

Let us pray... God of wonder, you are holy. Create a space for holiness in our lives. Usher your Spirit in our midst. Inspire and transform us. Teach us to build towards a better future where your grace and love welcome all... Amen.

The taboo Sunday is here... A gospel text that addresses money, politics, and taxes...

All the things that make most of us uncomfortable and are probably not what we want to hear from the pulpit...

But the comment from Jesus resonates at the end of this gospel... Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperors, and to God the things that are God's...

An answer that avoids Jesus being trapped by the Pharisees and Herodians, but leaves us with a trap...

Because if we take Jesus' answer literally, it reasons that all of life can be neatly compartmentalized and divided into categories...

Like religion and politics, or secular and sacred, or heaven and earth...

Which is not so easily done... First off, because life is messy and there are a ton of nuanced ways to look at things, to understand things, and to experience things.

Secondly, as Christians we profess that the kingdom of heaven can be brought to earth... Meaning that heaven and earth are not two distinct and sperate categories.

As we pray every Sunday... Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

A prayer that Jesus taught us to pray...

So then, why would Jesus say, give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperors, and to God the things that are God's?

Perhaps it is to make us stop and think... To think about how we live.

For example, what do you spend your money on? Think about what you have bought, paid for, or given to in these past couple of weeks.

Now think about how you spend your time? What have you been doing these past few weeks?

And finally think about what brings you meaning and purpose?

Now, if you are human... And if you are honest with yourself... There are going to be some tensions, overlaps, and maybe even some harmonies in your answers...

Because not all things neatly line up into a secular and sacred category, or a God and emperor category...

Because in the midst of all of the things you do, value, and experience... God is there... But so are our modern-day emperors...

An experience that Jesus experienced... He lived into this tension day after day... He saw how time, money, and values could be used to help people, to hurt people, and that money was simply a necessity in life.

And while money at first glance seems to be the focus in this gospel, it is actually the intentionality behind the money, and the driving force behind what it was used for, that Jesus was interested in.

Which gets at the heart of today's gospel... That our values matter... Giving us an opportunity to pause and reflect on our lives...

Do your values, choices, and actions reflect God's calling for you?

Because that, is a constant daily calling...

It is work that is never done.

It is work that is work and not work. It is love, grace, and justice being lived out through you...

It encompasses all that you are... Because God does not try to trap you and divide your life into compartments...

Because every aspect of your life impacts or influences the other parts of your life and the lives of others...

Showing us, it is impossible to completely compartmentalize our lives into simple categories like prayer life, faith life, work life, economic life, and social life...

Because you are who you are in every breath... You don't take a time out from life... You live it and it becomes a part of you like you become a part of it.

And it all goes by so very, very fast...

For example, my grandparents celebrated their 65th anniversary, this past week... Time that has flown by...

Time, like for all of us is filled with discovery... Discovering who you are and living into whose you are.

Because you are made in the image of God... And you also live on this earth.

Which means that through our mere existence, we defy dualistic ways of thinking... We are capable of more than either or...

Being created in the image of God, means we were created to be a part of God's expansive love... By deepening our abilities to love and be love...

Love that frees us to love our neighbors and to seek abundant life for all.

Love that is needed in a world that is filled with hate, divisions, and so many categorizations.

And so, it is my prayer that with God we can rise up and see the much bigger picture...

That we can find pebbles of connections with others... Pebbles that build bridges. Bridges that bring justice and invite the kingdom of heaven in our midst.

But we can only do this when we are intentional about how we live...

When we embrace our image of God by living it out in the world.

When we allow the transformative power of the Spirit to work... So that we can think deeper and love more expansively... Amen.