

## 20th Sunday after Pentecost, October 22, 2017

19th Sunday after Trinity, Proper 24(29)

**LUTHERAN**

# **LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY**

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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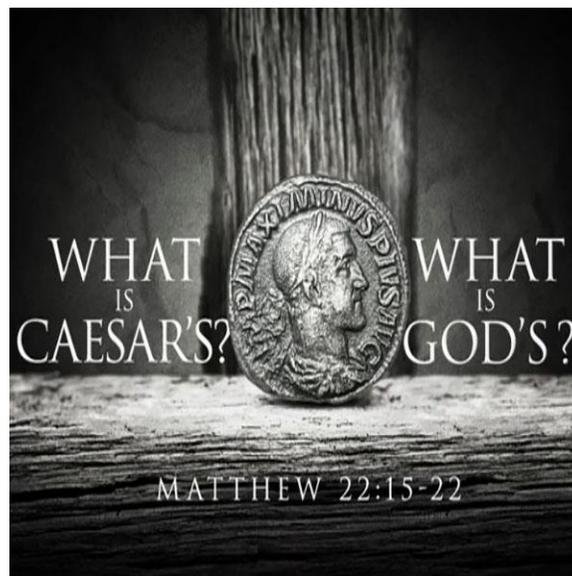
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**through Facebook at either “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”,  
“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

October 19, 2017 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44130

*Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa.*



<http://www.gracewayonline.com/what-is-caesars-what-is-gods-matthew-2215-22/>

### **Hymn of the Day**

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 940 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 250**

**“Holy God, We praise your (thy) name”**

“The German [Catholic](#) priest [Ignaz Franz \(de\)](#) wrote the original German lyrics in 1771 as a paraphrase of the [Te Deum](#), a Christian hymn in [Latin](#) from the 4th century. It became an inherent part of major Christian ceremonial occasions, mainly as a conclusion song. Due to its memorable melody and theme it is one of the most popular hymns and prevalent in German-speaking communities.

As a result of the German emigration in the 19th century, the song became known in the United States and was translated to English by [Clarence A. Walworth](#) in 1858, except verse 7 (translated by [Hugh T. Henry](#)), which accounted for its wide spreading around the country...

The first printing of the hymn was made in [Vienna](#) 1776, where it became part of the Catholic [hymnal](#) (*Katholisches Gesangsbuch*) upon the order of Her Apostolic Majesty [Maria Theresia](#).<sup>[1]</sup> Since then, different varieties in the German lyrics were developed, of which two are still in use: [Johann Gottfried Schicht](#)'s *Allgemeines Choralbuch* (1819) and [Heinrich Bone \(de\)](#)'s *Cantate (Mainz* 1852)

The lyrics paraphrase the Latin *Te Deum*. Its original version of 1771, which was later amended by Ignaz Franz, consisted of 12 verses; however, the amendment never gained acceptance and so the first version (altered by consolidating the 5th and 6th verse) retained.

On the initiative of Johann Gottfried Schicht, the hymn also became part of [Protestant](#) hymnals, but was widely neglected for a long time due to its perceived status as a "spiritual folksong" in the [Age of Enlightenment](#). Only in the 20th century was it fully accepted by Protestants, though shorter and altered versions are often sung (occasionally two verses were completely replaced by the [New Apostolic Church](#)).<sup>[2]</sup>

The hymn became also part of military hymnbooks where it was considered as a song of thanksgiving. The military hymnal of the Evangelical Church of 1939 added a conclusion verse which praised the Führer [Adolf Hitler](#). The hymnal of the so-called "[German Christians](#)" (1941) was named after the song and contained a version which was "purified of Jewish elements" and adjusted to the Nazi ideology.<sup>[3]</sup>

