



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: "Surrender: Serving the Savior"
"Citizenship." Text(s): *Matthew 22.15-22; 1 Peter 2.9-17.*

□ **Day #1—Monday, October 19th. Read: Matthew 22.15-16. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

Matthew tells us that it is the Pharisees and Herodians that come to Jesus. Just as Jesus had disciples, so also did other religious leaders. For example, John the Baptist had followers, and it is believed that possibly, some of John's disciples turned to Jesus when John confessed he was not the Messiah! (See *John 1.19-42; Matthew 9.14; 11.2ff.*). In our text, the Pharisees sent their disciples to Jesus, looking for ways to condemn Him.

The Pharisees were the religious conservatives of the day, opposed to Rome and all it stood for. Joining the Pharisees were the Herodians, a small group of Jews loyal to the various members of Herod's family. Both groups resented Jesus and what He stood for. Consequently, they come to trap Him with a question about paying taxes to Rome. As these two groups approach Jesus, the irony of their description of Jesus' character is made clear. In their attempt to flatter Jesus, they actually reveal the truth of who He is!

For Matthew it is of importance that the words of flattery actually express the truth about Jesus. Jesus has been addressed as teacher...He will be addressed as teacher again in 22:24, 36. The section is strongly focused on Jesus as teacher. That Jesus is 'true' points to the moral and religious integrity of his life. This has its counterpart in the truth of what he teaches. What he teaches is 'the way of God'. Related language is found in 'the way of righteousness' in 21:32 and the imagery of the narrow way in 7:13-14. The LXX equivalent is 'the way of the Lord'.¹

Of course, what we witness is that the Pharisees and Herodians "excessive and insincere flattery that frames this question is intended to disarm Jesus and set Him up for a fall."² However, Jesus is not swayed by false flattery or a desire to please the Pharisees or the Herodians. Jesus in fact will tell the truth and fulfill the mission that God has ordained for Jesus. A mission that will ultimately lead Him to the cross. A destiny that the religious establishment was planning for Jesus and motivated this encounter.

Consider/Reflect: [Regarding this text from Matthew 22.15-22] "The design of the Pharisees to entrap Jesus failed because he was able to transcend the dilemma they forced on him. And in so doing, Jesus was at the same time able to articulate a fundamental principle by which the disciples could chart their existence as the people of God's kingdom living in a yet imperfect world governed by secular authorities. This logion served as the beginning point of what was to be elaborated centuries later in the Lutheran two-kingdom theory. The later NT writers regard the ruling powers as instituted by God and as worthy of honor, faithfulness, support, and intercession (e.g., Rom 13:1-14; 1 Peter 2:13-17)".³

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, October 20th. Read: Matthew 22.17-19.—Examine: The Text and its Message.**

Jesus is asked about paying taxes to Caesar/Rome. Again, meant as a trap, either answer of yes or no could be used against Jesus.

If he were to answer that it is right to give tribute to Caesar, he would be discredited among the people as compromising on a basic principle and as thus not being worthy of the name "prophet." If, on the other hand, he were to disallow the paying of the tax to Caesar, that could be used against him in any later presentation of Jesus to the Roman authorities as a dangerous revolutionary.⁴

The tax in question was the annual "head" or "poll tax" required of all individuals. While seeing through their pretense, Jesus asks for the required coin used for the tax. It was a denarius, the average day-wage for a laborer in the first-century. As D.A. Carson describes, the denarius "bore an image of the emperor's head along with an offensive inscription ("Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus" on one side and "*pontifex maximus*"—which Jesus would understand as "high priest"—on the

1 J. Nolland. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 2005).
2 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).
3 D.A. Hagner. *Word Biblical Commentary*: (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993).
4 Ibid.

other) would offend most Palestinian Jews.”⁵

...three confrontations were initiated by Jesus’ opponents, in order *to trap him* into damaging statements which could be used against him. The first concerns the Roman poll-tax, which was fiercely resented by patriotic Jews as a symbol of their political subjection. Some twenty-five years earlier a major revolt against this tax had been sparked off by a Galilean popular leader, Judas (Acts 5:37), from whom the Zealot group took its inspiration. It was thus a loaded question: to support the tax was to be unpatriotic, while to oppose it was politically dangerous (especially for a Galilean popular leader). In getting them to show him a *denarius*, however, Jesus exposed them as *hypocrites*, since no patriotic Jew should have been carrying this coin, with its ‘idolatrous’ *portrait* of the emperor and its *inscription* giving him the title ‘Son of God’.⁶

Consider/Reflect: In your life, what belongs to “Caesar?” What belongs to God? How well are you giving to each?

