

Church and State

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's a great joy and privilege to be with you, worship with you, and to get to preach God's Word to you this morning. So please open up your Bible to Matthew! We've, for various reasons, gone back and forth from our series in Matthew 22 for the last few weeks, and we're back in it now. Matthew 22, verses 15 to 22.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, I stand before you with a deep sense of my own inadequacy, for how can we plumb the depth of your wisdom revealed in your Word? There is so much here, and we ask for your help. Help me to communicate clearly, accurately. Help us all to understand.

Bring these truths of your Word home to us in our hearts and in our lives by the power of your Holy Spirit. Make us a church, and make us, as individual Christians, make us all more fully submitted to God, you submitted to you, and submitted to your Son, Jesus Christ. Teach us, give us wisdom and discernment to know how to relate to our governing authorities, and to every other authority you have placed in our lives.

Speak to us now, Lord. Your servants are listening. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Please stand, if you are able. Let us honor God as we read from His Word. Matthew 22, verses 15 to 22.

[2 : 12] Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle Him in His words. 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.

Tell us, then, what you think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?

Show me the coin for the tax. And they brought Him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, Whose likeness and inscription is this? 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.

When they heard it, they marveled, and they left Him and went away. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. Time and time again throughout history, governments have overreached and interfered in spiritual matters and in the lives, in the matters of the church. And sometimes the church has also acted in ways more like the state than the church.

[4 : 01] In the 11th century, the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII engaged in an infamous power struggle called the investiture controversy.

By that point, the lines between spiritual authority and political authority had already been significantly blurred. And emperors treated Christian bishops almost like state officials. Henry IV and emperors before him liked using Christian bishops as their state officials. Why? Because in those days, the vast majority of Christian ministers were all celibate.

And because they were celibate, they did not have children. They had no heirs. If they appoint, unlike their kind of secular nobility, the aristocracy, if they appointed them to rule and to govern, they would pass down their dukedoms and their counties, whatever they were given to their children, to their heirs.

And power would reside within the nobility and the aristocracy. But if he could give it to the clergy and have them govern their provinces, well then, when they die, it all comes back to the emperor.

[5 : 17] And then he can find another person that's loyal to him and then give it to them and maintain control and power that way. And so, because vast swaths of their lands and their kingdoms belong to these clergy, the emperor demanded that it's his right to appoint the bishops.

Pope Gregory VII, however, insisted that bishops hold spiritual offices and that it was the church's prerogative to appoint bishops. This led to nearly 50 years of conflict and much bloodshed, and this was settled by their successors in the compromise of the Concordat of Worms.

The pope got to select the bishops, but the emperor got to preside over their appointments. And in a separate ceremony, the emperor would give the land to the bishops, to the bishoprics, to the bishops, the diocese, and then the bishops in that ceremony would have to pledge fealty, loyalty to the emperor, swear an oath of allegiance to the emperor.

Christian bishops, an uneasy compromise. In the European wars of religion in the 16th and 17th centuries, we noticed a similar tension and problems.

Christians conflated political loyalty with religious conformity, and so princes, for that reason, imposed Christianity on people by force.

[6 : 44] They pressured Jews and Muslims to convert. Heretics were prosecuted, and religious dissenters were considered guilty of treason. Millions of people died as a result.

When the Puritans settled in New England, where we live, one pastor in particular wanted to avoid those mistakes and to apply the lessons from history, and his name was Roger Williams.

Some of you guys from Providence and Brown probably have heard of him. He argued that uniformity of religion throughout a nation should never be enforced, and he wrote memorably that, quote, forced worship stinks in God's nostrils.

He further argued that there should be a hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world, because whenever that wall is torn down, the garden of the church itself becomes crowded with weeds and becomes a wilderness.

He enshrined equal freedom of religion and conscience into the Rhode Island Charter in 1663, which then influenced Thomas Jefferson and the famous religion clause of the First Amendment of our Constitution, which says, Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

[8 : 04] No one, in other words, should be coerced or pressured into religion. I think we can all agree on that. But where exactly are the lines in this so-called separation of church and state?

