

Sending forth

Closing Hymn: * *How Great Thou Art* UMH #77
Circle Song: * *How Great Thou Art* Together
Benediction: *Rev. Hyun-Jae "Kift" Lee*

Thank you for worshiping with us today!
You are invited to join us for a Potluck Lunch
and conversations in Fellowship Hall
following worship service.

Serving in worship today

Ministers..... All of us
KCL Pastor Pastor Hyun-Jae "Kift" Lee
ODC Pastors Pastor Ethan Gregory
 Pastor Karen Hernandez
 Pastor Zaida Huereca

Director of Youth &
Family Ministries Tes Lacy
Liturgist Laurel Wells
Greeter & Usher Arlene P, & Dick Givens
Projection & Admin
Team Tim Lacy, Linda L, Veronica L,
Organist /Pianist Judie Herber
Choir Director Laurel Wells



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Welcome to

**Keizer Clear Lake
United Methodist Church**



OCTOBER 18th
Worship Service

10AM



We're so glad
YOU'RE HERE



ORDER OF WORSHIP

Opening * Please stand as you are able at these places in the services

Prelude *El Shaddai*

UMH #123

Open Our Eyes

We Sing #2086

*Call to Worship

Laurel Wells

*

LEADER: *We come before God, bearing the names and identities the world has given us.*

PEOPLE: *Yet we are created in God's image and called by God's grace.*

LEADER: *The world often measures our worth by wealth, success, and status.*

PEOPLE: *But God's love cannot be bought, and our dignity cannot be taken away.*

LEADER: *Jesus calls us to give to God what belongs to God.*

PEOPLE: *We offer our hearts, our hands, and our lives to the Lord.*

LEADER: *Chosen in love and called to love, let us remember to whom we belong.*

ALL: *We belong to God! Let us worship the Lord with joy and thanksgiving!*

Opening Prayer (Unison)

Laurel Wells

* *Gracious and loving God, before the world gave us a name, you knew us. Before we could offer you anything, you loved us. We come before you carrying both gratitude and disappointment, joy and weariness. Remind us that our worth is not measured by wealth, status, or success, but by your image within us. Forgive us when we measure others by what they can provide, or place our trust in earthly power rather than your grace. Through Jesus Christ, teach us to live faithfully in this world while remembering to whom we belong. Shape our hearts with generosity, our actions with justice, and our lives with love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

Song Have Thine Own Way, Lord

UMH #382

Scripture Matthew 22:15-22 (CEB)

Laurel Wells

L: The word, inspired by God, for the people of God. C: *Thanks be to God!*

Children's Message

Tes Lacy

Message

We Belong to God

Rev. Hyun-Jae "Kift" Lee

Song

Who You Say I am

Pastor Kift

Sharing of Joy's & Concerns

Joys response:

Thanks be to God

Concerns response:

Lord, hear our prayers

Pastoral Prayer followed by The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Offertory

Musical Offering

The Love of God

KCL Choir

Doxology

UMH#94

* Offertory Prayer

Gracious and loving God, everything we have and everything we are belongs to you. You have created us in your image, called us your children, and loved us before we could offer you anything. As we bring our gifts today, remind us that our worth is not measured by how much we give, but by your unfailing love. Receive these offerings as expressions of our gratitude and faith. Use them to bring hope to those in need, justice to the oppressed, and love to our community. May we offer not only our resources, but our whole lives in service to you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

We Belong to God

1. Preface

Growing up in Korea as a pastor's child, I felt comfortable at church. My parents supported me financially, and I rarely worried about money. Giving my tithe seemed natural and easy.

As a pastor's child studying at seminary, I was confident that God had chosen me for ministry. Looking back, much of that confidence came from my comfortable position rather than a deep understanding of what it meant to be God's child.

That changed when I came to the United States and began serving at a Korean church. I was starting ministry under my own name, without the influence or protection of my parents. After three months of work, I received only \$200. I was told that my status as an international student explained the low pay. Giving a \$20 tithe was not financially impossible. Yet I struggled to give it willingly. I was surprised by my own reluctance, because tithing had never troubled me in Korea. I asked myself, "Why does such a small offering feel so difficult? Can I give it with a joyful heart? After three months of dedication, was my work really worth only \$200?"

2. Whom Should We Follow?

Today's passage begins with the Pharisees plotting to trap Jesus with his own words (v. 15). Jesus had challenged religious authorities in Jerusalem, unsettling their assumptions about power. Rather than listening to him, they sought a way to discredit him. They joined forces with the Herodians, who supported the Herodian dynasty and its ties to Rome. Together they approached Jesus with flattering words, praising him for teaching God's way truthfully and refusing to favor the powerful. Then they asked, "Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (v. 17).

Why bring up taxes? And why involve the Herodians? Judea was under Roman rule, and the emperor demanded tribute. Many Jews resented paying taxes to an occupying power. They believed God was their ultimate ruler, yet Caesar claimed authority over their land and resources. Could paying his tax conflict with their loyalty to God?

The question was a trap. If Jesus supported paying taxes, he might alienate those who resisted Rome. If he opposed the tax, his opponents could accuse him of encouraging rebellion. Either answer could be used against him.

They praised Jesus' integrity while acting dishonestly. They were not asking because they wanted to discover God's will. They wanted Jesus to confirm a position they could condemn. This reminds us that faithfulness requires more than asking religious questions. It requires openness to God's truth, even when that truth challenges our expectations.

