

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday November 10, 2019. "The Most Excellent Way: Render unto Caesar".

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

II Recap.

Last week we started this new series, "***The Most Excellent Way***" a look at how to live like a believer in America. Most of us can feel the tension between being a good citizen, and living out the teachings of Jesus, if we're truly honest, we have to admit those two don't always overlap. In fact, if we can push ourselves from 'truly honest' to 'fearless, brutal introspection' we would have to admit a lot of what we consider spiritual is actually justification of living in our culture. And we're ALL guilty of this. So the purpose of this series was to realign our hearts, and actions with the teachings of Jesus. And begin to even more move the direction of our lives towards this "***Most Excellent Way***". Last week we began with the understanding that there is this "*third way*" Jesus lived and calls us to live, that doesn't fall into the binary aggressor or doormat roles the world tries to force us in. This "*third way*" is based on love, inverting power, and caring for others generously and graciously. It is the harder way, but a fuller and more meaningful life that truly impacts the world.

III Sunday.

Sunday we specifically hit the topic of the tension we feel between living as a good responsible citizen in America, and how we understand the teachings of Jesus. So before we hit the scripture, we'll wrestle with a few questions.

Do you see a conflict, struggle between the values of our society and the teachings of Jesus? Now I know you answered that question in how OTHER people live. So, where do you personally struggle with what society values and the teachings of Jesus?

The primary passage was **Matthew 22:15-22**. So read that and answer the usual questions.

What jumped out at you about this passage?

And I want you to push yourself in answering this question. Don't just give a pat response.

Did Jesus answer the Pharisee's question? And how do you interpret the application of Jesus' response?

As we discussed last week, the world, both society and often religion as in this story, wants to force us into a binary, either/or set of choices. You can only do one of two things. And those two things will be defined by someone else. And if we're not careful we will believe those are our only two options.

Jesus again shows us there is this “*third way*”, a “**Most Excellent Way**”, in which we can reject the false forced choices, and live into this better life. And in deciding how we can live in the tension between the values of those in power, (both political and religious), and the teachings of Jesus. In this story Jesus showed one of the most important measurements of following him is not having the right answers, taking the right stands on issues, but living a life and treating others in the way Jesus did. There were three primary truths from scripture, Kal gave that helped give some details in how to interpret this Matthew passage, and also the often used **Romans 13:1-7** passage that tells us to obey our government. Read that passage to be able to work that teaching into this topic.

These three truths are.

1. We are to live as ambassadors. (2 Corinthians 5:20).

This passage says we are ambassadors, and we know this about ambassadors. They aren't residents of the country they happen to be residing in. They work to obey the laws of that country they live in, but they're actually bound by the laws of the country they represent. This teaching gives us a pretty specific understanding of how to live as a citizen, and definitely gives the Romans 13 passage some better context.

2. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. (John 18:36).

This was Jesus being arrested for disobeying the laws of his country, and reinforces Paul's teachings in Corinthians we are just ambassadors. Yes, we reside in this country. And we respect the laws and what this country stands for. We do serve a kingdom, and a king, but it's “*from another place*”, we are just ambassadors here. Yes I respect the laws and government of this country. Romans 13. But it does not influence or affect how I choose to live.

3. We are to fear God and respect the king. (1 Peter 2:15-17).

This pretty much puts in perspective and gives us a strong understanding, of how to live as a citizen understanding our values come from and we live for something bigger. **Fear**- hold in awe and reverence. **Respect**-recognize authority, but does not demand total obedience.

IV Challenge.

We have a dual citizenship. Will always be tension in living in the earthly one and obeying the heavenly one. And in order to keep these in the right order, **have to spend as much time reconnecting with our heavenly citizenship as we do living in our earthly one.** And in order to have wisdom, and courage to live this “**Most Excellent Way**”, we have to continually remind ourselves and reconnect with God to make sure our understanding of the purpose of the gospel, (Good News), undergirds all we do. In this story about Jesus, “**The Most Excellent Way**” is to understand we answer to this higher power, and it should cause us to make sure that those things we believe and hold close don't have to conform with the group we belong to. This is an identity issue.

Who do you say you belong to, are loyal to?

Where is your first and primary commitment to?

What speaks into or informs everything for you?

We GET to choose. What will you use to help you decide.