That issue is fiercely contested. How should we, as Christians, behave in the public square? Do we need to check our religion at the door when we go into the public spheres?

How should we relate to our governing authorities, especially when they demand allegiance in a way that violates our consciences and when they legislate laws that contradict the very words of God?

Jesus teaches us in this passage, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. And that's my main point this morning.

Give earthly rulers what you owe them. Give God what you owe Him. And we'll unpack what that means in two parts. First, we'll talk about, this is the main exhortation in the first half, regard the truth of God, not the opinions of men.

[9 : 10] Secondly, repay what you owe to your governing authorities and to God. To remind you where we are in the series in the Gospel of Matthew, we're still in the middle of Holy Week, the final week before Jesus' crucifixion, His death, and then His resurrection.

On Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem as the messianic king riding on a donkey. And then on Monday, He cleansed the temple of the pigeon sellers and the money changers, turning it back, restoring it to be a house of prayer rather than a den of robbers.

On Tuesday, He cursed the fruitless fig tree, which is a symbol of fruitless Israel. And then on Wednesday, Jesus entered the temple again and started to teach the crowds.

At which point, the Jewish leaders asked Jesus in chapter 21, verse 23, by what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you that authority? We're in charge of the temple precincts. And we did not give you permission to teach here and to do what you're doing in the temple. So what are you doing? And at that point, Jesus told three parables in rapid succession.

[10 : 20] Three parables, all denouncing the Jewish religious leaders. In the parable of the two sons, Jesus says that the Jewish leaders are like a son who promises to obey his father and go and work in his vineyard, but instead turns around and doesn't do any other work, doesn't go into the vineyard at all.

And in the parable of the tenants, Jesus compares the Jewish leaders to the tenants of a vineyard who refuse to give to the master, the owner of the vineyard, the fruit that comes out of that vineyard

that they were hired to work.

And then in the third parable, the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus says that the Jewish leaders are like guests who are invited to a king's feast, wedding feast for his son, but then they refuse to come, and instead they seize the king's servants and kill them.

Jesus is denouncing the wickedness and the faithlessness of the Jewish religious leaders during his day, and that's where our passage picks up this morning.

So no wonder he says in verse 15 that the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle Jesus in his words. The Pharisees are furious.

[11 : 30] They're plotting to trip Jesus up to get him into trouble, and we see them lay their snare in verses 16 and 17. 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.

Tell us then what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? This seems kind of far removed from us, from the context that we live in, but this is literally the most controversial hot-button issue you can ask any religious teacher, any Jew during Jesus' day.

You may have heard the saying, never discuss religion or politics in polite company, right? I don't agree with that, because, I mean, if you agree with that, we can never share the gospel with anybody, right?

I mean, that doesn't make any sense. But I do think discussing religion and politics requires special care and humility, because they can be so polarizing, and people are so committed to those things and feel so passionately about those things.

And the Pharisees' question here concerns both religion and politics. It's a double whammy. First, this was a political issue because it was about Caesar's taxes.

[12 : 50] It's a reference to the census tax or the poll tax that the Roman civil magistrates collected. Roman citizens were exempt from this tax.

It was only imposed on a conquered and subjugated people like the Jews. It's for this reason that Tertullian, a later church father Christian theologian from the 2nd century, called this poll tax, a quote, a badge of slavery.

It was a symbol of the Jews' political subjugation by the Romans. Secondly, this was a religious issue, because the question is, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

Of course, it's lawful according to Roman law. That's not the question. These Jews are asking, is it lawful according to God's law? It's a religious question. Is it lawful according to the Torah?

The Jews are supposed to have only God as their king. Even their theocratic monarchy was a concession. When the Israelites asked for a king, like their surrounding nations, God said to them in 1 Samuel 8, 7, they have rejected me from being king over them.

[14 : 09] So zealous Jews deeply resented the Caesar's rule over them. God is our king, they said. We are the chosen people of God. We are God's special possession.

You are not our king. God's our king. In fact, just a couple decades earlier before this confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees, there was a man named Judas of Galilee who rallied the Jewish people around this issue.

