

Sunday December 5, 2021

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church Welcome & Prayer (Simon M)

As we come to the first Sunday in December, with Christmas around the corner, it's good for us to spend time thanking God for his kindness to us. Paul writes to the church in Ephesus with a bit of a run sheet of God's blessings. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. " (Ephesians 1:3)

- Chosen before the creation of the world * Holy and blameless in his sight
- Loved * Predestined * Adopted
- Redeemed * Forgiven

All according to the mystery of his will, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under Christ.

Let's pray. *Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore his praises sing.
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise the everlasting King!*

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great kindness to us. We thank you for your many blessings. We know we are deserving of none of them. We deserve judgement, yet you have given us forgiveness. We deserve to be cut off, yet you have granted to us adoption. We deserve your wrath, yet you have given us your love. Help us this morning, as we read from the book of Mark, that we would know more of your greatness and live to bring all things under the lordship of Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

Song – Praise my soul the king of heaven

1. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing.
Praise him, praise him,
praise him, praise him,
praise the everlasting King!

3. Father-like he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him, praise him,
praise him, praise him,
widely as his mercy flows!

2. Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress.
Praise him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him, praise him,
praise him, praise him,
praise him for his faithfulness!

4. Angels, help us to adore him;
ye behold him face to face.
Sun and moon bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him, praise him,
praise him, praise him,
praise with us the God of grace!

Bible Reading – Mark 11:27-33 (NIV)

²⁷ "They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸ "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?" ²⁹ Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰ John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!" ³¹ They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' ³² But if we say, 'Of human origin' ..." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) ³³ So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

Announcements – Sunday 5th December

SRE Teaching. Have you ever considered teaching Scripture to local kids in our public schools? There are vacancies each Thursday @ 12:30pm at Charlestown public as well as opportunities in other local primary schools. Training would be required but there is currently a grant that would pay for it available. If you would like more information, please see Karen Logan or Stephen

Focus for the month – Christmas. Its looking a lot like Christmas time, already! So how do we prepare for Christmas as a Christian. Advent calendars and readings perhaps? Extended times of prayer? Cards with Bible verses? Presents of Christian books? Volunteer at a Christmas lunch? Gifts to TEAR or an overseas mission agenda? Write letters to one of our missionaries? Let's all try and be creative this year and emphasise the Christ in Christmas.

Lord's Supper. We will be celebrating the Lords Supper at all of our services today.

ZOOM Prayer time. Every Monday night the Church meets via ZOOM to pray. It is so important that pray, both individually and collectively for each other, our church and our nation at this time.

Kids Church Prize giving is down for Sunday 12th December

Christmas Services will be held at

Christmas Eve 6pm (Charlestown),

Christmas Day 8am (Swansea) and 9:30am Charlestown).

Please use the opportunity to invite friends and family to come along.

Financial News – October.

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| Budget Offerings for October | \$30,008 |
| Actual Offerings for October | \$24,870 |
| Deficit for October | \$ 5,138 |
| Deficit for January – October | \$19,218 |

October continues a difficult year financially for the Church. We had hoped that coming back to face to face services might have reversed our trend to falling short of our budget but instead we had one of our worst months in the year. Please pray that we might have the financial backing to continue to do all that the Lord is calling us to do in our region.

Church Directory. For those who prefer a paper Church directory, there are a limited number of the names and addresses of our people at the entrance to the Church. For the rest of us, the easiest way of getting people's details is on Elevanto, our Church Management System. For more information about how to use Elevanto please speak to Liz Hyslop or one of the elders.

Song – My song is love unknown

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| <p>1. My song is love unknown, my saviour's love for me; love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be: but who am I, that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh and die?</p> | <p>3. They rise and they must have my dear Lord done away; a murderer they save, the prince of life they slay! Yet willingly, to shame he goes that he his foes, from this, might free.</p> |
| <p>2. He came from heaven's throne salvation to bestow; but they refused, and none the longed-for Christ would know: this is my friend, my friend indeed, who at my need his life did spend.</p> | <p>4. Here might I stay and sing of him my soul adores; never was love, dear King, never was grief like yours! This is my friend in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend.</p> |

Pastoral Prayer (Steve McA)

Dear Heavenly Father, We praise your glorious and powerful name, and we thank you for all that you have done for us, and for all that you give us. And as you have commanded us Lord, we know that we are not to be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, and with thanksgiving, we are to present our requests to you.

