

United In Awe

A Five-Day Devotional
from Pastor Chris's Sunday Message

October 19 - October 23, 2026

Division has a way of convincing us that the other side is the problem.

In this week's Gospel, the Pharisees and Herodians could hardly have been more different. The Pharisees resisted Roman influence and wanted to preserve their Jewish identity, while the Herodians were far more accepting of Roman authority. Under normal circumstances, these two groups had little reason to cooperate. Yet their shared opposition to Jesus was strong enough to unite them.

They approached Jesus with what they believed was the perfect trap: Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? If Jesus opposed the tax, they could accuse Him of challenging Rome. If He supported it, He risked alienating those who resented Roman occupation. Either answer seemed certain to divide people and damage His ministry. But Jesus refused to be trapped inside their divisions.

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Something unexpected happened. The people who had approached Jesus determined to discredit Him marveled at Him instead. His words did more than win an argument. They challenged assumptions, shifted perspectives, and created a moment when two opposing groups suddenly had something far greater in common than their politics: Jesus Himself.

Our world knows plenty about division. We can disagree about politics, culture, priorities, and countless other things. Christians are not called to abandon their convictions. Pastor Chris reminds us that some issues are worth discussing and debating. But when disagreement begins destroying friendships, straining families, creating contempt, or turning neighbors into enemies, something has gone terribly wrong.

The answer is not simply to stop talking about difficult things. The answer is to keep bringing Jesus into the conversation.

When Opposition Brings Us Together

Then the Pharisees went and took counsel how they might entrap him in his talk. They sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are honest, and teach the way of God in truth, no matter whom you teach, for you aren't partial to anyone."

The Pharisees and Herodians were unlikely partners. They represented opposing perspectives and normally had little reason to trust one another. Yet they found something that temporarily united them: their opposition to Jesus. That picture is sobering.

Human beings are remarkably good at forming groups around what—or whom—we oppose. Sometimes our strongest sense of belonging comes not from what we love together, but from what we dislike together. We can bond over frustration, criticism, politics, resentment, or a shared enemy. But that kind of unity is fragile.

The Pharisees and Herodians were not suddenly friends. Their partnership existed only because Jesus had become a common threat. Once He was gone, they could easily return to fighting one another. Christ invites us to something far deeper.

Christian community cannot be built primarily around what we are against. It must be built around Who we belong to. When Jesus becomes the center, our relationships no longer depend upon agreeing about everything. We can disagree and still worship together. We can see an issue differently and still pray for one another. We can hold strong convictions without treating another person as an enemy.

The question is not simply, "Who agrees with me?" A better question is, "Are we looking toward Jesus together?"

Reflective Thought:
Is any relationship in my life becoming defined more by disagreement than by our shared need for Christ?

Prayer
Lord Jesus, forgive me when I allow frustration or disagreement to define how I see another person. Remind me that my deepest identity is found in You. Help me build relationships around Your grace rather than around shared anger or opposition. Amen.

Jesus Refuses Our Traps

"Tell us therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test me, you hypocrites? Show me the tax money."

The question Jesus faced seemed impossible to answer safely. Should taxes be paid to Caesar? If Jesus said no, His opponents could accuse Him of rebellion against Rome. If He said yes, those suffering under Roman occupation could accuse Him of siding with their oppressors. His enemies thought they had created a choice between two unacceptable answers.

Jesus refused the trap.

After asking to see the coin used for the tax, He answered: give Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give God what belongs to God. Jesus did not allow His mission to be reduced to the political categories His opponents had created. We often encounter similar pressure. Our world often demands that we choose a side and then accept everything associated with it. People want quick labels: Are you with us or against us?

Jesus reminds us that our first allegiance belongs somewhere higher. Governments matter. Elections matter. Communities matter. Decisions affecting our neighbors matter. Christians should take those responsibilities seriously. But none of them deserve the place that belongs to God.

Before asking, "What does my political side say?" or "What does my group expect?" disciples of Jesus must ask: "What belongs to God?" And ultimately, the answer includes us. Our hearts, loyalties, words, relationships, decisions, and lives belong to Him.

Reflective Thought:
When difficult issues arise, do I first ask what my "side" believes—or what faithfulness to Jesus requires?

Prayer
God, You alone deserve my highest allegiance. Give me wisdom when the world presents complicated choices and pressures me to fit neatly into its categories. Help me think faithfully, speak graciously, and remember that every part of my life belongs to You. Amen.