He riled up their resentment toward this poll tax, this very tax, in order to start a revolution, a revolt against the Roman rulers. This is what he said as he incited his fellow Jews.

They were cowards, he says. If they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans and would, after God, submit to mortal men as their lords.

So all that to say, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Is the most controversial hot button issue. And here's how they've set up their trap.

[15 : 14] If Jesus answers that it is lawful for them to pay the poll tax to Caesar, then Jesus will immediately lose credibility with the patriotic, religious Jewish zealots, many of whom are in Jerusalem.

They were deeply offended by Caesar's rule and by his poll tax, and Jesus would lose credibility with them. But if Jesus says that it is not lawful to pay the poll tax, then they will snitch and inform the Roman rulers.

Do you remember Judas? I think his name was Judas from 20 years ago. Do you remember the revolt that he led against Rome? That wasn't fun, was it? You don't want that to happen again, do you?

See, there's this guy. His name is Jesus. And guess what? He's also from Galilee. And he's telling people not to pay the poll tax.

That's exactly what Judas said 20 years ago. You better squash that before it gets any larger. We know this is their intention because in the parallel passage in Luke 20, 20, it tells us explicitly that they wanted to catch Jesus in something so that they could deliver him to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

[16 : 35] They have designed a lose-lose situation for Jesus. This is why in verse 16, the Pharisees' disciples come along with the Herodians. That's very interesting.

That's unusual bedfellows. The Pharisees were more sympathetic to the Jewish zealot ideology like Judas of Galilee. In fact, Judas of Galilee's close associate and partner in crime was a Pharisee named Zadok.

So they are more aligned with them. But the Herodians are in cahoots with the Romans. They're living large and ruling at the behest of the Romans.

So this is, it's in their interest to stay on Rome's good side. So this is a case of the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Pharisees and Herodians have made common cause to make Jesus their common enemy, and they're trying to trap him.

If Jesus answers one way, the Pharisees can denounce Jesus to the Jewish zealots. If he answers another way, the Herodians can denounce Jesus to the Romans. Either way, they can get Jesus into sufficient trouble to get rid of him, which is what they want to do.

[17 : 48] So their question is not a sincere question. It's a setup. But they don't want Jesus to know that, which is probably why the Pharisees send their disciples to Jesus instead of coming themselves.

You guys notice that? It says that they sent their disciples. They've already had their own confrontations with Jesus. They've been embarrassed by Jesus once too often. And Jesus knows who they are, and so they send their unknown, anonymous disciples.

Hey, you go sneak into the crowd. You ask them this question. You act like a sincere seeker. That's why Luke 20, 20 calls them spies.

But Jesus sees right through it in verse 18. Jesus, aware of their malice, said, Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Jesus doesn't pull any punches.

Imagine being called that by Jesus. My heart would just drop. While his interrogators are hiding behind their disingenuous flattery, Jesus tells them to their face that they are hypocrites.

[19 : 05] The Greek word that means hypocrite literally means actor. And it metaphorically refers to someone who is pretending to be something that they are not, like here. In the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 6, Jesus gave several illustrations of what hypocrites look like.

He said that hypocrites are those who sound the trumpet when they are giving alms to the needy. Because they care less about actually caring for the poor and more about being noticed while they're giving to the poor.

They're like, here's a trumpet. Is there enough people watching? Blow the trumpet here.

Everybody's watching give to the poor. Hypocrites, he says, are those who stand in prominent places to pray.

Not because they actually want to talk to God, but only because they want to be seen by men as talking to God. Hypocrites are those who disfigure their faces intentionally to make it look like they've been fasting and praying for a long time.

Not because they actually care about fasting, but because they care about being noticed. Not because they care about humbling themselves before God in fasting, but because they care about exalting themselves before men in their superior spirituality.

[20 : 23] or their imagined spiritual superiority. The disciples of the Pharisees are hypocrites because they're pretending like they sincerely want Jesus to answer their question when in reality they're just trying to frame him and trap him.

Let's look at what they say in verse 16. 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. Notice that everything that they say here about Jesus is actually true. But their speech is still false because they don't mean it.