For our world Lord, we know that there is a great concern about the new strain of Covid-19. We pray that the leaders and health officials throughout the world will be able to take appropriate steps to prevent this from becoming a serious issue. And we pray that the existing vaccines that we have, may be proven to be successful against this strain.

And Lord, we also know that there are many wars and conflicts that are still occurring throughout our world. Today, we think especially of Ethiopia, where a civil war has been going for the last year, which has left thousands dead, forced more than two million people from their homes, and pushed parts of the country into famine. We pray for peace in the Tigray region where this conflict is occurring. We pray that the government and the Tigrayan leaders might be able resolve their differences, and that much needed food and medical supplies will be able to reach those who have suffered because of this conflict. We pray also for a resurgence of the Christian faith in this nation, and that militant Muslims will come to know the truth, and stop persecuting believers.

Lord, we also give thanks for those who are working throughout the world to spread your word. Today, we pray for the Webbs who are working with the Aboriginal communities in Broome. We pray that you will encourage them in their work as they spend time apart from their families and friends, and we ask that the gospel may continue to grow throughout the Aboriginal communities, and more people may come to know of your wonderful saving grace. And we pray for the churches throughout our nation who may be struggling as a result of the lock-downs. We pray for wisdom in encouraging and strengthening people in their resolve so as to not give up meeting together, but that they will seek to meet together in fellowship with one another and strengthen each other.

We also pray for those in our church who are suffering. Whether it is from sickness or illness to them or a friend or family member, or whether they are grieving the loss of a loved one, or they may be struggling financially, we ask that you will comfort them, and give them the strength that they need to deal with their hardship. And we also pray that as a church, that we may be able to provide the care and support to them, in order to help them through these tough times.

And finally Lord, as we approach Christmas, we pray that we might use this opportunity to tell others of your wonderful gift of Jesus Christ, and of what he has done for us. We pray that we may be bold and that you will give us the courage to tell others about our faith, so that your Word may be extolled throughout the land. And we ask all of this in your Son's great and glorious name. Amen.

Bible Reading – Mark 12:1-17 (NIV)

12 Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ² At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵ He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. ⁶ "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷ "But the tenants

said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'⁸ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

⁹ "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Haven't you read this passage of Scripture: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; ¹¹ the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'" ¹² Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

¹³ Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. ¹⁴ They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax^[i] to Caesar or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.

Sermon: Who tells YOU what to DO? (Stephen T)

Maybe you've heard the story of ship's captain who was sailing late at night and he saw a light on a collision course with his own course. He told the signaler to send the message, "Alter your course ten degrees south." The message came back, "No you, alter your course ten degrees south." The captain got mad and signaled back, "Alter your course ten degrees south; I'm a commander." The response was, "No, you alter your course; I'm a seaman third-class." By then the captain was furious, and signaled back, "Alter your course; I'm a battleship." The response was, "No you alter your course; I'm a lighthouse."

God's authority is like that lighthouse, it doesn't move. No matter how much authority we have in life, God's authority always trumps our authority. But the problem is that our society doesn't recognise God's authority any more. In the current debate over Assisted Voluntary Dying I have heard many proponents of change say, "Why should anyone, the government, the Church or anyone else tell me what I should be able to do at the end of my life?"

Slide 2

So who tells you what to do? Who has authority to speak into your life? God? Other people? The government? The Church? Yourself? That is the critical issue that we confront in our next passage from Mark's gospel. And it is important because if you and I don't alter our course we will come a cropper on the rocks of life. So, as we look at the question who tells you what to do, we firstly find in some circumstances we have two options

Slide 3

1. God or the crowd? (11:27-33)

²⁷ "They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸ "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"

Jesus, the day before, had overturned the tables of the money changers. He had gotten rid of the selling of the sacrifices from inside the Temple & the rulers of the Jewish religion are incredibly upset about this. Who gave you the authority to do that? You have never been to rabbinical school, you have no position within the Temple courts, so what gives you the right, the authority, to come in here and to teach in the Temple and to clean the Temple?

In other words, Jesus, who tells you what to do? Has God spoken to you or are you just following the whims of the crowd or are you acting on your own authority? Now Jesus knows where they are coming from & what they are trying to do. He knows they are trying to get him to say something that will turn the crowds against him. But he also knows that this is an important question, a question that comes to the heart of who he is & what he is here on earth to do. So, like a true Rabbi, he answers a question with another question.