They Marveled at Jesus

They said to him, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard it, they marveled, and left him, and went away.

One of the most remarkable moments in this story happens after Jesus answers. His opponents marvel at Him. These were not disciples who had come ready to learn. They had arrived with a plan to trap Him. Yet something in Jesus' words stopped them.

Pastor Chris points out how significant this is. Earlier in the Gospels, crowds marveled at Jesus' miracles. Now His opponents are doing the same thing. Jesus' words challenged their perspectives and moved them beyond simply trying to win an argument.

That should give us hope. We sometimes assume certain people will never change.

We may think someone is too angry, too stubborn, too different, too opposed to Christianity, or too convinced of their own position ever to see things differently.

But Jesus can reach people we cannot.

Our responsibility is not to force someone into agreement. Our calling is to faithfully point toward Christ and trust the Holy Spirit with what happens next. A conversation that begins with hostility can become curiosity.

Curiosity can become wonder. Wonder can become faith.

Never underestimate what a few words about Jesus can do.

Reflective Thought:
Who have I quietly decided is beyond the reach of Jesus?

Prayer
Jesus, forgive me when I underestimate Your ability to change hearts. Give me courage to speak Your name with humility and love. When I encounter hostility, help me trust Your power instead of relying only on my arguments. Use my words and actions to help others see something beautiful and compelling in You. Amen.

Conviction Without Contempt

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and humility, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Following Jesus does not require abandoning conviction.

There are issues that matter deeply. Christians should pursue truth, defend what is right, speak for those who need a voice, and participate faithfully in their communities.

Pastor Chris makes that clear in the sermon: there are divisions are worth debating, and we should stand for our convictions and advocate for what we believe to be true. The danger begins when conviction becomes contempt.

When disagreement destroys relationships, strains families, breeds hostility, or convinces us that another person deserves our hatred, our disagreement has begun controlling us. Jesus shows us another way.

We can disagree without dehumanizing.

We can speak truth without cruelty. We can defend convictions without making enemies. We can listen without surrendering everything we believe. Christian maturity is not measured only by whether we hold the correct position. It is also revealed in how we treat people while holding it.

The person standing across from you is not merely a vote, an opinion, a political label, or an opponent. That person is someone God loves.

Reflective Thought:
Can people see the character of Jesus in the way I disagree with them?

Prayer
Holy Spirit, guard my heart when conversations become difficult. Give me courage to stand for truth without becoming harsh or contemptuous. Teach me to listen patiently, speak graciously, and remember the dignity of every person I encounter. Let my convictions draw me closer to Christ rather than farther away from my neighbor. Amen.

A Unity That Lasts

Above all these things, walk in love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

The Pharisees and Herodians approached Jesus united by opposition. They walked away sharing something very different: awe. Pastor Chris summarizes the transformation beautifully:

“They approached him, united against him, but they left united in awe of him.”

That may be the greatest invitation in this entire story. The church does not need every person to think exactly alike. We come from different families, generations, experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. There will always be things about which faithful people disagree. Our unity comes from somewhere deeper.

We gather around one Lord. We kneel before one cross. We receive one grace. We proclaim one Savior. That unity is powerful enough to survive disagreements that would otherwise separate us.

Pastor Chris ends the sermon with a simple challenge: share your opinions, make your arguments, stand for your convictions—but also share Jesus and see what the Holy Spirit might do. If Jesus could bring Pharisees and Herodians together in amazement, then Christ can still create unity among people who once considered one another enemies.

Politics will change. Leaders will change. Issues will change. Caesar will change. But Jesus remains. And a unity centered in Him can last far beyond anything the world creates.

Reflective Thought:
What would change if I became more passionate about helping people marvel at Jesus than about getting them to agree with me?

Prayer
Lord Jesus, make You the center of my life and the center of Your church. Where there is division, bring humility. Where there is hostility, bring peace. Where relationships have been damaged, begin the work of reconciliation. Help me stand faithfully for what is true while always pointing beyond myself to You. May people who disagree with one another discover something greater together: wonder, hope, grace, and lasting unity in Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Little Encouragement to Share

If these devotional reflections have encouraged you, challenged you, or helped you see God's Word in a new way, consider sharing this booklet with a friend, family member, neighbor, or someone who might need a little encouragement this week.

Sometimes a simple word of faith can make a difference.

Want to hear more?
Watch the message that inspired this week's devotional and continue the journey with us in worship.

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