

Bible Study for Sunday October 18, 2020

Our texts for this Sunday are:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
- Matthew 22:15-22

Opening Question: How often do we ask an insincere question, one intended to elicit a certain answer, or to embarrass, or to pursue some other, more selfish, agenda? What does that ultimately say about us?

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

²We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly

³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake.

⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

What do you think of verse 4? What if that was spoken to you?

What if someone were to see your faith and how it has transformed your life? Do you think God would want them to “imitate” you? Would you be “examples to all the believers” to the people in Shoreview, Roseville and Arden Hills...and beyond?

“But in every place your faith in God has become known”....are people talking about your faith? Should they be?

Matthew 22:15-22 ¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” ²¹They answered, “The emperor’s.” Then he said to them, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Commentary: In answering those who sought to entrap Jesus about whether or not they should pay taxes to the emperor, Jesus asked them to show Him a coin. Then He asked them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They responded, “The emperor’s.” What if we changed the wording to be, “Whose image is on your coin?” This could be a way of inviting us to consider, “Whose image is stamped on the emperor?” We believe that all human beings are bearers of the image of God. The emperor’s image is stamped on the coin, but God’s image is stamped on the emperor. So, Jesus’ answer that they should “give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” might sound straightforward but is actually an invitation to consider the real question of who and whose we are.

What reflections does Jesus’ answer raise for you about your allegiances, your loyalties, and your treatment of other people? If we are each made in the image of God, how can you reconcile your discontent with people you find difficult?

Allegiance and devotion to both God and country are two paramount loyalties and, for many Americans, they offer the greatest sense of belonging.

Are these loyalties ever in conflict for you? Which are you first, a Christian or an American? Does a question like that feel answerable to you?

Ask yourself about the Divine image imprinted on your soul. What does a person look like, or how does a person act, when he or she is living fully into his or her identity as one who is created in the image of God?

Does your public persona suggest an identity that is contrary to your truest self? How do you wrestle with conflicting allegiances and expectations? Does it feel like God’s expectations of you and your community’s expectations of you are sometimes at odds?

Consider how this story takes on new meaning if the real question is not so much about what you should do with your money but what you should do with your life. What does it feel like for Jesus to say to you not, “show me a coin,” but “show me your life”?

- What does the Lord see, when you show him your life?