In Switzerland there also exists a pacifistic version which was composed after [World War I](#) by ...[Karl von Greyerz \(de\)](#) and is destined for the [Swiss Day of Repentance and Prayer \(de\)](#), an interdenominational church holiday in Switzerland.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy\\_God,\\_We\\_Praise\\_Thy\\_Name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_God,_We_Praise_Thy_Name)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXwpNB1pJsE> “ Stephen Tharp plays Holy God, we praise thy Name at Saint Patrick Cathedral in NYC. The rattling noise heard in the background is the Cathedral floors being swept.” “[Paul Wanders1 year ago](#) And All God People Said! WOW! You Have To Be A Pipe organ Genius To Be Playing This From Memory And Constantly scanning all of the stops like a painter painting his Master piece. Swirling around his paint brush in the paint trying to get that perfect color. The Quickness in his programing off the fly locking off manuals choosing his stops off the fly. Just Great All Around. Bravo!”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DII6ap7bj0Q> "Holy God, we praise Thy Name" hymn from "Faith of our Fathers" concert performed by Irish Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus at the Point Theatre, Dublin, Ireland on 24th/25th January 1997”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXqTDjI2zb8> Sen. Kennedy's Funeral: Processional Hymn. Advance to the 3:00 mark to hear the hymn.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5yov08Oqms> Holy God We Praise Thy Name · Perry Como

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**Isaiah 45:1-7; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Exodus 33:12-33 or Isaiah 45:1-7 (Next Week :Reformation Day observed: Revelation 14:6-7; Deuteronomy 34:1-12 or Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18)**

*“The name Cyrus won't ring a bell for many worshipers, unless perhaps it's Miley Cyrus of "Hannah Montana" fame. Preachers are likely to strike a chord, however, if they announce that this Cyrus is the Lord's Messiah (Hebrew for "anointed one" = "Christ" in Greek), which is precisely what Isaiah 45:1 calls the Persian ruler who conquered Babylon in 539 BCE. Cyrus's messianic status should give us pause, if not surprise and offense. Two thousand years of Christian history have solidified the connection of the name Jesus with title Christ, and rightly so, for that is what Jesus is: God's anointed one.*

*It is also likely that the first recipients of the royal oracle in Isaiah 45:1-7 -- exiled Jews living in Babylon -- would have been stunned to hear the prophet say such a thing. While the term messiah (māšîaḥ) is not abundant in the Old Testament, occurring about thirty five times, the remnant of Judah would have associated "messiah" almost exclusively with their own king from the house of David.<sup>1</sup> How could that office be assumed by a foreign conqueror? So what are we to do with Cyrus, the only non-Israelite leader to be called a messiah?...”*  
[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=164](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=164) [James K. Mead](#)  
 Associate Professor of Religion, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA

## Cyrus, God's Instrument

45 Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,  
 whose right hand **I have grasped**,  
 to subdue nations before him  
 and to loose the belts of kings,  
 to open doors before him  
 that gates may not be closed:  
<sup>2</sup> **“I will go** before you  
 and level the exalted places,<sup>[a]</sup>  
**I will break** in pieces the doors of bronze  
 and cut through the bars of iron,  
<sup>3</sup> **I will give** you the treasures of darkness  
 and the hoards in secret places,  
 that you may know that it is **I, the LORD**,

the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

<sup>4</sup> For the sake of my servant Jacob,  
and Israel my chosen,

**I call you** by your name,

I name you, though you do not know me.

<sup>5</sup> **I am the LORD**, and there is no other,  
besides me there is no God;

**I equip you**, though you do not know me,

<sup>6</sup> that people may know, from the rising of the sun  
and from the west, that there is none besides me;

**I am the LORD**, and there is no other.

<sup>7</sup> **I form** light and create darkness;

**I make** well-being and create calamity;

**I am the LORD**, who does all these things.

a. [Isaiah 45:2](#) Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint *level the mountains*

"I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things" (Isaiah 45:7).

Strong words! But are they good news or bad news? It's clear... this announcement is meant as good news -- but it will take some work for us and our hearers to determine how and why this is true.