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²⁹ *“Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰ John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”* Jesus would be a masterful chess player, don’t you think? The teachers of the law think they have now got the upper hand in this game. But Jesus reply shows us that they are the ones who are now in trouble. For it was John the Baptist who had endorsed the ministry of Jesus & they had both come with a message of repentance because the Kingdom of God is at hand. So Jesus was aligning himself with John. Whatever authority John had, was the same authority, that Jesus had.

Slide 5

And the crowds recognised that John was sent from God. That God Himself had told Him what to say and what to do. But the Synagogue leadership didn’t want to listen to John’s message. He was just some wilderness whacko, a hick from the sticks. So, they put their fingers in their ears whenever John preached. But luckily for them after a while John fell foul of Herod and had been removed from the scene.

But now Jesus was preaching the same message as John. Actually, Jesus had a bigger and wider following than John and what’s more he was exorcising demons, walking on water, healing the sick, raising the dead and horror of all horrors, forgiving sins. Jesus had raised the stakes considerably! And with his question to them Jesus now had them checkmate!

Slide 6

³¹ *“They discussed it among themselves and said, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ ³² But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) ³³ So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”*

The Jewish leaders go for the politically correct answer, “we don’t know”. They don’t want to offend the crowds. They don’t want to agree that John or Jesus has come with God’s authority. They play it safe. So, the ones who should be listening to what God is saying to them, the ones who should be speaking with God’s authority show, that they are more concerned with what the crowd thinks than what God thinks.

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Now let’s bring this home to us today. Firstly, Jesus is clearly saying here that he speaks with God’s authority. That when we read what he says and does in the gospels, it is like the very words of God have come crashing around us. So, God is speaking to us today, right now. Not in my words but when my words connect with God’s word.

But are we listening to God speak to us today? Are we willing to let God tell us how to live our lives? Because we are adults, Australian adults, no one really has the right to tell us what to do, do they? But God wants to tell you what to do, how to live, how to use your money, how to forgive, how to conduct your family times together, how to run your Church. So, are we listening to God? Do we care what God says? Or are we like most Australians, who still think that they have the right to live however they want to live?

Slide 8

The second point I want to make is that sometimes God’s representatives, and in this case it was the teachers of the Law, are more concerned with what other people think than what God thinks. Sometimes we in the Church pander to our society, its values and morals, rather than listen to God’s word. When we come to issues of refugees, euthanasia, homosexuality, gambling, sexuality, money or love we sometimes

don't want to go out on a limb because people might call us Bible bashers or old fashioned. Or attack us for our different beliefs.

So, we need to make sure that as a Church we are listening to what God says to us over the voice of our society. We need to love God's voice more than the voices of those around us. But that leads us to our second incident where Jesus asks who tells you what to do

Slide 9

2. God or Yourself? (12:1-12)

For Jesus tells the religious leaders a story, a parable. *"A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place."*² At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.³ But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Slide 10 ⁴ Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head & treated him shamefully.⁵ He sent still another, & that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.⁶ *"He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'"*⁷ *"But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'"*⁸ So they took him & killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

Now this sort of thing happened in Judea all the time. There were many landowners who set up their vineyards & hired tenants to run the place & each year they would collect their rent in either grapes or money. But Jesus was doing more than just telling them a bit of news because the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 5 told almost the exact same story. So, this is a rerun! And in Isaiah's story we find out that the landowner is God Himself, the vineyard is Israel and the tenants are the religious leaders. So, friends get ready for the sting in the tail!

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And Jesus parable begins by talking about God's generosity. He has set everything up for his people. He had made sure they have everything they need to be fruitful and successful. And when they are fruitful and successful, they need to acknowledge God's authority over them. And they do that by listening to what he has said and doing what he has asked them to do.

But the leaders don't want to do that. They instead listen to their own desires and get carried away with their own greediness. But God is patient with them, again and again he sends them servants and he even sends them his son, his only son. But in the face of such a generous God, we see a whole group of terrible tenants.

Who seize these servants and beat them and send them away? And then strike the next one in the head and treat him shamefully. And then beat others and kill others still and then when they are sent the landowners son, they think the landowner must be dead and so this is their best chance to become landowners themselves. So, they kill the son and show utter disrespect by not even burying him but instead throwing his dead body out of the vineyard.

The religious leaders don't want to live under God's authority. They don't want to listen to the prophets he has sent them, including John the Baptist. They don't want to even engage with the Son that God loves. Instead, they listen to their own hearts. Their own warped consciences. Their own self-centred plans. And it looks like they will get away with it!

