

Give to Caesar and to God
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Our Savior, Momence

Jesus said: "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."
(Luke 20:25 ESV)

When is our conduct toward authority pleasing to God? When we first recognize a certain order of God in authority. Whether authority is Christian or pagan, pious or impious, just or tyrannical, it does not detract from the dignity and power arranged by God for them. Consider that at the time Jesus said these words, Tiberius Caesar reigned over Israel as the secular authority. Yet Jesus says about him, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

Our conduct toward authority pleases God when we render the duty owed to authority according to Holy Scripture. Jesus does not say, "Let them take." He says, Render. You willingly give to them what belongs to them. That's why you pay taxes. Jesus is not that revolutionary to tell you to defy Caesar and pocket your earnings. Render what belongs to Caesar. There is an exception to our Lord's words. If the authority commands something that conflicts against God's Word, then we must respond with Saint Peter and the apostles: "We must obey God rather than men."

Our conduct toward authority also pleases God when we do everything in obedience to God. Nothing pleases God than what flows from faith in Jesus Christ. All that we say and do is in response for all He has said and done for us, even His bloody death and triumphant resurrection. The psalmist writes in Psalm 116, "What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?" Render to Him the things that are His, chiefly faith in Jesus Christ, as your hope for eternal life.

As Tiberius Caesar's inscription appeared on the tribute money, so Christ's inscription appears on you by virtue of your baptism. You are hidden in Jesus. His Name is your name. His life is your life. His death is your death. His resurrection is your resurrection. His blood covers you. His perfect life is your life. His obedience is your obedience. The Holy Spirit calls you by the Gospel to believe that Jesus is your only hope for eternal peace. He sanctifies you with His Gifts of Word, water, bread, and wine. He keeps you connected to Christ in the Church to life everlasting.

No wonder when the people heard what Jesus said, they marveled. It's a simple statement, yet profound in meaning. Render to those what is rendered. Everything is in its place. One foot is in the secular realm, caring for one another, while the other foot is in the sacred realm, receiving all good things from God through Jesus Christ.