

## Pentecost #20

10/18/2020

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### Celebrate (Introduction)

“In Today’s first reading God uses the Gentile ruler Cyrus to accomplish divine purposes. When the Pharisees try to trip Jesus, he tells them to give the emperor what belongs to him and to God what belongs to God. To gather for worship reminds us that our ultimate allegiance is to God rather than to any earthly authority. Created in the image of God, we offer our entire selves in the service of God and for the sake of the world.”

We are together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Hymn: [“Just As I Am, Without One Plea”](#)

### Psalm 96:1-13

<sup>1</sup> O 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 idols;  
but the Lord made the heavens.  
<sup>6</sup> Honor 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 holy array;  
tremble before him, all the earth!  
<sup>10</sup> Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns!  
Yea, the world is established, it shall never be moved;  
he will judge the peoples with equity.”  
<sup>11</sup> Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
<sup>12</sup> let the field exult, and everything in it!  
Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy  
<sup>13</sup> before the Lord, for he comes,

for he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with righteousness,  
and the peoples with his truth.

**Hymn of Praise:** [“Crown Him With Many Crowns”](#)

**Prayer of the Day**

“Sovereign God, raise your throne in our hearts. Created by you, let us live in your image; created for you, let us act for your glory; redeemed by you, let us give you what is yours, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [Isaiah 45:1-7](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [1 Thessalonians 1:1-10](#)

**The Gospel:** [Matthew 22:15-22](#)

**Hymn of the Day:** [“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”](#)

**The Message:** ([VideoLink](#))

There are times in life when everything seems to be falling apart. Attacks come from several different directions at once, each of which can be overwhelming. We are living this today. Even though we normally we would be able to handle them individually to be attacked all at once can be almost impossible to overcome. In the long run we come to realize a price must be paid but at what cost? Fortunately for most of us resolution will come but for some the price may be extremely high.

In a very real sense this was the case in Jesus’ life. It seems as though His life was destined to face crisis and threats, one after another from the establishment of the day. As his ministry went on, the confrontations with the authorities became increasingly numerous and challenging. Even at that He was always able to overcome the attacks by His would be enemies, the religious Jewish authorities. He was even able to put them on the defensive on many occasions.

This brings us to today’s Gospel lesson. After losing confrontation after confrontation, the authorities would again challenge Jesus. This time though was somewhat different for he was attacked from another direction. The attack came from a most unlikely alliance of the Pharisees, who were the fiercely orthodox Jews who sought an independent nation of Israel, and the Herodians, who were the staunch political supporters of Caesar. Both realized the threat that Jesus had become to each of their self-interests, even though their interests were diametrically opposed. This becomes a story of intrigue for it is a story of the religiously

powerful and politically elite joining together in order to try to trick and eliminate their common perceived enemy, Jesus. The story could very be entitled “Against all Odds”.

Together the Pharisees and Herodians plotted to entrap their prey. They came up with a question so controversial that it lingers on to today. It all began with a set-up. “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one, for you do not regard people with partiality.” The set-up was on by launching into laudable and complimentary words. These words were the connivers sleazy tactics in order to place their prey off guard. They were said in order to have Jesus think that they were on His side. We all know that suspicion should always arise when such extreme compliments occur.

Now thinking that they had so masterfully set-up Jesus, they then dropped the sledge hammer. “Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not?” Let it be understood, no one likes paying taxes and especially in paying taxes to a foreign government which is occupying your land or when they lack being fair. In such instances taxes are seen as evil for they support that which represses and oppresses you. Therefore, for the Jews to pay taxes to a foreign, gentile, pagan nation and not to a theocratic Jewish nation was degrading and grievously resented. It was seen as being sacrilegious. The only king the Jews would recognize was the God sent political Messiah of a theocratic government. The trap was that if Jesus would answer that such a payment of taxes were lawful than He would be held in extreme disdain among His fellow Hebrews. But worse than that, it would be seen as accepting the pagan gods of Rome. Of course, the Pharisees were eager to hear this kind of answer for they could then charge Him with heresy.

On the other hand, to say that it is unlawful to pay such taxes, was to reject the Roman occupation which was an act of sedition and rebellion. The Herodians were awaiting such an answer so they could charge Him with being an active enemy of Caesar.