It's flattery. Unlike genuine praise which is intended to encourage and build up the other person, flattery is intended to build yourself up and put yourself in an advantageous situation.

It's self-serving. Our Kent Hughes, another pastor, memorably said, gossip is saying behind a person's back what you would never say to their face.

[21 : 41] Flattery is saying to a person's face what you would never say behind their back. These Pharisaic agents are just trying to butter Jesus up to make him slip and fall.

Nonetheless, what they say about Jesus is entirely true. Jesus is true. He does teach the way of God truthfully. Jesus does not care about anyone's opinion.

It says in John 2, 24-25 that Jesus did not entrust himself to people and to their esteem or opinion about him. Jesus is not swayed by appearances. That phrase, not swayed by appearances in the original Greek is literally Jesus, you do not see faces.

What does that mean? You do not see faces. This is a Hebrew idiom for showing partiality towards certain people or faces.

Deuteronomy 10, 17 says that God is not partial and takes no bribe. Literally, in the Hebrew, that's God does not take faces and does not take bribes.

[22 : 51] Similarly, in Acts 10, 34, he says that God shows no partiality. And there, the literal expression in Greek is God does not take up faces. So to not take a face is to show no partiality to anyone regardless of their appearance, position, or power.

This is what God enjoins Samuel in 1 Samuel 16, 7. Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because I have rejected him.

For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. The Lord does not see faces, he sees hearts.

Jesus is therefore like his father because he's God's son and because he's one with him, he sees no faces. He's not swayed by appearances. He doesn't pay more attention to beautiful and handsome people or rich and powerful people.

It's an amazing quality about our savior that we should seek to emulate. Whether people love him or hate him, whatever people's opinion of him might be, Jesus is always true and teaches the way of God truthfully.

[24 : 13] And how different is Jesus from the Pharisees? When Jesus asked them earlier in chapter 21, 25, the baptism of John, where does it come from? From heaven or from man?

They refused to answer, give Jesus a straight answer. They refused to tell him honestly what they think because they despised John the Baptist and they definitely did not think that his baptism came from heaven but they did not dare to say that because it says they were afraid of the crowd for they all hold that John was a prophet.

And again in chapter 21, 45, 46, after hearing the parables that Jesus spoke denouncing them, the Jewish leaders, it says that they were seeking to arrest Jesus but they feared the crowds because they held him to be a prophet.

The Pharisees are unwilling to say what they really think and to do what they really think is right because they're afraid of people's opinions, unlike Jesus who does not care about anyone's opinion.

The Herodians are concerned about pleasing the Romans and doing their bidding because they see people's faces, they only see powerful people's faces, but Jesus does not see people's faces.

[25 : 35] What about you? Do you see people's faces? Do you pay more attention to people who are good looking and well dressed?

do you respect and value every person that you talk to simply because they are created in the image of God? Do you gravitate toward the rich, the successful and powerful people, people who can do something for you, give you a favor?

And then do you tend to ignore people who have nothing to offer? imagine if Jesus treated us that way. We had nothing to offer.

Not many of you are wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth, but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. what about you? Do you care about people's opinions? Do you regard the truth of God or do you regard the opinions of men?

[26 : 52] Do you stand upon the truth of God's word no matter how inconvenient it is for you, no matter how unpopular it is among your friends or in the culture? Or do you champion God's truth only when it suits?

you? Do you hesitate to share the gospel with your neighbors and coworkers because you're afraid that they'll judge you and think less of you?

Does your interpretation of countercultural, hard-to-accept passages of scripture shift with the ever-changing culture?

Are you like a chameleon? Do your beliefs change and morph wherever you are, whatever peers you are surrounded by and what they think and believe? Why should we care about what creatures think?

What matters is what the creator thinks. why should we care what these spectators in the courtroom think? Only thing that matters is what the judge thinks.

[28 : 02] Let us not go limping between two opinions. Let's let our yes be yes and our no no. If we're going to believe in God's word, let us believe it fully and wholly and stake our very lives upon it and stand and say, here I stand, I will not move.

