

In Luke 20:20-26, Jesus is confronted by religious leaders who attempt to trap Him with a loaded question about paying taxes to Caesar. Their intent is not genuine curiosity but to force Jesus into a no-win situation—either alienate the Jewish people by supporting Roman taxes or risk arrest by opposing them. Jesus, however, responds with remarkable discernment and wisdom. He asks for a coin, points out Caesar’s image on it, and delivers the profound instruction: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” This answer not only avoids their trap but also redirects the conversation to a much deeper issue: the question of ultimate allegiance and identity.

The story is not just about taxes or politics; it’s about living faithfully in a world full of tests, pressures, and hidden agendas. Jesus models discernment, seeing through flattery and manipulation, and shows the importance of pausing, reflecting, and seeking God’s wisdom before responding. In a culture where questions are often designed to provoke or divide, followers of Christ are called to answer with grace and truth, aligning their words and actions with God’s character.

Jesus’ response also teaches that faithful discipleship involves fulfilling our responsibilities as citizens—paying taxes, obeying laws, and respecting authorities—while never confusing these duties with our ultimate devotion. Earthly authorities have their place, but they are always subordinate to God’s authority. As image-bearers of God, our lives, priorities, and deepest loyalties belong to Him alone. The world may claim our time, resources, and attention, but only God can claim our hearts.

This passage challenges us to examine where our loyalties truly lie. Are we giving more of ourselves—our time, energy, and devotion—to “Caesar” than to God? It calls us to realign our hearts, ensuring that God remains at the center of our lives, and that every other obligation is measured against our allegiance to Him. Ultimately, living in the kingdom means reflecting God’s image in all we do, giving Him our first and best, and letting our lives point others to His lordship.

Key Takeaways

1. Discernment is essential in a world full of hidden motives and manipulative questions. Jesus models the ability to see beyond appearances, responding with patience and spiritual wisdom rather than impulsiveness. This kind of discernment protects our integrity and witness, helping us navigate situations where others may seek to provoke or trap us. We must learn to pause, pray, and seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance before we respond. [47:00]
2. Wisdom in our words is not about cleverness but about aligning our responses with God’s truth. Jesus reframes the trap question, avoiding unnecessary conflict and exposing deeper realities. When faced with challenging or divisive questions, we are called to answer with grace, gentleness, and faithfulness, allowing our words to reflect Christ’s character and open doors for meaningful conversations. [50:28]
3. Faithful discipleship includes fulfilling our responsibilities as citizens, such as paying taxes and respecting authorities, but always within the boundaries of our higher allegiance to God.

Earthly obligations matter, yet they are never ultimate. When societal expectations conflict with God's commands, our loyalty to the Lord must take precedence, reflecting a balanced and faithful citizenship. [54:00]

4. Bearing God's image means our lives, priorities, and devotion ultimately belong to Him. While the world may claim our resources or attention, only God can claim our hearts and worship. This truth challenges us to examine whether we are giving God our first and best, or merely what is left over after other demands are met, calling us to a whole-life surrender. [57:18]
5. Our ultimate allegiance must always belong to God, above every earthly authority or competing loyalty.

Jesus' teaching compels us to evaluate where our priorities lie and to ensure that no human institution, relationship, or pursuit takes precedence over God's will. Maintaining this allegiance requires courage, discernment, and integrity, as we steward our lives to honor God first in all things. [60:09]

Bible Reading

Luke 20:20-26 (ESV) — 20 So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

21 So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God.

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them,

24 "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's."

25 He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

26 And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.

Observation Questions

What tactics did the religious leaders use when they approached Jesus with their question about taxes? ([42:39])

How did Jesus respond to their question, and what object did he use to make his point? ([43:53])

According to the passage, what was the reaction of the religious leaders and the crowd after Jesus answered? ([46:05])

What two different "claims" or authorities does Jesus acknowledge in his answer? ([44:23])

Interpretation Questions

Why do you think the religious leaders tried to trap Jesus with a question about taxes, rather than asking a sincere question? What does this reveal about their motives? ([42:19])

Jesus says, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." What deeper issue is Jesus addressing beyond just paying taxes? ([44:23])

The sermon mentions that discernment is needed to see through flattery and manipulation. Why is discernment so important for followers of Jesus today? ([47:00])

How does Jesus' response model both wisdom and grace when faced with a divisive or loaded question? ([50:28])

Application Questions

The sermon talks about “pausing to reflect, pray, and evaluate intentions” before responding to difficult questions. Can you think of a recent situation where you responded impulsively? How might a “God pause” have changed your response? ([48:20])

Jesus fulfilled his responsibilities as a citizen (like paying taxes) but never confused them with his ultimate loyalty to God. Are there areas in your life where you feel tension between your earthly responsibilities and your devotion to God? How do you navigate that tension? ([54:00])

The message challenges us to examine where our loyalties truly lie. Is there something in your life right now—work, approval, comfort, politics—that is getting more of your time, energy, or devotion than God? What would it look like to realign your priorities? ([01:03:58])

The world often tries to claim our attention, resources, and affection. What are some practical ways you can ensure that God gets your “first and best” rather than just what’s left over? ([57:18])

When have you been in a conversation where someone tried to provoke or trap you with a question about faith, politics, or another sensitive topic? How did you respond, and what did you learn from that experience? ([41:27])

The sermon says, “Maintaining allegiance to God requires courage, discernment, and integrity.” Which of these do you find most challenging, and why? What is one step you can take this week to grow in that area? ([01:02:00])

The closing prayer asked God to reveal any obstacles that are “blinding us from you.” Is there something specific you sense God is asking you to remove or surrender so that He can be at the center of your life? ([01:09:00])