□ Day #3—Wednesday, October 21st. Read: Matthew 22.20-22.—Explore: The background to this text(s).

With the coin before them, Jesus asks, “*Whose likeness and inscription* is this?” The answer is of course, Caesar’s. Jesus’ response will both impress and silence His critics: If it is Caesar’s coin, then give it back to Caesar! At the same time, what belongs to God must be given back to God as well!

Whatever is due to the emperor must be paid. But Jesus did not say only that. He reminded his hearers that in addition to their obligations to the state they had obligations to God, and those, too, must be rendered. We are at one and the same time citizens of some earthly state and citizens of heaven; the obligations of neither may be neglected. And as we reflect on what Jesus said, we are made to realize that there are limitations to *the things that are Caesar’s*. People must never allow their obligations to the civil state to encroach on their payment of *the things that are God’s*...The most significant part of life is that which belongs to God; rendering to God what is God’s is accordingly the most important duty we have. We should be clear, too, that Jesus is not saying that we can divide life into separate compartments so that God has nothing to do with that section which belongs to Caesar. The obligation to God covers all of life; we must serve Caesar in a way that is honoring to God.⁷

Jesus was aware of the hypocrisy in their approach and also of the implications of His answer. He therefore answered their question by demonstrating that government does have a rightful place in everyone’s life and that one can be in subjection to government and God at the same time. He asked them to give Him a coin used to pay the tax. A Roman denarius, with its image of Caesar, the Roman emperor, made it obvious they were under Roman authority and taxation...Therefore the taxes must be paid: Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s.⁸

Consider/Reflect: “Jesus here distinguishes the two realms—the civil and the heavenly—under which all believers live. Though our first allegiance is always to God (Ac 5:29), we are also bound to obey the legitimate civil authorities God has established (Rm 13:1–7). Luther: ‘It is the duty and obligation of those who participate in this earthly regime to administer law and punishment, to maintain the distinctions that exist among ranks and persons, to manage and distribute property. . .But the Gospel does not trouble itself with these matters. It teaches about the right relation of the heart to God’ (AE 21:108).”⁹

□ Day #4--Thursday, October 22nd. Read: 1 Peter 2.9-10.—Explore: The background to this text(s).

Perhaps recalling Jesus’ teaching on rendering to Caesar and to God what are theirs respectively, the Apostle Peter reminds the church of their identity as God’s people in the midst of an often, hostile culture. Peter uses the descriptions of Israel from the Old Testament, transferring these now to the church in the New Testament. As P.H. Davids describes, Peter weaves together:

...a phrase taken first from Exodus (“But you”), then from Isaiah (“chosen people”), then Exodus again (“royal priesthood” and “holy nation”), and finally Isaiah (“God’s own people...deeds,” the grammar changed to suit the new context in 1 Peter), indicating a long period of meditation on and use of these texts in the church. The emphasis throughout is collective: the church as a corporate unity is the people, priesthood, nation, etc., rather than each Christian being such.¹⁰

5 D.A. Carson. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

6 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

7 L. Morris. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1992).

8 Walvoord, Et al., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

9 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

10 P.H. Davids. *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1990).

The purpose of the church's vocation as God's chosen people is to proclaim God's glory! God's glory is His character, His holiness, love, and mercy.

As the Israelites were once the chosen people of God, now Christians are the new Israel, chosen by God... a royal priesthood. The priests belong to the King, God Himself. Luther: "Each and all are....equally spiritual priests before God....Faith alone is the true priestly office. . . Therefore all Christian men are priests, all women priestesses, be they young or old, master or servant, mistress or maid, learned or unlearned" (AE 35:101)...God's people, individually and collectively, are set apart to do His will (Ex 19:5–6)...Luther: "We must recognize in our hearts and believe that we receive everything from Him and that He is our God. Then out with it, and freely and openly confess this before the world—preach, praise, glorify, and give thanks! This is the real and only worship of God, the true office of the priest, and the finest, most acceptable offering" (AE 14:32). 2:10...[Once you were]...not a people. . . Apart from God, humans are isolated and not in relationship with Him or others. Having received God's blessings, He places us in His Body, the Church.¹¹

Consider/Reflect: Believers are in an honored place as "stones" in God's new temple—His body! Believers are a "chosen people" (*eklektos genos*); A "royal priesthood" (*basileion hierteuma*); A "holy nation" (*ethnos hagion*). The church is the "new Israel." Our vocation stays the same as Israel's—to bring glory to God by proclaiming His character and love!

