
Whose is it? Who do you belong to?

Children's Sermon on Render to Caesar things that are Caesar's... Matthew 21:15-22



Main Objective: Who do you think you are?? This question is a bit of a recurring theme in these recent readings of Jesus and His encounters with Pharisees. In this Gospel passage, the religious leaders try to trap Him by asking about paying taxes. The response reminds us that we can obey the law of government and still serve God first and foremost. The objective of this lesson is to communicate to kids that they are “dual citizens”, alive in the world, but made in God’s image and living to serve Him.

Law/Gospel Theme: We live to serve God. This does not mean that we ignore or disobey the laws of government. In this Gospel message, Jesus advocates following the rules of taxation that legal authorities demand, but that does not make us slaves to the law. We rejoice that we are made not just as earthly citizens, but that we are made in the image of God, and carry a Heavenly citizenship. We belong to the family of Christ, covered by His blood and wrapped in His love. Our identity and responsibility lie in Him.

Optional Materials: Coin or coins, and/or dollar bills; (optional) picture or birth certificate

Bible Passage: Matthew 22:15-22

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Children's Sermon Object Lesson on Matthew 21:15-22

Greet children, holding up a piggy bank or handful of money/coins...

Hello, children of God! I'm excited; do you know why? Well, check out my coin collection here! I just got my allowance, and I've been counting the dollars and coins that I have saved up. I haven't decided just what to buy with it yet, but it'll be great! But you know what, I want to ask you something. This might seem like a simple question, or it might be a little tricky... where did this money come from? Think about it... *Allow for some potential responses... If kids are hesitant to answer, provide some prompting. Encourage them to consider possibilities of multiple options, such as:*

- The money came from mom/dad
- The money came from a store
- The bank originally provided the coins or bills
- A manufacturer created the money from metal/paper

So, where did this money really come from? It's hard to say. And who does it belong to now? That can be a little tricky, too. It's mine, but if I buy something, then it will go to the store. Or I could give one of these coins to you, and then it would become yours. Maybe I give it back to the bank...does it belong to the bank? Hmm...

Well, here's another question: where do YOU come from? *Answers may vary. Hopefully the "where do babies come from" issue does not prominently arise...* Now, you might consider yourself a citizen of a certain place, like America. That's true, you come from a place. Or you might think of yourself as coming from your parents, which is also true. But ultimately, all of us come from God. He created us in His own image, His most precious and wonderful masterpiece! We belong to Him, and He is glad to call us His children.

In the Gospel lesson today, Jesus encountered some people who tried to trick Him with a question. They asked Him if people should pay taxes to the government. These church leaders did not like Jesus very much, and they wanted to trap Him, thinking that He might get in trouble if He said that taxes were not important...but if he said that people of God should pay taxes, the Jews might become angry because not everyone liked the Roman government. But Jesus, being



the son of God and far more clever than Pharisee tricks, gave them another answer. He had them show Him a coin, and asked whose picture was on the coin. Well, the ruler (Caesar) was pictured on the coin. So Jesus pointed out that money could go back to the people in charge of the government, because they were in charge of the state. But Jesus also said “give to God what is God’s.”

What belongs to God? Well, everything! We recognize that we can (and must) use some of our money on things like taxes, groceries, clothes, or whatever else we need to survive. But God is not just another budget line item. We give to Him with our tithing offerings, but we also honor Him by giving our whole lives to Him. We pray; we read our Bibles; and we take care of others. We recognize that He made us, so we belong to Him. Coins and money and taxes are necessary, but those things don’t last. Eventually, they fade away. Our lives are meant to serve God, because He loves us. He has given us all that we have, and He wants us to have meaningful lives. He gave us His son, Jesus, covering us with His blood and with His love. We live through the practicalities of life on Earth, but we know something better awaits us, because God makes us part of His family and gives us the promise of Heaven. That’s a wonderful thing to remember. Yes, we obey the law here and now...but we also have the good news of the Gospel, which is for eternity! Why don’t we thank God for that?

Children’s Prayer Moment

Prayer:

(Have kids repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for making us in your image

Thank you for allowing us to be part of your family

We know that your laws are better than any government

Help us to serve and obey you

And give you our whole lives, as they belong to you

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!



Bible Verses/story to Reference:

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ 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." ²² When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

-Matthew 22:15-22





This lesson was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May

2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

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