

Luke

See Jesus

Jesus and Politics

Luke 19:47-48; 20:17-26

(Synoptic passages: Matt. 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17)

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Oct. 15, 2023

Jesus is exposing the religious leaders and dismantling the falseness of their religious system that they promote and protect so tenaciously. So, they come up with a plan to trap Him with a question they think will put Him in a “no-win” situation that will either marginalize Him and destroy His popularity or will cause Rome to crucify Him and destroy His very life.

I. Don't Do to Jesus What He Refused to Do to Himself

Luke 20:22-25 “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.’”

When they asked Him whether they should “give tribute to Caesar,” they’re stirring up a hornet’s nest and hoping He’ll step right in it. They’re not asking about taxes in general. They’re asking about an annual poll tax that every Jew was required to pay for the “privilege” of living in the Roman Empire.

This was a tax that was so hated and hotly debated, that there were regular revolts as people would rise up to resist it! In each case, Rome would crush them.

Jesus answered their question with a question that shattered their simple categories and He refused to be pushed into one particular camp, tribe, or viewpoint when it came to that political “hot-button.”

Jesus is always doing something bigger and better than any one human “camp” or viewpoint could imagine.

Prayerfully and carefully think through which party and candidate would most align with biblical principles that would cause human beings to flourish—and then hold your view with humility. Remember that another brother or sister who loves Jesus could prayerfully and carefully choose to vote differently.

II. Don't Buy into Our Culture of Extremes

A. Don't Check Out and Say It Doesn't Matter

We face the temptation to just give up, stop caring, stop praying, stop voting and just wait for Jesus to return. But that’s not what Jesus told us to do in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:13-16 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

B. Don't Freak Out and Say Let's Go to War Politically

Today we are seeing Christians talk in very inflammatory ways that don’t represent Jesus well. People have brought religious-like devotion frenzy into their politics. *The Economist* called it “America’s new religious war.”

The fear, the frenzy, and rage that surrounds politics today truly indicates that it's an idol. It has become something that the majority of our land now puts their hope in as the solution to most of our problems!

III. Don't Lose Sight of Who's Really in Control

Luke 20:24 "Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?..."

The coin has the image of Caesar on it, so it belongs to him! But you have the stamp and image of God on you. You belong to Him!

A. He Made Us in His Own Image – So We Belong to Him

Jesus cuts right through the confusion of this poll tax debate and says, "What you do with that denarius is not nearly as important as what you do with your life! Give Caesar the denarius. Pay your tax. But give Me your life."

Luke 9:23-25 "...If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"

Colossians 3:1-4 "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

When you give your life to Christ, God looks at you and He sees what Jesus has done. That means every day you have to get up and remind yourself of who you are in Christ—not what you feel like, not what you think, and not what others say about you, but what God now sees and says about you.

When you get a hold of this, it changes what you need from other people around you. It frees you from being so self-absorbed and emotionally exhausting to everyone around you because you don't need so much from them. You don't go into relationships with your hand out, desperately needing affirmation, acceptance, and security because you've found all that and more in far greater measure in Christ.

B. He Reigns Over Us in His Power – So We Can Trust Him

Jesus and the New Testament don't teach that this world will be changed through legislation and political power. Instead, He said things like:

John 18:36 "...My kingdom is not of this world..."

His kingdom is an upside-down kingdom when it comes to power and influence. Human politicians can do little good until they have power and get elected, but Jesus did the most good when He set aside His rights and gave up all power!

Philippians 2:5-11 "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."