

Life Changing Community Group Discussion Questions

week of 10/18/26

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today as a community of believers who want to know You more deeply. We thank You for Your Word, which is living and active and always more than we expect. Lord, just as Jesus surprised and astonished those around Him, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to be surprised by what You want to say to us today. Set aside our assumptions, our political loyalties, and our earthly preoccupations, and help us to fix our eyes on Your kingdom above all else. Holy Spirit, guide our conversation, draw us closer to one another, and above all, draw us closer to Jesus, our King. In His name we pray. Amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing that genuinely surprised or astonished you recently, big or small?

Summary

In this sermon, Pastor Mark explored a pivotal moment in Matthew's Gospel where the Pharisees and Herodians attempted to trap Jesus with a politically loaded question: 'Is it lawful to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?' Pastor Mark provided rich historical context, tracing the Jewish experience under Macedonian and Roman rule, the Maccabean revolt, and the zealot theology of Judas the Galilean, to help listeners understand just how explosive this question was. Jesus responded by saying, 'Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's,' leaving His questioners astonished, bewildered, and without the ammunition they sought.

Pastor Mark argued that Jesus was not dodging the question out of fear or political cleverness. Rather, He was declaring that the question itself was of secondary importance. The real issue was not Caesar's coin but God's kingdom. Jesus knew that within a generation, the temple would be destroyed and the question of Roman taxation would be irrelevant. What would never be irrelevant is the question of whether Jesus is your King. The sermon closed with a call to pledge first allegiance to Christ above every earthly loyalty, inviting the congregation to receive Communion as a sacrament of that allegiance.

Key Verses

- Matthew 22:21
- Zechariah 9:9
- Malachi 3:1-3
- John 18:36
- Matthew 24:2

Questions

1. Pastor Mark noted that Jesus repeatedly astonished and bewildered people throughout Matthew's Gospel. When you think about who Jesus is and what He taught, is there anything about Him that still surprises or challenges you today?

2. The Pharisees and Herodians were political enemies who united in their opposition to Jesus. What does it say about the nature of Jesus and His kingdom that He could provoke such a reaction from people on opposite sides of a political debate?
3. The question about paying taxes to Caesar was deeply tied to national identity, justice, and religious faithfulness for the Jewish people. Can you think of issues in our own culture today where faith and politics feel just as tangled together? How do you navigate that tension?
4. Jesus essentially told His questioners that they were focused on Caesar when they should have been focused on God. In what areas of your own life do you find it easy to let earthly concerns crowd out your focus on God's kingdom?
5. Jesus told Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' How does that statement shape the way you think about your own citizenship, your political involvement, and your ultimate loyalties?
6. Pastor Mark described the Lord's Supper as a 'pledge of allegiance' to King Jesus. How does thinking of Communion in that way change or deepen the meaning it holds for you personally?

Life Application

This week, take an honest inventory of where your attention and energy are most focused. Make a list of the top three things that occupy your thoughts and conversations, whether that is politics, finances, relationships, or something else. Then prayerfully ask God whether those things are receiving more of your devotion than He is. Choose one concrete way to reorient your focus toward His kingdom this week. That might mean replacing a news habit with Scripture reading, serving someone in need, or simply pausing each morning to declare out loud that Jesus is your King before the day's demands take over.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus consistently surprised and astonished people throughout His ministry, and His answers often revealed that the questions people were asking were the wrong questions entirely.
- The question about paying taxes to Caesar was not just a political trap. It was a deeply theological question rooted in centuries of Jewish suffering, and Jesus refused to be confined by its either-or framing.
- When Jesus said 'Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's,' He was redirecting His listeners away from earthly kingdoms and toward the only kingdom that truly matters: the kingdom of God.
- Jesus knew that the political questions consuming His questioners would soon be rendered irrelevant by history, reminding us that earthly powers and concerns are temporary while God's kingdom is eternal.
- The central call of the sermon is to pledge first allegiance to Jesus as King above every earthly loyalty, a commitment the Church of the Nazarene tradition affirms through holy living, worship, and the sacraments.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You that You are a King unlike any other. You are not confined by our political categories, our earthly anxieties, or our limited understanding. Thank You for reminding us today that the most important question is not about Caesar or any earthly power, but about You. We confess that we too easily let the noise of this world drown out the voice of Your kingdom. Forgive us for the times we have pledged our deepest allegiance to things that will not last. As we leave this time together, would You seal in our hearts the truth that Your kingdom is eternal, that Your lordship is complete, and that You are worthy of our first and greatest devotion? Holy Spirit, go with each person here. Strengthen us to live as citizens of Your kingdom in every relationship, every decision, and every conversation this week. We pledge our allegiance to You, our King. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

A Note About These Questions: These small group questions are developed from each week's sermon with the assistance of Sermonshots, which incorporates AI technology. The resulting questions and content are reviewed and edited by the pastor before being shared with the congregation.