This ... important text ...actually runs from 44:24 through 45:8, and it seems to mark the center of this section of the book (chapters 40-55). Note how its significance is emphasized by a hymnic inclusio ("Sing, O heavens," in 44:23; "Shower, O heavens," in 45:8).

The hymns surround two parallel "Thus says the Lord" passages (44:24-28 and 45:1-7), of which the second is our text. This structural context is important, not only because it marks the grandeur of the text, but also because it points quite clearly to what God is up to in Cyrus. The first half of the "Thus says the Lord" parallelism (44:24-28) is nothing more than a lengthy and powerful self-introduction of Yahweh, needed perhaps to set up the incredible claims of 45:1-7. Because "I am the Lord who..." (44:24-28), I can do this remarkable Cyrus thing (45:1-7) -- even if you Israelites might think it's not the way for a proper God to act (deliverance through a "heathen"?!), which seems to be the implied objection to which God responds with the "woe" warnings that immediately follow our text (45:9-13).

The elaborate structure of this lengthy unit (44:23-45:8) centers in the announcement that, through Cyrus, God will fulfill the divine "purpose" to rebuild Jerusalem (44:28). That rebuilding project functions, I think, both literally and metaphorically for our prophet. God means actually to rebuild the city, but God means also to rebuild everything that has been broken, to bring salvation beyond the holy hill to "all the ends of the earth" (45:22)...

On a Sunday when the Gospel reading includes the "render unto Caesar" line (Matthew 22:21), our text reminds us that God has worked and will work through "Caesar" (or Cyrus). Whether or however we talk about God's "two kingdoms," that can never mean there is one "kingdom" where God rules (church) and one that God leaves to Caesar (politics).

Cyrus is a remarkably active divine agent in our text. He is called to be the means of God's deliverance. But ... Isaiah (and God) refuses to allow him to be merely a pawn. Cyrus, too-

-though he did not know God (45:4)--was meant to come to know that he was called by God (45:3)..."

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1003](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1003) [Fred Gaiser](#) Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn

**Psalm 96: 1-9, (10-13); RCL; Psalm 99 or Psalm 96:1-9, (10-13) (Psalm 149; RCL, Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17 or Psalm 1)**

"Psalm 96 is for royalty. It should start with timpani and end with a trumpet. (If you don't have a drummer or trumpeter handy, read on.)

This enthronement psalms (93; 95-99) calls the people to praise God (verses 1-3, 7-10a, 11-12a) and gives reasons why God is worthy of praise (verses 4-6, 10b, 12b-13). Taken together these moves "describe the nature and consequences of God's rule." \*

God's reign gets spectators involved and awakens sleepers. No wonder the Psalm brims with imperatives: three times we are told to sing, and after that to bless, tell, declare, ascribe and worship. This Psalm is motivational. It moves people to proclaim God's mercy and might...(verses 11-13) (are) not included in the lectionary, perhaps because of the judgment theme. These verses proclaim that God comes to judge the nations in righteousness. Yet this judgment evokes more joy than dread, for the whole world, both nations and nature, will rejoice -- even the trees will sing." (continued after the reading)

*\*Bold matches references in opening commentary.*

### **Worship in the Splendor of Holiness**

- 96 Oh sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth!**
- <sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.**
- <sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous works among all the peoples!**
- <sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;  
he is to be feared above all gods.**
- <sup>5</sup> For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,  
but the LORD made the heavens.**
- <sup>6</sup> Splendor and majesty are before him;  
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**
- <sup>7</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!**
- <sup>8</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
bring an offering, and come into his courts!**
- <sup>9</sup> Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;<sup>[a]</sup>  
tremble before him, all the earth!**

**10 Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns!**  
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;  
he will judge the peoples with equity.”