But no, they won't. The generous God is also a just judge.⁹ *"What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."*¹⁰ Haven't you read this passage of Scripture: *"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"*

Grace has its limits. God will one day bring everyone to account. Yes, he has sent his people prophets warning them to repent. He has even sent his son Jesus Himself, to die for their sins and to offer them forgiveness and a fresh start. But if you reject the Son, there will be nowhere to hide on the day that God brings in his just judgement.

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Spurgeon put it this way in his own inimitable style, *“Remember, once more, that if you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. He is God’s ultimatum. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can be sent. Heaven, itself, contains no further messenger. If Christ is rejected, hope is rejected... (In) rejecting Christ, you have rejected all – you have shut against yourself the one door of hope... There remains nothing but damnation for those who believe not in Jesus!”*

If you reject God’s authority and choose your own authority in His place. If you don’t listen to what God is saying to you and instead listen to what your own heart is saying to you then your world will be rocked. And that will not be a good thing. The rock that is Christ will trip you up. The stone that the builders rejected will fall on you, big time.

There’s an old rabbinic saying that goes something like this, “If a pot falls on a rock, woe to the pot. If a rock falls on a pot, woe to the pot.” Either way, “woe to the pot.” It’s crushed either way. If you stumble over Christ as the Messiah, you are broken. If you oppose Him, you’re broken. Christ’s kingdom will be established and if you are not a part of it, you will be left broken, crushed, defeated. Friends, grace, God’s grace has its limits.

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Now this story in its initial context is aimed at the religious leaders. And they know it. ¹² *“Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them.”* They didn’t heed the warning. They didn’t listen to the Son, their last chance. Instead, they plan to kill him!

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But don’t forget this is a parable. A story not just directed to its initial hearers but to everyone of its hearers. As Warren Wiersbe says about Jesus’ parables, *“A parable starts off as a picture that is familiar to the listeners. But as you carefully consider the picture, it becomes a mirror in which you see yourself and many people do not like to see themselves. This explains why some of our Lord’s listeners became angry when they heard His parables, and even tried to kill Him. But if we see ourselves as needy sinners and ask for help, then the mirror becomes a window through which we see God and His grace.”*

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So, let’s look into this mirror ourselves. We farm a far richer vineyard than the one in ancient Israel, don’t we? Look at the land of plenty that God has given us? The lucky country they call us? Rich in minerals, in history and rich in homes and money and material possessions. And yet we have a rich spiritual legacy as well. We have the message of all the prophets available to us in our Bibles and in our own language. We have the complete inerrant word of God on our shelves to read each and every day. We have access to God through prayer and his presence through His Spirit. And we have the Son, Jesus. Who died for us and rose again! Who is the author and perfecter of our faith! God has been so, so generous to us.

And yet often we get too busy to read that word. Too many more important things to do than to pray to Him. And we complain about the cross Christ has asked us to pick up. And we don’t always want to follow him where He wants to lead us. And when we have times set aside to worship God, to hear what God wants to say to us and to pray and give our lives to us, you know what God? I can only make it 2 out of every 3 times or maybe every fortnight or once a month. I just have too many other things on. And God don’t tell me to change that. Because you don’t really understand the pressures that I am under.

But friends we don't own this world or this life. God does. And he gave us to us so graciously. So, who are we going to listen to? The crowds who say that serving God is a waste of time or God Himself? Ourselves or our God? And finally, will we listen to

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3. God or Caesar? (12:13-17)

¹³ *"Later they sent some of the Pharisees & Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him & said, 'Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?'"*

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They're persistent, aren't they. If they could just get him to make a careless statement they will succeed in destroying him. It reminds me a bit of what happened to Bill Clinton a while back when he was running for the first time for President of the United States. Clinton was at a press conference when a journalist asked him, *"Seeing you evaded the draft & went to England rather than serving in the Vietnam war, considering that stand of conscience, would you be able to order young Americans into a combat situation against their conscience."*

Now that's a beauty, isn't it? If he answers no, he disqualifies himself from the job – he can't make the tough decisions, and he certainly can't be the commander in chief of the army. But if he says yes, he was admitting to double standards, he will do to others what he didn't want done to him! Clinton would be in trouble whichever answer he gave.

That's the exact position the religious authorities wanted to get Jesus into. So, Jesus, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? If he says no, he is in trouble with the Roman authorities for insurrection. But if he says yes, the crowds who hate these taxes will turn against him.