□ **Day #5— Friday, October 23rd. Read: 1 Peter 2.11-17.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Verse 11 begins a new section in Peter's exhortation to the churches he is writing to. Peter now seeks to emphasize that God's people are "beloved of God" even though they are facing serious trials and struggles. It is precisely that they (we) are God's beloved, that we (they) experience life in this world as "sojourners and exiles." In light of being "strangers in a strange land," Peter now exhorts believers to live accordingly! The word translated as "passions" in *v.11*, translates the Greek word, ἐπιθυμία (*epithumia*), which literally means, "over desire" (Good or bad). Christians must be clear and careful not to "over desire" things that damage our soul and/or our relationship with God!

Like all people, we were born in sin and lived in the darkness of the world. But Christ, the light of the world, has called us out of darkness into His light. He makes us His own, gives us a place as citizens of His kingdom, and empowers us to live as His royal priesthood. We are not alone but are part of His people, a holy nation. Now that same Savior calls us to tell others of His love. Through our words and actions, we proclaim the life and salvation that is ours in Jesus.¹²

Peter continues to describe the integrity of believers. In this text, the first issue Peter describes is the believer's relationship to human institutions and government, a similar point that Paul makes in Romans 13. Peter tells the church that we must be "subject for the Lord's sake." As P.H. Davids notes:

Submission to God, of course, would be an assumption of Christianity...This submission is described two ways: "To every created human being" and "on account of the Lord." Both terms are important. The first is a difficult phrase that has also been translated "to every human institution" and "to every institution created for people."...In biblical Greek God creates the world and all creatures...Christians might feel that this submission did not include submitting to non-Christians, but Peter argues that it does include them and names the significant ones in many of their lives: Caesar and his governors, their masters, and their husbands.¹³

When it comes to submission to authorities, interestingly, Paul put family relationships first in his list, yet Peter puts government authorities first. "This shows his context of persecution; he will always assume that the person in question is non-Christian and very likely oppressive."¹⁴ The nature of the submission called for will be described in *vs. 15–17*. This naturally leads to *v.14* and Peter's focus on "governors."

... "governors," that is, the legates or procurators (of imperial provinces) and proconsuls (of senatorial provinces)... were the highest authority with which people normally had to deal in their lives. Since they at times had a direct effect

11 *The Lutheran Study Bible.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 P.H. Davids. *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1990).

14 *Ibid.*

on daily life and since their various evils were often well known, they would be much harder to submit to than the distant unknown Emperor. But one should submit because (1) they represented the Emperor (i.e., were “sent by him”) and (2) their purpose was “to punish those doing evil and to commend those doing good” (i.e., to keep the public order...Peter does not go as far as Paul does, for the latter argues in Rom. 13:3–4 that public order is God’s will and therefore the ruler is in that respect God’s “servant.” In this area our author is far more schematized, simply citing the basics of the tradition. Neither of them, of course, necessarily approves of the methods of the rulers, nor argues that Christians should participate in their activities.¹⁵

Peter makes clear, as does Paul that suffering for the sake of the Gospel is suffering for one’s faithfulness to God’s truth. To suffer consequences by civil authorities for breaking society’s laws (stealing, abusive actions, etc.) is the proper purpose of civil authority. At the same time, resisting civil authority when they are disobeying God’s law or contradicting clear, Biblical directives, will call the church to civil disobedience. Prayerful discernment is vital!

Consider/Reflect: “Submission is subjecting or subordinating oneself to someone or something else. Christians are called on to submit voluntarily to every authority instituted among men (Rom. 13:1). This includes accepting one’s role in society... That is, believers commit themselves to doing what is deemed right according to the norms of one’s own culture, assuming of course that what society calls “right” does not require a direct violation of God’s commands.”¹⁶

☐ **Day #6-Saturday, October 24th. Read: Psalm 89.1-11. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the *Daily Order of Prayers* from *Luther’s Small Catechism*. Read and mediate on *Psalm 89.1-11* and...:

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.¹⁷

Consider/Reflect: [Psalm 89]...“Speaks primarily of David, who enjoyed God’s faithfulness...and promises. Even when David sinned and felt the weight of God’s Law...he still relied completely upon God...[Pray]: ‘Blessed be the Lord forever!’ Preserve the faithful, O Lord, and provide for their future security and service. Amen and Amen.”¹⁸

**Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...
Sermon Series: “Surrender. Serving the Savior.”**

Scripture Texts:
Revelation 14.6-7
Romans 3.19-28
John 8.31-36

15 Ibid.

16 L.O. Richards. *The Bible Reader’s Companion* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991).

17 Martin Luther. “*Luther’s Small Catechism*.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

18 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.