressor? No; they are spiritual; they deal with the soul. The only weapon of the Church is the Word, and the person who refuses to be governed by the Word of God can in no way be forced to obedience. By his refusal he places himself outside of the realm of the Church, and the Church has no dealings with him, and cannot have.

But what are the statutes of the State? The secular laws; in our country, the laws made by the people. The supreme law in our country is the Constitution, and thereto are added the statute laws of the state, and all the civil laws that are enacted from time to time.

The State as such has nothing to do with the Bible. Our judges and magistrates are not to be guided and governed by the precepts of the divine Law in their official decisions, but by the existing laws of the State.

And the aim and object of the Church differs from that of the State. What is the aim and object of the Church? It is the spiritual welfare of those to whom she ministers. She ministers to the wants of the immortal soul.

The Church has no jurisdiction over the life and property of her members, and any attempt on the part of the Church to rule by means of temporal power is an infringement upon the State, and a violation of the principle embodied in Christ's words: "*My kingdom is not of this world.*"

The Church must point out the way to heaven and use its endeavours to make people spiritually happy in this life and eternally happy in the world to come.

But what has the State to do with the spiritual happiness of its citizens? The State's sphere is the temporal, bodily happiness of its inhabitants. When the State protects its citizens, punishes crimes, regulates commerce and trade, and in a proper way enhances bodily welfare, its aim and object are fully attained. It has nothing to do with the spiritual condition of the people.

So we have seen that there is a great difference between Church and State as to their subjects, their statutes, and their object and aim.

2. The Second Lesson: Do Your Duty To Both.

Jesus, however, does not merely state the distinction between Church and State. He also says, "**Render**" (note the word render) "*therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" We must do our duty to both. This is the second point of consideration.

"*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.*" Jesus obviously does not mean to say that a Caesar should be at the head of every government, and that only when a Caesar, or an emperor, is at the head you must do your duty.

Jesus mentions Caesar, because the form of the Roman government, at that time, happened to be that of an empire. Had it been a kingdom, with a king at the head, He would have said, *Render to the king the things which are the king's.*

The Word of God does not prescribe any particular form of government, but it says, "*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*"⁴ So you are constrained by the Word of God to do your duty as a citizen, no matter what may be the form of government, whether it be a monarchy or a republic.

And how will you do your duty? In the first place, by honouring the magistrates. Our officials who have been elected to office by the vote of the people to enforce the laws should not be treated disrespectfully, but held in honour and esteem.

They are included in the Fourth Commandment and belong to the masters whom we are not to provoke to anger, but to hold in love and esteem. We therefore honour them even in our public Worship Service by mentioning them in

the General Prayer and by calling upon God to “*grant also health and prosperity to all who are in authority.*”

Secondly, you will, furthermore, do your duty to the State by conforming to the laws. Sometimes laws are made that are burdensome, laws that put us to a great deal of inconvenience, or encroach upon our personal liberty, laws that are unjust, inasmuch as they are discriminating.

But can a true Christian show open contempt of the existing laws and take part in an open revolt? No; he is bound to abide by the law, however burdensome and inconvenient it maybe. Was it not, to say the least, burdensome and disagreeable to the Jews to have the Romans rule over them at the time of Christ?

But what did Christ say when they asked Him, “*Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?*” Did Jesus advise them to shake off the Roman yoke? No; He said, “*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.*”

Even the most nonsensical law must be respected, as long as it is in force; and in our country we can easily get rid of a law that is universally condemned by making the proper use of our ballots.

Only in one case must a Christian resist and transgress the law, and that is when the State by law compels him to do that which is sin. Then the rule applies, “*We ought to obey God rather than men,*”⁵ and a true Christian will rather suffer punishment, imprisonment, death, than conform to a law in direct violation of God’s command.

Thirdly, there is one more point respecting your duties towards the State. God says in the prophecies of Jeremiah, “*Seek the peace of the city,*”⁶ and in the Epistle to the Romans, “*Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*”⁷

A Christian must, therefore, scrupulously pay the taxes imposed upon him, but he must also do his part as a citizen to promote the general welfare of the State. He must make himself acquainted with the history of his country, with its form of government, with the laws, with the present conditions, so that he may be able to cast an intelligent vote.

But these duties must never keep us from fulfilling our duties towards God. ***“Render ... to God the things that are God’s,”*** says Jesus. What is it that we must render to God? God says in the Book of Proverbs, ***“My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.”***

It is our heart which God demands of us, that is, our love to Him. But in no other way can you give your heart to God than in His Son Jesus Christ and by the mediation of the Saviour and Redeemer.

By nature our hearts are full of sin, and the love of God is not in us. So many people are not aware of this, or do not care. They are good citizens, and perform their obligations to the State, and expect to be received into heaven for doing so. They think that by rendering to Caesar the things which are Caesar’s they had, at the same time, rendered to God the things that are God’s.

But you may be a model of a good citizen and still not be a Christian, because you do not give your heart to God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, put your sole trust for your acceptance with God, in His wounds and sufferings for your sins, in His painful death on the cross, and you have given God your heart, and the love of God will enter into your soul.

But your duties towards God do not end here. Rendering to God the things that are God’s also demands of you the using of the means and possessions which God has entrusted to you for the establishment of God’s kingdom.

In the Old Testament the amount that was to be rendered to God was exactly fixed. The children of Israel had to give tithes, that is, a tenth of their income, to God. In the New Testament there is no such law. Christians are expected to render unto God the things that are God’s without any compulsory law.

They are expected to give freely, willingly, and cheerfully towards the support of the ministry and towards the spreading of God’s kingdom. Do not shrink, then, from this part of your Christian duty. Give liberally, and remember that you are but a steward of your possessions and consequently will have to give an account of your stewardship, that ***He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,***⁸ that God loves a cheerful giver, and that the Lord’s blessing will always rest upon those who help His cause.

May the Lord grant us all, His grace to the end that we perform our duties both in the State and in the Church, that we be good citizens and faithful

Christians, until we are translated from this world into His glorious kingdom in heaven, where there are pleasures for evermore. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matt 22:1-7

² John 18:36

³ Luke 12:32

⁴ Romans 13:1

⁵ Acts 5:29

⁶ Jeremiah 29:7

⁷ Romans 13:7

⁸ 2 Corinthians 9:6