

What Belongs to God

Matthew 22:15–22 — 10/19/25

Setting the Scene

The Pharisees and the Herodians were unlikely allies. The Pharisees despised Rome's rule, while the Herodians supported it. Yet here they came together with one goal: trap Jesus. Their question about paying taxes was more than financial—it was political and religious. If Jesus said “yes,” He would appear to support Rome's oppression. If He said “no,” He could be charged with rebellion.

Instead, Jesus reframed the issue. He asked for a coin: “Whose image is on it?” When they answered, “Caesar's,” He said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.”

Caesar's Claim vs. God's Claim

- **Caesar's claim is limited.** His image was on the coin. His authority stretched only as far as civic order.
- **God's claim is total.** His image is stamped on humanity. His authority stretches over heart, mind, body, and future.

This is not simply about taxes—it's about identity. Caesar can mint coins, but only God can create people. Which raises the deeper question: What belongs to God?

The Image of God (*Imago Dei*)

Genesis 1:27 tells us that humans were created in the image of God. That means:

- We are made for relationship with Him.
- We reflect His character in love, justice, and holiness.
- We ultimately belong to Him.

A coin stamped with Caesar's face belongs to Caesar. A life stamped with God's image belongs to God. To live as His image-bearers is to give Him back ourselves—our worship, our obedience, our love.

The Prophetic Challenge

Jesus' words are not comfortable. They press us to ask: *What are we giving to Caesar that really belongs to God?*

- Some trust politics more than God's kingdom.
- Some define their identity by career, wealth, or reputation.
- Some give their loyalty to fear, anger, or pride.

But none of those bear God's image. You do. To "give to God what is God's" is to surrender not just scraps or portions but the whole of life.

Grace in the Call

This is not about earning God's love—it's about responding to it. At the cross, God restored the image marred by sin. He does not demand what He has not already redeemed. His claim is not to crush us but to free us—free from Caesar's false claims, free from idols, free to live fully as His children.

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to you personally that you bear God's image?
2. In what ways do you see the "Caesars" of our world trying to claim more than they deserve?
3. Where in your life are you tempted to give Caesar what belongs only to God?
4. How can you live more intentionally as an image-bearer of God this week?

Closing Thought

Caesar's image is on a coin. God's image is on you. Which claim will you honor with your life?