

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jun 2nd 2015

Mark tells the story of Pharisees and Herodians who met with Jesus in effort to trap him by his own words. They are quite cunning. They start by using flattery. “Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man, and that you are not concerned with anyone’s opinion. You do not regard a person’s status, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.” Wow! I wish people thought that of me.

Jesus saw through this. When they asked about the lawfulness of paying a census tax, Jesus asks for a denarius to look at. Jesus examines the coin, asks about the image—Caesar’s. Jesus says these well-known words, “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” The Pharisees and Herodians were described as being “utterly amazed.”

What does this mean? Some scholars explain this as Jesus’ version of separation of Church and State. Some scholars describe this as Jesus reminding us that we ultimately belong to God. We were created and put on this earth for specific reasons.

I like both of these ideas. The age old debate over the relationship between church and state is fascinating to me. I truly believe we were each put on this earth for very specific purposes by our Creator. That being said, our political (state) functions must reflect that purpose. Simply put, when creating or reevaluating laws of our land we could navigate that path by asking the question WWJD—What would Jesus do?” If only things were that simple... This is strictly my opinion at this moment. Take some time to reflect on your thoughts on this question regarding the relationship of church and state.

Next, I find great comfort in knowing that I was created by a Loving God who has great plans for me. It’s kind of a daunting feeling at times. Ultimately, I belong to God, and it is my responsibility to live the Gospel in my daily life. A great challenge indeed. Think of how you care for something you worked very hard to make, or how you care for and protect a prized possession. Aren’t you very gentle with it? You may allow it to serve its purpose—if it’s a car, you drive it on occasion. If it is a garden, you prune it, water it, and ultimately enjoy the fruit, vegetable, or flower outside of the garden. If it is a child, you love it and protect it, but at some point must let it leave the house and live life. We belong to God, he has a plan for each of us, and he cares for us, and prepares us to carry out His plan. Think about what purpose you may serve on this earth, and how you might carry that out in a way that is pleasing to God.

“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

