

Luke 20:20-26 (NRSV)

²⁰ “So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor.

²¹ So they asked him, “Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth.

²² Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?”

²³ But he perceived their craftiness and said to them,

²⁴ “Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?”

They said, “The emperor’s.”

²⁵ He said to them, “Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

²⁶ And they were not able in the presence of the people to trap him by what he said; and being amazed by his answer, they became silent.”

Luke 20 is a very dynamic drama in the life of Jesus. The context will set the stage for our scripture this morning.

The setting is Holy Week and Jesus is in the temple speaking about God’s good news. The Chief Priests, Scribes and some of the Elders were listening and contemplating how to trap Jesus and turn him over to the Romans as a subversive to be severely punished and executed.

They were plotting against Jesus because Jesus was a threat to their religion which was not leading people to a personal saving relationship with God.

In verses 1-8 of Luke 20, the religious leaders are asking Jesus by what authority is He speaking about God? Jesus posed to them a question they could or would not answer and Jesus would not answer their question

Verses 9-19 is the parable of the wicked tenants which I shared with you last Sunday. The heir was killed being about the business of his father. Jesus is telling them that the religious leaders are doing the same. They

are rejecting the Savior and the message of hope and salvation Jesus is bringing to them and the people.

This brings us to our scripture for this morning from Luke 20:20-26 from the New Revised Standard Version.

The religious leaders are trying to be stealthy in order to trap Jesus and send spies to ask him a question about a coin.

They are coming as wolves in sheep's clothing. The spies speak faint praise to Jesus in verse 21, "Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth.

(Jesus knows the question even before they ask because He knows what is in their hearts.)

Here is the question from the spies, "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" They know this is a very loaded question because if the Roman governor heard of this he most likely would have arrested them! If Jesus answers the wrong way they will go straight to Pilate.

But, Jesus knows their craftiness, He will not be fooled. Jesus says to them, "Show me the denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?"

The spies answered, "The emperor's."

Jesus responds, "Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

The spies were dumbfounded and there was nothing they could do because Jesus sprung the trap on them, especially because the people were watching and could turn on them. In fact, they were amazed by Jesus' answer and became silent!

This coin scripture is really about the Lord's authority and ownership.

Psalm 89:11 says, "The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours: the world and all that is in it—You have founded them."

This is not a parable about money, it is about the recognition and belief of rendering to God all that we are, all that we have and all that we believe.

He is the source of all things. To Him we owe our lives, our health, and our money.

Rendering unto the Lord is giving to Him all our praise and worship, all our prayers and intercessions and all our dreams and heartaches.

We render unto God COVID-19, not that He created it, but that He has ultimate control over it. He will see us through this and to Him we will give all the glory! He gives to us the wisdom and insight to do what is prudent and right. He gives wisdom to the research scientists, health care providers and first responders the strength and energy to care for people.

He gives to us the courage and strength to care for the sick, the lonely, and the hungry. We have been providing food for the food pantry, but we also have a great message of God's love to give to people who are hungry for direction in life and freedom from sin and evil.

We are now in a demanding and challenging time of history not just for one country but for the entire world. There are two roads we could travel; the road of fear or the road of faith, the way of Christ. We still need to be wise and take the necessary precautions to protect ourselves and others as we live as Christ followers.

The following are action steps we can all take to live for Jesus.

1. PRAY & WORSHIP – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 states, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

a. Rejoice and give thanks in all circumstances. Should I rejoice and give thanks for COVID-19? Not at all, but rejoice and give thanks because our God overcomes paralyzing fear and gives us the ability to live for Jesus.

b. Pray without ceasing! Jonah 3:8b says, "Let everyone call urgently on God." For a time, such as this, we must be calling upon the Lord to stop this virus, heal the people of the world and give us courage to face the challenges.

For this is God's will for us!

c. Spend time as an individual, family or with a few neighbors to pray.

d. Worship the Lord through song. A great hymn is "God of Grace and God of Glory". You can access this hymn by searching for it on the internet.

2. CONNECT & SHARE –

a. Philippians 2:4 says, “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” Staying connected to one another at this time is vital. Social media and our landlines give us the opportunity to call, email, text in order to check on people to see if they have any needs which we can help them meet.

b. 1 Corinthians 12:27 states, “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”
Even though we are unable to meet in Bay House for worship, we are still the Church together through the Holy Spirit by prayer.

We have the opportunity today to shine for Jesus. We can show Bay Indies and our communities that as believers we have a God who is bigger than this virus and will give us the strength to not only live through this virus but to be overcomers. People who will speak the grace, love and peace of God. That we will not stop working but will even ramp up our efforts to love and care for one another.

I have been hearing some stories about some actions of members of our community. Those acts are a blessing. If you have uplifting stories to tell about the good deeds of your neighbors, email me.

How is the Lord using you in a new way for His glory in such a time as this!
Blessings on you all!!!

Pastor Tom