Regard the truth of God, not the opinions of men. Now let's look at Jesus' response to their question in verses 19 to 22, which is absolutely brilliant.

He says in verses 19 to 20, show me the coin for the tax. The poll tax amount was a denarius and that was the silver coin that people used to pay the tax.

So understandably, when Jesus says, show me the coin for the tax, they bring him the Roman denarius. And then Jesus says, whose likeness and inscription is this? At that time, because who the emperor was at the time, on the front, a denarius had the likeness or image of Tiberius Caesar. And on the back, it had the image of Tiberius' mother, Livia, depicted as the goddess of peace. So the Roman denarius was a violation of the second of the Ten Commandments.

[29 : 20] You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. Not only that, the coin, that denarius, had an abbreviated Latin inscription that said, Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus.

Augustus. That's what it said on the front. On the back, it said, Pontifex Maximus, meaning high priest. Tiberius, the emperor, was claiming both to be the high priest of God and the son of God, which is a direct violation of the first of the Ten Commandments.

You shall have no other gods before me. The very sight of this coin would have been repulsive to faithful Jews.

They wanted no part in this emperor cult. And this is why in 66 AD, during a short-lived independence during the Jewish revolt, another Jewish revolt, one of the first things that they do as soon as they have some control over their own lives is mint their own coins.

To devout Jews, the very possession of this idolatrous Roman denarius would have been incriminating.

[30 : 47] And apparently, Jesus doesn't have one. So he asks his interrogators, show me. Show me the coin for the tax.

And who hands him this coin? It's the Pharisees' disciples and the Herodians. The co-conspirators just happen to have a denarius in their pocket.

And that fact alone, they're losing some major points with the Jewish zealots that they were trying to discredit Jesus with in that crowd. I imagine there are gasps and murmurs.

They pull out the coin. Oh, yeah. It's like, and maybe I'm dramatizing too much. I'd imagine at least there were like raised eyebrows.

Like, huh? Like, what's going on? You're carrying that vile token of idolatry and symbol of our subjugation in your pocket? You use it?

[31 : 52] Right here, you're inside the temple precincts during the holiest feast, the Passover feast. You have that in your pocket? It's just as offensive as the money changers and the pigeon sellers in the temple.

And when Jesus asked them, whose likeness and inscription is this, they sheepishly answer, Caesar's. And Jesus says to them, therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

And when they heard it, they marveled and they left him and went away. The word render can literally be translated as repay. It's a Greek word that translates repaying the debt that you owe to somebody or paying a wage to someone who wages, someone whom wage is owed to because of their work or rendering a reward to someone who deserves a reward or a punishment.

It's but giving something that is owed. It's a repay someone. So that's why the new international version, NIV, translates verse 21 this way.

So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and give back to God what is God's. Well, this is what Jesus is saying. If you're already using this idolatrous Roman coin and carrying it around in your possession and the coin has Caesar's likeness and inscription on it, then give it back to him.

[33 : 17] Pay your poll tax. Jesus doesn't flinch when he tells him the truth. Pay your taxes. This applies to us too.

Pay your taxes. I've heard a pastor joke one time that, quoting Benjamin Franklin, I think he's the one who said, right, the only two things are certain in life, that one is debt, the other is taxes. And it seems like some people try to avoid taxes even more than they avoid death. Should not be so with us. And in saying this, Jesus articulates a very important principle.

The citizens of a country are in a real way indebted to their civil authorities for their services and its appropriate and right to pay taxes to them. When our country is invaded by a foreign nation and our families are threatened, isn't it the government that mobilizes and commands the military to repel the enemies, the invaders?

Isn't it the government that catches, prosecutes, and imprisons criminals so that our streets are safe? Isn't it the government that provides clean water and various health services?

[34 : 35] Isn't it the government that offers free education whether you take advantage of it or not? Jesus is teaching us that there is something that we actually owe to our governing authorities.

Paul captures this perfectly in Romans 13, 1 through 7. I'm going to read it and project it for you on the screen. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good.

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience.

[35 : 51] For because of this, you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them.