3. The Coin: Whose Image Does It Bear?

Jesus recognized their intentions and asked, "Why do you test me, you hypocrites?" (v. 18). Rather than accepting their two choices, he challenged the question itself. Sometimes faithfulness requires us to question the alternatives presented to us instead of simply choosing sides. Then Jesus asked them to show him the coin used for the tax (v. 19). The discussion moved from abstract debate to a physical object. The silver denarius commonly used for Roman taxation bore the emperor's portrait and inscriptions declaring his authority. Perhaps many of us would gladly opt out of paying taxes if we could! But the people questioning Jesus already lived within Rome's economic system. Whether willingly or out of necessity, they used currency marked with Caesar's image. Likewise, we may disagree with government policies and still depend on the structures of society. Modern taxation differs from taxation under foreign occupation. Still, the passage asks: How do we live faithfully within institutions that do not always reflect God's purposes? God's people do not live outside society. We work, pay taxes, and share responsibility for our communities. Our calling is not to escape every earthly system but to participate without surrendering our ultimate loyalty to God. Looking at the coin, Jesus asked whose image and inscription appeared on it (v. 20). That question leads us to another: Whose image do we bear?

4. The Calling: Give God What Belongs to God

The Greek word for "image" in Matthew is *eikōn*. The Greek translation of Genesis 1:26–27 uses the same word for people created in God's image. Jesus does not explicitly mention Genesis, but the parallel invites reflection. A coin carries Caesar's image, identifying its association with imperial authority. Human beings bear God's image. What does that say about our identity? Our lives ultimately belong to God. Others may set our wages or treat us unfairly, but they cannot determine our worth. Our dignity comes from the God whose image we bear; no amount of money can erase it. The questioners answered that the image was Caesar's. Jesus replied, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (v. 21). Jesus did not tell them to refuse the tax. He acknowledged that faithfulness to God does not necessarily mean rejecting civic responsibilities. But he did not end his answer with Caesar, either. He reminded them of a greater claim: what belongs to God must be given to God. And what does belong to God? Psalm 24 declares that the earth and everything in it belong to the Lord. Genesis tells us that people are made in God's image. God's claim, therefore, goes far beyond worship services, offerings, or private prayer. Our decisions, relationships,

resources, and lives belong to God. Caesar’s power appeared on coins and was enforced through taxes. But even the greatest earthly authority is limited. God’s sovereignty is not. Belonging to God also brings responsibility. We are called not only to remember our own dignity but to recognize God’s image in others. Giving ourselves to God means treating people fairly, protecting their dignity, and practicing compassion and justice. This includes how we compensate workers, welcome strangers, and respond when someone is mistreated. We cannot celebrate being God’s children while disregarding how other children of God are treated. Matthew says the questioners were astonished by Jesus’ answer and left (v. 22). He does not tell us that their amazement changed their hearts. Being impressed by Jesus is not the same as following him. Discipleship begins when his truth shapes our lives.

5. Conclusion

When I received the \$200 for three months of work, I gave \$20 as my tithe. But I did not give joyfully. I was hurt not by the amount of the tithe, but by how little my work seemed to be valued. In Korea, church life had felt easy because of the standing I enjoyed as a pastor’s child. In the United States, I discovered that even a small offering could become difficult. Eventually, I walked away from that ministry. I could not pretend the treatment was fair, and I did not need to pretend that it made me happy. Over time, however, I began to understand something I had not fully grasped before. I had always been God’s child. But my identity did not depend on my father’s ministry, my position at church, or what anyone paid me. It rested in God’s grace. That experience helped me understand what belonging to God meant for me. I remain grateful for the love I received through the church as I grew up. One painful church experience did not erase that goodness. I hope to share that grace with others—not by ignoring injustice, but by recognizing God’s image in every person. Brothers and sisters, perhaps someone has undervalued your work, overlooked your gifts, or treated you unfairly. Such wounds do not determine who we are. We do not have to deny our pain to be faithful, and we do not have to earn God’s love through perfect offerings or cheerful feelings. We are loved before we can give anything. We are chosen by grace and called to reflect that grace in the way we live. May we bring to God not only our gifts but also our joys, disappointments, and wounded hearts. And may we honor in others the same dignity God has given us. We are God’s beloved children, created in God’s image. We belong to God. Amen.

Practice (Response)

1. When have you allowed other people’s opinions or expectations to determine your worth? How does remembering that you belong to God change the way you see yourself?

2. How can we remain faithful to God when we face disappointment, injustice, or difficult circumstances in our daily lives?

3. If every person is created in God’s image, how can we better honor the dignity of others through our words and actions?

*Keizer Clear Lake UMC Preaching Note (153) / We Belong to God
Twenty-First Sunday After Pentecost / Matthew 22:15-22 (CEB) /
October 18, 2026*

Reading (Lectio)

(Matthew 22:15) Then the Pharisees met together to find a way to trap Jesus in his words.

(Matthew 22:16) They sent their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are genuine and that you teach God’s way as it really is. We know that you are not swayed by people’s opinions, because you don’t show favoritism.

(Matthew 22:17) So tell us what you think: Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

(Matthew 22:18) Knowing their evil motives, Jesus replied, “Why do you test me, you hypocrites?

(Matthew 22:19) Show me the coin used to pay the tax.” And they brought him a denarion.

(Matthew 22:20) “Whose image and inscription is this?” he asked.

(Matthew 22:21) “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

(Matthew 22:22) When they heard this they were astonished, and they departed.