

22nd October, 2023

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe,

light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall.

Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all.

Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all!

O seed of Israel's chosen race
now ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all.

Hail him who saves you by his
grace,
and crown him Lord of all!



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Let every tongue and every tribe

responsive to his call,

to him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all.

To him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all!

Oh, that with all the sacred throng
we at his feet may fall!

We'll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all.

We'll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all.!

The Sermon by Timothy James

Read Romans 15:14-22, Matthew 22:15-22: Trusting Jesus

This is part of series of accounts of Jesus' last few days, and follows (and is followed by) teaching about the Kingdom and his place in it.

The Pharisees and Herodians (who hated each other) form an unlikely alliance: Pharisees opposed co-operation with Romans, Herodians were collaborators. The trap was meant to put a wedge between Jesus and the people, or the occupying power. Their introduction is insincere (but true). Jesus points this out.

Everybody hates paying tax. Romans taxed all their territories (often heavily); the Temple tax was also payable by all adult Jews (in special currency), so Jews had double burden. Some Pharisees taught that paying Roman taxes (with Caesar's portrait) amounted to idolatry.

Jesus plays a word trick to get out of the immediate trap. But, as always, the quip has a deeper meaning.

Scriptural teaching about the "secular" state has two streams: the state is sometimes shown as opposed to God (foreign empires oppress God's people – e.g. Revelation 13); but the state is also an instrument of God's will (empires create order and law – Rom. 13:1-7). In the OT God's people lived as an autonomous state: there were no secular authorities, because Israel was a theocracy. But Jesus' disciples lived under Roman domination, and Paul's contemporaries as citizens/subjects of Rome.

The Romans were brutal, but efficient and valued law. Rome was not a liberal democracy, yet its authority was God-given. So the problem for God's people was working out how to relate to the authorities. We face this problem too when the state we live in seems to require things which conflict with our obedience to God.

So what is Jesus saying?

First, that being good citizens is not at odds with being God's subjects. We have money only because the state creates it (out of the underlying

created value which only God can make), so why should we resent returning the state's money? If we benefit from the order and prosperity the state creates, why should we not comply with its rules? The state may sometimes use our revenues for unjust purposes, but is that our concern?

But secondly, God's children are under another obligation.

Just as Jesus' hearers had to work out how to be a true Jew under pagan rule, we have to learn how to be a citizen of God's kingdom as well as citizens of the United Kingdom. Many modern Western values derive from Jesus' teaching but, equally, much that our society demands is inconsistent with the Gospel.

The thing he pointed out about the coin was that it had an image on it, and writing. The image was the emperor's, and the writing made claims about who the emperor was and what his empire stood for. It said that he was Lord.

As Jesus' people, we need to have his image upon us, and his words imprinted in us. We have nothing that is not from him, so when we "give God the things that are God's", that means we give him everything, all that we have and are. What that means in practice is a day-to-day question for us to work out: what does he require of us today, and how are we to give it to him?

Collect: Twentieth Sunday after Trinity: *God, the giver of life, whose Holy Spirit wells up within your Church: by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ and make us eager to do your will, that we may share with the whole creation the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. Nov. 15th at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: Oct 25th & Nov. 22nd at 11am, in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.