

Worship @ Home
Sunday 22nd October 2023



Call to Worship

God of yesterday, today and for ever,
we come as your people today,
and offer you the longings of our hearts.
Give us courage,
that we might inspire others to follow your way
and seek the values of your kingdom.
Amen.

Hymn 24: Come, now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship,
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue
will confess you are God,
one day every knee will bow.
Still, the greatest treasure remains
for those who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship...

Brain Doerksen

Prayer

Inspiring God,
we pray for grace to enjoy the blessings of your
world;
for discernment to know when to speak out for the
values of your kingdom;
for wisdom to know when compromise is the most
fruitful way;
for courage when we must make a stand.
And at all times we pray for the presence of the
Holy Spirit
to guide, inspire and empower us, in Jesus'
name.
Amen.

Loving God,
we have sinned against you
in what we have thought, said and done.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
We are truly sorry
and turn away from what is wrong.
Forgive us for the sake of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(A moment of silence)

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
This is his gracious word:
'Your sins are forgiven.'
Amen. Thanks be to God.

Lord's Prayer

Hymn 78: Give thanks with a grateful heart

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One;
give thanks because he's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One;
give thanks because he's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.

And now let the weak say, 'I am strong,'
let the poor say, 'I am rich,'
because of what the Lord has done for us;
And now let the weak say, 'I am strong.'
let the poor say, 'I am rich,'
because of what the Lord has done for us;

Give thanks.

Reading: Matthew 22. 15 – 22

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax^{ia} to Caesar or not?"

¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

²¹ "Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

²² When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Reflection

A trap with words...those who set out to trap Jesus with words where the disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians but who and why do these groups want to trap Jesus with words?

The Herodians were a non-religious Jewish party, not like the political parties of our day but people who supported Herod the King of Judea and the policies of the Roman government. The Pharisees were members of the Jewish community, a community Jesus was a member of. The Pharisees believed and attempted to uphold within the community the strict observance of traditions and the written law of Moses. Jesus had many run ins with the Pharisees you could say! You could also say that the Herodians and the Pharisees were at opposite ends of the political spectrum but in their common hatred of Jesus was enough for them to join forces to try and trap Jesus – or at least that's the picture that Matthew paints of this encounter.

Jesus has returned to Jerusalem for the final time and has shared several parables with the crowds. The Pharisees and the Herodians see this as an opportunity to put Jesus on the spot in front of his followers to try and show him up.

They ask him, "Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"

It was a trick question! If Jesus had said no, then the Herodians would have had grounds to charge him with treason against Herod and Rome. If he had said yes, then the Pharisees would be able to accuse him of disloyalty to the Jewish nation and he would have lost the support of the crowd and undermined what he had been teaching.

But what Jesus does, rather than says is something quite remarkable when backed into a corner. He asks them for a coin – you can imagine the scene, the confused looks, they were certain they had him with the question they posed and what on earth? He wants a what, a coin...the scrambling in pockets, the mutterings of what is this guy up too...

So they produce a coin, the denarius was a coin minted to be used as tax money at the time. It was silver and had an image of the emperor on it with an inscription calling the Emperor "divine", God.

The Pharisees considered such images as idolatry, forbidden by the second commandment, "You shall make no idols".

Jesus looks at the coin and asks, "who's image is this?"

So both the Herodians and the Pharisees state the obvious – Caesar's.

Jesus cuts straight through their trap with the line, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

Jesus draws a sharp distinction just like in his parables between two kingdoms. The kingdom which human's have created for themselves, which Caesar was a symbol of and God's Kingdom.

Caesar minted coins for his kingdom, his image was stamped on what he had made by using his power and demanded for it to be paid back as tax. God has minted the human heart and soul and has stamped God's image on everyone for we are all made in the image of God, we are all made in love. But unlike Caesar God makes no demands but invites us to share our heart, our love as we follow the way of love, Jesus Christ, and with one another.

Hymn 446: I will offer up my life

¹ I will offer up my life
in spirit and truth,
pouring out the oil of love
as my worship to you.
In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord, receive the sacrifice
of a broken heart.

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
to so faithful a friend, to so loving a king?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
as a praise of your name
for the things you have done?
O, my words could not tell, not even in part,
of the debt of love that is owed by this
thankful heart.*

² You deserve my every breath,
for you've paid the great cost,
giving up your life to death,
even death on a cross.

You took all my shame away,
there defeated my sin,
opened up the gates of heaven,
and have beckoned me in.

Matt Redman (1974)

Prayers of Intercession

God of all,
we pray for those who have too little money:
for those who are hungry, those denied
healthcare,
those unable to provide for their families, those in
debt.

**May they be enriched and enabled
and may they know your love.**

We pray for those for whom too much money
brings loneliness, apathy and a sense of
superiority.

**May they be cherished and challenged
and may they know your love.**

We pray for those who worship money,
for those tempted to steal or to deceive.

**May they be transformed and trusted
and may they know your love.**

We pray for those reluctant to share their money,
for those who avoid paying taxes,
for those tempted not to declare their earnings.

**May they be mindful and ministered to
and may they know your love.**

We pray for our churches, our communities and
for ourselves,
that we may live, give and share in your name
and to your glory.

Amen.

Offering and Dedication

God of all goodness and grace,
receive the gifts we offer;
gifts of time, care, love and money;
and grant that our whole life
may give you glory and praise;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn 615: Let love be real

¹ Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;
a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go.

As God loves us, so let us love each other:

*with no demands, just open hands and space to
grow.*

² Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;
that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words
are weakness;
give me your love in spite of all you know.

³ Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control;
let us accept each other's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and
disappointments;
give me your trust when all my failings show.

Michael Forster (1946)

Sending out Prayer

Show your faith in your actions,
your love in your works,
and your hope in your perseverance.
May God empower you
and may the currency of the Kingdom,
love,
inspire all that you do.
Amen

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