Jesus was caught on the spot – heresy and death or sedition and death. What kind of choice was that? But Jesus was well aware of what was going on. He was well aware of the contrivance, the intentions and the malice of this inquisition. The inquisitors would soon learn the lesson that Jesus was far too wise to fall for their plot. “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites?” He laid it right out there in the open by calling them what they were – hypocrites. With this He let them know that He knew their intentions behind the question. Then He dropped His own bombshell of an answer. “Show me the coin used for the tax.” They brought Him a denarius which was the amount of the tax. He then asked, “Whose head is this and whose title?” Note that each Caesar had his head image minted on the coins. Jesus continued, “Whose head is this? Who is it?” They answered ‘The emperors’” Jesus then proceeded to give them a lesson in civics of the day, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s and to God the things that are God’s.

A civics lesson, yes, but it was also a lesson in logic and common sense. Every coin minted with the emperor’s likeness was considered to be his property. He owned the coin and it was lent out for the purpose of public use in commerce. The value of the coin was set and

defined by the Caesar. Therefore, its value was only upheld as long as it was backed by the Caesar. This, by the way, still holds true today. Money is the property of the issuing government and is utilized so that there is order in the commerce and economy of a nation and within the international community.

Jesus' answer gives recognition that for the common good of an orderly society there must be taxes of some kind. He recognized that there was and is a valid role of government within the lives of mankind and therefore must have means to be sustained. In His answer He rejected the Hebraic tradition of theocracy, a government founded and controlled by religious institutions. There is little doubt that He separates allegiance to government and allegiance to God. He says we have a dual citizenship in the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God. Both bear obligations and responsibilities. Both demand allegiance and support. The inquisition was over for the time being and Jesus had won.

Although this statement is seemingly clear, it presented and still presents problems of interpretation. It gave our founding fathers justification in including the separation of Church and State as a basic principle of our nation regardless if Jesus words were instrumental in their thinking or not. They formulated the separation of church and state simply to avoid the theocratic pitfalls of history as found during the crusade, the Holy Roman Empire, and the persecution of reformers. The pitfalls of the past also caused the emigration of thousands to the new world in order to flee state sponsored religious persecution. Ironically it led many of the new immigrants to create colonies of intolerance as they set up theocracies. That is why the founding fathers' wisely incorporated the separation of church and state in their thinking just as Jesus had done. They knew religious freedom could not be realistic under a theocratic form of government.

A dual citizenship demands much of us for we must be able to wed our politics and our Christian convictions without dictating to others what they must believe. To dictate is contrary to Jesus' life and teachings. Rather we can witness to what we as individuals believe and do including as it extends into our governing philosophy. Our civic citizenship and our religious citizenship come together in our very being and become our Christian life. Note that the state and church as institutions are not incorporated in this process for if they are they easily can become exclusive and religious freedom is lost. This becomes a state of forced beliefs. Jesus knew that forced beliefs are against the very nature of God's creation of free will.

Instead this dual citizenship must be founded upon that great command, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.... And... You shall love your neighbor as yourself." If this is the foundation of our lives then there is, and never will be, any conflict in the dual citizenship for it becomes one within each of us through love. This means we must always be careful to witness but never take away someone else's freedom to believe as they choose. This is what is called love.

Anthem: ["Great Is Thy Faithfulness"](#) The Morgan University Choir

### **Offering\***

We give thee but thine own, what-e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

### **The Prayer**

Father of all, in the midst of uncertainty and anxiety we come to you seeking your comforting presence. At this time a tomorrow of resolution to all that confronts us seems beyond reality. Instead of unity of purpose is beyond our comprehension. Revenge and bitterness are all too evident. Open our lives so that we may find the love which you have shown us. It is this love which we need to realize in order find hope for a new day of comfort and peace. Give us the perseverance so that we may help bring healing and resolve to our many problems especially during this spreading of this deadly and debilitating virus.

Continue to be with all those on the front lines of helping those who have been stricken by the pandemic and the natural disasters. They are giving so much of their lives while placing themselves in danger. We continue to pray for their safety and well-being.

We pray for all whole need your comforting and healing presence especially Chad Bittinger, Heidi Brackbill, Danny Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Kirk Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Richie Wokkittel, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

**Closing Hymn:** ["O God of Every Nation"](#)

All are welcome to our outdoor Sunday morning service at 9:30 AM weather permitting. Social distancing and face masks are required. Bring a lawn chair.

Bible Study with Vicar Karen Pugatch, Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30PM more information attached below.

\*Offering to be sent to:

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