Taxes to whom taxes are owed. Revenue to whom revenue is owed. Respect to whom respect is owed. Honor to whom honor is owed. There are people to whom respect and honor are owed by virtue of their position and authority.

I think this applies to every authority structure in our society, starting with the family, with the parents, in our governors. There are governing authorities to whom taxes are owed because of their protection and provisions.

being subject to human governing authorities and being subject to God, Jesus is saying, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As long as the Jews are not themselves worshiping Caesar Tiberius, paying the poll tax does not violate, does not compromise them.

It does not violate their conscience. It need not. Sometimes we get hung up about what other people do with the things that we give them. I'm sure you guys have heard this.

[37 : 18] I've heard this from people that I love. Can we really buy stuff from Amazon and other companies who use the money that we give them to support various movements and initiatives that are opposed to God and his word?

Can we pay taxes to our governing authorities who will use our money to fund abortion and wars that we don't support? But God seems to care more about what we do, what we do directly, than about what we do indirectly.

What other people do through things that we have to provide for one way or another. And God seems specifically to care a lot about how we honor and submit to our governing authorities.

Authorities in society, authorities in church, authorities in your home. In fact, Romans 13 is very clear. We ought to submit to God by submitting to our governing authorities.

And those who resist the authorities, he says, incur God's judgment. Isn't that wild? Of course, there is an assumption here that these rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.

[38 : 37] That's their God-given job, to punish bad conduct and enforce good conduct, encourage good conduct. However, sometimes human rulers do directly command us to do things that God expressly prohibits.

And sometimes these human rulers forbid us from doing things that God expressly commands us to do. And in such situations, numerous biblical precedents teach us that we must obey God rather than men.

Think of the Egyptian midwives who disobey Pharaoh's command to kill the Jewish male babies as they are born. Or Obadiah who disobeys Queen Jezebel's command to kill the Lord's prophets and instead hides them and feeds them.

Or think of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah during Nebuchadnezzar's time who refused to bow down to the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar. Think of prophet Daniel who disobeys King Darius' edict that no one in the kingdom should pray to any God except for to the king.

In Acts 5.29, when strictly charged by the Jewish leaders, the official Jewish authorities, to stop teaching in Jesus' name, Peter and the apostles answer, we must obey God rather than men.

[39 : 47] But it's important to note that these are all extraordinary circumstances of overt persecution. I was about to say overt circumcison.

No, overt persecution. Sorry. Need a little bit more sleep. Sorry. And that's not the situation that we find ourselves in here in the U.S.

Sometimes I think we get carried away by our Massachusetts independent and revolutionary spirit. Whenever we disagree with our governing authorities, we want to make signs and banners saying, resist.

No kings. We go on to protest and show of defiance. When we don't like the election results, we go storming the Capitol, disrupt the certification process and election outcome.

I'm not saying that you guys actually did this. Just. But the New Testament never commands or commends this kind of behavior.

[40 : 57] Never. It's so tempting for us to blur the line between church and state and to seek to co-opt the state's power of the sword to advance our power of the key.

To use the state as a vehicle to advance our agenda, the church's agenda. But Jesus says clearly in John 18, 36, my kingdom is not of this world.

And as soon as you make one of the kingdoms of the earth, your kingdom and God's kingdom, he sees this to be God's kingdom. That's not it. He says, if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.

But my kingdom is not from the world, Jesus says. Don't succumb to the temptation to make nationalism or revolution your religion or a socialist utopia your vision and hope.

It's never going to be. In fact, 1 Peter 2 teaches us that we ought to be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governor as sent by him.

[42 : 03] He tells us to love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor. I could hear all the objections in my ears. I could imagine the objections in my ears. But what if that ruler is sliding toward authoritarianism?

He's going to become a tyrant. Do you know who the emperor was when Peter was writing? He was Nero. Nero is the guy, when there was a huge fire in the city of Rome, burning three-fourths of the city down, people were blaming him, yeah, because, I mean, he's the ruler.

And so in order to find a scapegoat, he blamed the Christians. Oh, the Christians caused this. And then he subjected Christians to torture, gladiatorial games, and killed them by fire, saying that it caused fire.