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Now Jesus takes his time to answer, he really needs to choose his words carefully. As he thinks he asks to see a coin, a denarius. Now as a side issue, don't you find it interesting that Jesus doesn't have a coin, not even one, nor his disciples. It is not a lot of money, about the same as a day's wage. But Jesus is not a rich man. And so, someone else brings him a coin. They have one. They are using the Roman currency. They are happy to take some of the benefits of Roman rule like the stability, the roads, the law & order. So, Jesus says if you are happy to take the benefits, then you should also pay some of the costs for those benefits. So, give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to him as well.

It is like he is saying, if the coin has Caesar's image on it, then it is his, so give it back to him. Your acceptance and usage of Caesar's coinage implicitly acknowledges his authority and therefore the obligation to pay his tax. Caesar can tell you what to do. Caesar is someone you do need to listen to. But he doesn't have the final word, God does. It was the Christian author C. S. Lewis who said in his book *The Weight of Glory*, p. 45 says, *"He who surrenders himself without reservation to the temporal claims of a nation, or a party, or a class is rendering to Caesar that which...most emphatically belongs to God"*

Yes, God does give Caesar some power. Paul will later say you should pay your taxes, you should follow their laws, we should even give the local authorities respect & he was talking about Nero at the time. And here Jesus here is talking about Rome, a brutal regime, not what we have today, a democratically elected government.

Now there has been a lot of talk about this verse in recent days. Should we accept the governments law to go into lockdown, to stop meeting together as a Church, to no longer sing, even their coercion into getting the jab? And if we are going to listen to their voice, when will they have overstepped their mandate? When do we say, *"You have gone too far & on this issue I am not going to render to Caesar but instead render to God?"*

It is complex issue. But let me suggest a few principles for us to consider. We resist following the government when they ask us to violate a direct command of God. In Acts 4 for example the apostles are told not to teach in the name of God and they keep doing so. They say "We must obey God not me." Secondly Christians must resist if they are asked to do an immoral act, like murder or steal or lie. Thirdly if the government itself is doing the immoral acts, it is not enough to not join them in their immorality, we must actively intervene on behalf of those being abused. And lastly, we are to resist when the government asks us to go against our conscience for example to participate in a war that our conscience says we can't fight in.

But this sort of civil disobedience should be a last resort, where all other options have been explored and we should be willing to accept the penalty for breaking the law. But here Jesus is also saying we need to give God what we owe him as well. We have to listen to God and His word. We have to do what he says, give him the honour and worship he deserves. Live your life for him and him alone. We owe him our life, because he made us. We owe him your soul because he sent Jesus to die for your sins. We owe him your heart because he has loved you with an everlasting love. Simply, we owe him everything.

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So give him everything - our best thoughts, our best time, our best energies, our whole life. Not just the leftovers. Not just the parts that are left after we spend 40 hours at work and 25 hours with the kids. No everything we do, in word or deed we do it for God's glory.

And one way we do that is to listen to the Lord first and foremost. We listen to what the Bible says as more important even than what the government says. Yet at times we will do, what the government says, as well. We need listen to what Jesus says before what the people around us say. We even need to listen to Jesus before our own thoughts and desires.

Why? Because he has been so generous to us. He has sent his son to save us & he continues to commit himself to us. So, listen to Him. And when he says something, do it. Make sure you render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar but you render to God what belongs to God.

Song – Cling to Christ

1. Father, I can come to You
And boast of deeds I've done
In my pride I strive to earn
The favour Christ has won
He alone pleads my acceptance
All my works aside
So I come with empty hands
And I cling to Christ

Chorus
It's more than I can do
It's more than I can do
To keep my hold on You
But all my hope and peace
Is that You cling to me

2. Father, I can go astray
And battle needless fears
Voices tell me I'm condemned
And that I can't draw near
But Your Spirit calls me homeward
With Your words of life
Jesus bore my every sin
So, I cling to Christ

3. Father, all my earthly aims
In time will turn to dust
Let me learn that loss is gain
For those who know Your love
All the treasures of this world
Will never satisfy
You alone are endless joy
So, I cling to Christ

Closing.

Thanks for joining us for church today. It's a privilege to hear the life and teaching of Jesus, as we look forward to celebrating the day of his birth. But as we opened with Paul's teaching to the church in Ephesus, we'll finish also with Paul's words of prayer. *"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!"* Amen.

Morning Tea Why not give someone a call and have a cuppa together?