**11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;**

**12 let the field exult, and everything in it!**

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

<sup>13</sup> before the LORD, for he comes,  
for he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world in righteousness,  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

a. [Psalm 96:9](#) Or in holy attire

“...The other texts appointed for this day emphasize God’s power among the nations. The first lesson (Isaiah 45:1-7) is a hymn to the Persian King Cyrus who sent the exiles back to their homeland; yet Cyrus, however great, was only a man. To God alone, the return of the people from their exile is ascribed.

In the second lesson, from 1 Thessalonians, Paul gives thanks for Christian believers who spread the Gospel message to all nations (Psalm 96:3,7 and 10 tell us proclaim God’s reign to all peoples and nations). And in today’s Gospel, Jesus makes a clear distinction between what we owe to Caesar, the human king, and we owe to God. We have to pay taxes to Caesar, but only God is to be worshipped. This is reminiscent of Psalm 96 with its clear distinction between the gods humans make and the one true God, who alone is to be worshipped.

Psalm 96 presents an excellent opportunity to preach a sermon on worship, especially when used together with 1 Thessalonians 1. In a time when worship attendance is falling off in a great many churches, it is a good thing to work with the congregation on why and how we worship. The church is more than a social network or a cultural artifact. So why worship? Because we are created to be in relationship with God. And because God calls us to worship.

To preach on this Psalm, you can ask and answer three basic questions: First, *whom* we do worship? (see 1 Thessalonians 1: 3,10 and Psalm 96: 4-6). Second, *why* do we worship? (Because God our creator calls us to be in relationship. That is what Psalm 96 does.) And finally *how* we do we worship (Psalm 96: 1-3 and 7-9). There is great variety in how we worship, but proclamation is at the heart of it...”

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2176](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2176) [Nancy Koester](#)  
Adjunct Professor, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn.

**I Thessalonians 1:1-10; RCL, the same reading (Romans 3:19-28; RCL, I Thessalonians 2:1-8)**

*“This is the first of four weeks dedicated to 1 Thessalonians.*

*The way in which the lectionary has divided up the letter presents a challenge to the preacher: the texts for the first three weeks really belong to a single extended passage describing Paul's time with the Thessalonians, while the fourth week takes an apocalyptic turn. How to shape three distinct sermons out of the single passage and also build a link to the fourth week? Several re-readings later, I am leaning towards a sermon series constructed around the theme of God's word..."*  
[http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1044](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1044) [Holly Hearon](#) Professor of New Testament, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, IN

*"The opening of any letter sets the tone for the remainder of the letter.*

*When we write a letter of complaint, we generally do not begin with warm, fuzzy greetings. Likewise, a letter making a formal request will not generally begin with informal salutations. Such practices were also the case in antiquity, where the form and tone of the opening of a letter sets the stage for what follows, while reflecting the current relationship between the writer and the recipient.*

*Shortly after leaving Thessalonica to go south, Paul became worried about the community he left behind. Having dispatched Timothy and hearing his subsequent report, Paul penned what has been determined to be the earliest letter in the New Testament -- 1 Thessalonians. Timothy reported that many people at Thessalonica still had great affection for Paul, so Paul writes them to provide assurance, comfort, gentle admonition and conciliation, encouragement, and pastoral care. Overall, he writes to encourage the Jesus-believers to persevere in their Christian life -- they are doing alright (unlike the Corinthians or the Galatians) but he wants them to "do so more and more" (4:1, 10).*

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=141](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=141) [Richard Ascough](#)  
Associate Professor of New Testament and Greek, Queen's Theological College, Kingston, ON, Canada

## Greeting

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace.

### The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

<sup>2</sup>We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly<sup>[a]</sup> mentioning you in our prayers, <sup>3</sup>remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>For we know, brothers<sup>[b]</sup> loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup>And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup>so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup>For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. <sup>9</sup>For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to

God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

- a. [1 Thessalonians 1:2](#) Or *without ceasing*
- b. [1 Thessalonians 1:4](#) Or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*

“...By way of application, what can we learn from Paul’s and his associates’ thankfulness for these believers?