Second century Christian author, Tertullian, as well as third century, Lactantius, they both note that Nero was the first emperor that persecuted Christians in such official and extensive way.

And it's during Nero's reign that Peter writes, honor the emperor. Be subject to him for the Lord's sake.

[43 : 30] Peter explicitly says in 1 Peter 2, 18-19, that we should be subject not only to the good and gentle masters, but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing when mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

Why should we submit to unjust authorities? Because we are mindful of God who put those authorities in charge. We are supposed to learn submission to God's authority by submitting to the various human authorities God has placed around us in our lives.

Jesus sets an example for us in this. The Roman governor, Pilate, has Jesus flogged without just cause.

Pilate admits it himself twice. He says, I find no guilt in Jesus in John 19. And then he eventually condemns Jesus to death by execution on the cross. And when in John 19, 9-11, he's frustrated by Jesus' refusal to speak and defend himself, Pilate says to Jesus, do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?

And Jesus answers, you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.

[44 : 59] Here's the man who's gonna condemn him to death on the cross. And Jesus says, you have authority over me to do this because God gave it to you.

My father gave you that authority. In our society, which places a premium on individual liberty, we're suspicious of authority.

But God has a much higher regard for authority than we do. He cares that we submit to our governing authorities. Therefore, he says, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

But that's not all. Jesus also says, and render to God the things that are God's. In one sense, Jesus tells us to be submissive to the human governing authorities.

But in another sense, what Jesus says here is very subversive for a few reasons. At the very least, Jesus is asserting that Caesar, contrary to his own presumptuous claims, is not God since Jesus distinguishes what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God.

[46 : 12] You follow me what I'm saying? Render to Caesar things that are Caesar's, God things that are God's, because Caesar is not God. He's putting Caesar down a notch.

And Jesus' answer raises a natural question. Okay, so honor Caesar and we owe taxes to him, so we pay taxes to him because he provides these services to us, but what about to God?

What do we owe him? What are we supposed to repay him? What are the things that we render to him? What do you think is the answer? What do we owe God? Our lives.

Everything. Everything. Everything. It's perfect. Psalm 24, we read from it for called to worship. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

Matthew 5.45 says that God makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and he sends rain on the just and the unjust. The sun that warms us and gives us light, the rain that falls to water the earth and produce crops so that we have food to eat without which there is no life.

[47 : 24] All of these things come from God. They're his. Acts 17.28 says, In God, we live and move and have our being. The very breath in our lungs, the very strength in our fibers, the very souls of our being come from God.

We owe God everything. I was dealing with an arm sprain this past week and I was humbled by the realization that such a small thing can be so debilitating.

And yet, how many days have I lived without thanking God for that health in my arm that I now miss? I've taken it for granted every single day of my life.

Yes, we owe our governing authorities some things, but we owe God everything. I think another aspect of this passage confirms this, how did Jesus come to the conclusion that the denarius text belongs to Caesar?

What was the logical process, the reasoning process? Because his likeness and inscription were on it. Right? So that begs the question, where do we find God's likeness and inscription?

[49 : 00] Josh is getting all the, yeah, yeah, he's pointing at himself. Yes, us. The Greek word for likeness is the same word that is used in the Greek translation of Genesis 1, 26 when God says, let us make man in our image after our likeness.

What in all of creation has God chosen to put his stamp of likeness upon? It's us, human beings, God's image bearers. Aren't God's people the ones who, according to Revelation 14, one, have the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and his father's name written on their foreheads in a spiritual sense? God's likeness and inscription are written on us, stamped upon us. And the word render, I mentioned to you, is the same word that means to give back or to repay.

It's the same word that's used in the parable of the vineyard in the preceding chapter to talk about giving back to God the fruit of the vineyard. What is the vineyard in that parable? It's the people of God.

The fruit you're supposed to give back to God are the people that belong to him. So what are we supposed to render to God?

[50 : 12] You yourselves. You, your body, your soul, your words, everything you have and everything you are belong to him and that is incredibly subversive.