**(1) It demonstrates the grace perspective about anyone’s ministry and productive results.** God is the source of spiritual increase ([1 Cor. 3:3-10](#)).

**(2) Though Paul was quick to give God credit and thank God for a fruitful ministry or change in the lives of others, he never lost sight of his personal responsibility to sow and water, or pray, preach, and plead** (cf. [1 Cor. 15:9-11](#); [Col. 1:28](#)–2:2). Here is a wonderful illustration of the balance between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility.

**(3) It provides an example for the kind of people we ought to be—thankful, faithful, and dependent workers.**

**(4) These were men who lived by praise with their focus on the Lord.** We not only see the consistency of their prayers, but also their thankfulness. The emphasis on the consistent nature of their prayer life and thanksgiving in verses 2 and 3 is brought out by: (a) three continuous present tenses (giving thanks, making mention, and bearing in mind), (b) the adverbs “always” (vs. 2), and “constantly” (vs. 3); and (c) the phrase “in our prayers.” Literally, this is “upon our praying” or “the praying of us” meaning perhaps, “at the time of our praying” which seems to point to a regular time for prayer. Realizing their own inadequacy in ministry, they regularly turned to the only one who is sufficient ([2 Cor. 2:16](#); [3:5-6](#)).

**(5) Paul’s thankfulness and prayers for others were personal and specific.** “Making mention” does not suggest just a casual remembrance. “Mention” is *meneia* and refers to “a remembrance in a special case, i.e., ‘the direction of the memory to some particular object.’”<sup>14</sup>

**(6) The Apostle was thankful for “all” of these believers.** He was not just being polite. He was genuinely thankful for what God had done in each of their lives. This demonstrates the importance of every believer in the body of Christ.

**(7) This reminds us that the freshness of our memory for an individual affects our prayers.** But it is also true that the character of our lives will affect a person’s remembrance. How important it is to be the kind of people that others love to remember.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/3-commendation-and-thanksgiving-1-thess-12-10> The rest of this study is worth a read.

**“The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 21st Chapter”**

“Glory to You, O Lord”

**Matthew 22:15-22; RCL, the same reading (John 8:31-36 or Matthew 11:12-19; RCL, Matthew 22:34-46)**

“We think of the last days of Jesus' final week as being full of vexation.

Indeed, they were: betrayal, arrest, torture, and crucifixion. But the first two days of the week were also filled with difficulty. In Matthew's version of the week, Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly on Monday and proceeds to the temple to cleanse it of abuse. Tuesday is particularly full.

Jesus returns to Jerusalem for a series of pronouncements and confrontations by religious leaders. On this day, Jesus curses the fig tree, is questioned about his authority, offers three parables that each conclude with dire warnings for those who assume they are comfortably within God's favor.

Then he is challenged on whether to pay taxes to Caesar, is questioned about the resurrection of the dead, challenged about the greatest commandment, and engaged in discussion about the nature of the messiah.

Finally, Jesus engages in a long discourse (23:1-25:46) in which he denounces religious leaders, laments over Jerusalem, foretells destruction of the temple, gives his disciples a list of signs concerning the end times, offers additional parables, and tells of the final judgment. Tuesday was a big day...”

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1062](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1062) [Clayton Schmit](#)  
Provost, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC

**Paying Taxes to Caesar**

<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. <sup>16</sup> And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>17</sup> Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” <sup>18</sup> But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “**Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?** <sup>19</sup> **Show me the coin for the tax.**” And they brought him a denarius.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to them, “**Whose likeness and inscription is this?**” <sup>21</sup> They said, “Caesar's.” Then he said to them, “**Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**” <sup>22</sup> When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

- a. [Matthew 22:16](#) Greek for you do not look at people's faces
- b. [Matthew 22:19](#) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer

“**This is the Gospel of the Lord**”      “Praise to You, O Christ”

“Politically, just about the only thing Pharisees and Herodians have in common is that they don't like Jesus.