Note well what Jesus is not saying here. He's not saying Caesar and God are equivalent authorities. Caesar has his spear. God has his spear.

Absolutely not. No. Caesar's here. God's here. Over all of it.

God's claim upon our lives and on our world trumps Caesar's or any ruler's and Abraham Kuyper was right. There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ who is sovereign over all does not cry mine.

And I started out by mentioning Roger Williams and the idea of separation of church and state.

Secular liberalism has run amok with this idea of separation of church and state and they've taken it way beyond anything Roger Williams ever intended.

[51 : 25] the original argument that there should be no force or coercion in religion has morphed into secularism. The exclusion of religion from the public sphere and the relegation of religion to the private realm of values and personal opinions.

Williams called for the toleration of other religions but held firmly to the exclusive truth of Christianity but that has in our culture morphed into moral relativism and religious indifferentism.

The liberal creed that no religion is better than another. Williams wanted to protect the church from the corrupting influences of the state because he deemed religious matters too high and holy and the state therefore incompetent to adjudicate such matters.

But secular liberalism or our state current states our governing authorities are more concerned with keeping religious influence and especially Christianity and its morality out of the public square. This is the exact opposite of what Roger Williams envisioned and that is a heresy!

An affront to the sovereign lordship of God. Think about it. If you ever become a public servant a teacher a mayor a city councilor a judge a house representative a president can you check your Christianity at the door and then serve as a secularist?

[52 : 58] No, absolutely not. Whether you are at home or work God's likeness and inscription is on you and you belong to him.

yes, give your eight hours a day to your boss or to your professor but remember that 24 hours of your day belongs to God.

Yes, give your 10% or 37% if you're really rich in paying taxes to your governing authorities but remember that 100% of your income belongs to God.

Yes, you are accountable for the things that you say at your workplace to your boss but remember that you are accountable for everything you do and say in or out of work in private or in public to God.

How does that work? How can we give a part of our lives a portion of our things to this human authority and then give all of it to God?

[54 : 12] How can you do that? Because God's authority transcends it all because even when you work you're not working only for your boss ultimately you're working unto God. When you submit to your governing authorities you're doing it not ultimately for their sakes but ultimately for the Lord's sake.

All of it gets assumed under your submission and your obedience to God. God has no rival He has no peer we were singing it earlier He is holy there is no one like Him there is none beside Him and He deserves and demands our exclusive allegiance and worship total worship.

But we haven't done this have we? we have withheld from God parts of our lives that rightly belong to Him there are corners of our lives and our relationships we have not surrendered to Him we haven't given God who to whom we owe everything we have not given Him His due you know what we haven't even given our human governing authorities their due I've repented many times of how I've spoken of them in disrespectful and dishonorable ways so what hope is there for us and that's why God sent His Son Jesus because we are rebels rebels from the very core of who we are we don't like submitting to authority we don't like having kings why?

because we want to be king we want to do what we want we want to be masters of our own faith that's ultimately why we don't want kings we've lived like that we've lived as rebels against God going against His ways and yet God so loved us that He sent His only Son Jesus Christ not to come and crush that rebellion but to come and offer us rebels an olive branch of peace in His blood sacrifice on the cross by dying for our rebellion and because of that and because Jesus died for us

and redeemed us with His blood you have been ransomed not by perishable things such as silver or gold but by the precious blood of the Lamb the blood of Jesus Christ because God has done that we as Christians have even more reasons to give ourselves wholly to God even non-Christians owe everything to God they have to give Him what is His due but we have been redeemed we've been ransomed purchased 1 Corinthians 6 19 20 says do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy

Spirit within you whom you have from God you are not your own for you were bought with a price so glorify God and that's our privilege to render to Caesar what is Caesar's to render to God what is God's and oh glorious everything belongs to God let's pray Father help us we want to submit wholly to you we want to give of ourselves completely every aspect of our lives to you because you deserve no less make us a people who give you the worship that is due the obedience that is due thank you for redeeming us by the blood of your only son

[58 : 46] Jesus Christ in his name we pray amen so Thank you.