So they hold their noses, put aside their many differences for a moment, and come together to pose Jesus a question that they hope will put him between a rock and a hard place: “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” (verse 17)

If he answers that the taxes are lawful, he will give offense to the Pharisees and the many in the crowds who hate the empire’s constant meddling -- not to mention the poor who are especially burdened by this particular “flat tax.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, if he speaks out against the tax, it won’t take long for the Herodians, who are loyalists to Rome, to take news of such seditious talk back to the powers that be. It is a well-laid trap, and all the more so because it is prefaced by a flattering reminder that Jesus has a reputation for fearless truth-telling, not political maneuvering (verse 16).

Jesus is not fooled by the flattery, but he does agree to answer the question. But first, he reframes the issue subtly by asking to see the coin used to pay the tax. This is a clever move because it allows all onlookers, including the reader, to see for themselves what Jesus already knows: Jesus is the one being put on the spot, but it is his questioners who are more deeply entangled with, and complicit in, the exploitative economics of empire. Jesus’ pockets are empty, but his opponents have no trouble supplying a denarius on demand.

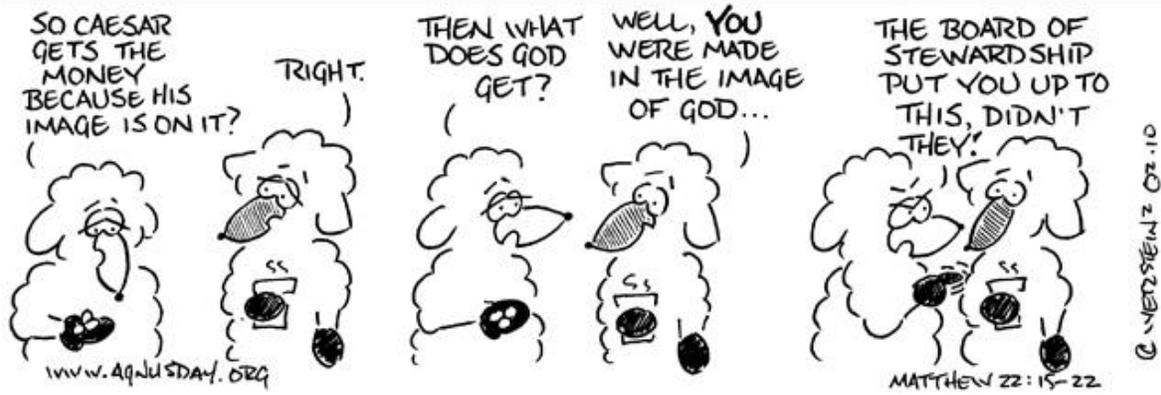
When they produce the coin of the realm, Jesus puts off his answer another moment in order to make one more thing clear: “‘Whose head is this, and whose title?’ They answered, ‘The emperor’s.’ Then he said to them, ‘Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s’” (verses 20-21)...

Confronted with the question of human loyalty and the coin bearing the image of the earthly emperor, it’s easy to picture Jesus flipping that coin in his hand a few times, and then tossing it casually aside. In my imagination I see his eyes rising to meet those of his opponents, confronting each of them with an unspoken question hanging in the air: “And you, my friend: Whose image do you bear?”

One thing, at least, seems clear: Jesus is not solving the dilemma by carving out separate domains of human loyalty. For every character in the story, and for each of us who still bother to read and ponder it, one absolute commitment subsumes and relativizes all other commitments.

Whatever we render unto Caesar, or to the retirement fund, or to the offering basket at church, we can never afford to forget this: we belong entirely to God. We may divide our budget, but we must never divide our allegiance. The coin of our realm bears the image of dead presidents, but each of us bears another. Our Emperor said: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.” We must never forget to render unto God the things that are God’s.”

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2201](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2201) **Lance Pape**  
Granville and Erlene Walker Assistant Professor of Homiletics, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas



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