



21st Sunday after Pentecost

18th October 2026



How Much Are We Giving to God?

Greetings! It's it great to be here as part of our church family, today we come together to celebrate the 21st Sunday after Pentecost. May I welcome all who are watching our service via 'Live screen'.

Today's Gospel, is a great teaching on *recognizing God's wonderful grace to us, and to strive to give God everything in our lives, not what we consider to be His share.*

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, as we gather together as living stones, part of your Church, we ask the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, kindling in them the fire of your love. Almighty God, speak to us through your Holy Spirit, and as we walk in the light of your Spirit may we grow in wisdom, always rejoicing in the comfort He brings, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Last Tuesday we returned to St Helier's Correctional Centre as a monthly follow up, we call a Journey Day for the Kairos Inside #16, just completed a fortnight ago. To me it was again, such a blessing. To be in a community, much like our church family, that recognises God's love and forgiveness, and the hope that it gives to people that have made some bad life choices. I say this as an introduction to the following reflections on our Gospel reading today, which is a real 'eye opener' to how some people in our societies live.

For instance, in our Gospel today, using a question as a weapon, which is apparently one of the oldest techniques in controversy!

We hear it used to perfection most days now, on TV or radio or our mobiles. The art is to find the question to which there is no acceptable answer, so that any response sees the poor person answering the question, sinking deeper and deeper into trouble.

This, of course, changes the whole purpose of a question, since the point of a question is to get an answer, with the assumption that the one asking the question, does not know the answer and is then, in some sense, dependant on the one who does!

But, in reality the point of the unanswerable question *is to put the questioner in a position of power.*

In this parable, the pharisees are confident that they have found the perfect question to ask Jesus. Whichever way Jesus answers this, He will alienate some of his followers, and that is exactly what the Pharisees want; they want to erode Jesus' power base, without dirtying their own hands!

So, they calculate, if Jesus replies, that the taxes should be paid to the illegal Roman usurper, he will anger those who hope and believe that he is the Messiah, the one who will reassert God's direct rule over his people, and get rid of the Romans!

And if he tries to please that group by saying that taxes should be withheld, he will be liable for arrest by the civil powers, and he will frighten the ordinary people, who want no trouble with the authorities, but who have come to Jesus to hear about God and to find consolation and healing.

We can imagine the Pharisees chortling with glee! *'Got him'* with these questions!

But if they think their weasel words of flattery will lull Jesus into a false sense of security, they are quickly proved wrong. Within seconds, they are the ones scrabbling for an answer, with their careful strategy completely destroyed. Once again, with all their dealings with Jesus, they are made to look like fools, who do not know their own business.

They are supposed to be the religious leaders but they never thought to introduce the question of God's rights in the debate! It is Jesus who does that, as though he knows more about God than they do! And since that has always been the heart of their hatred for Jesus, they go away with the situation completely unchanged, with their own anger growing to the point where it will not be contained for much longer.

It apparently does not occur to them, that Jesus' answer is a real one, perhaps because their question was not a real one, and they didn't want an actual answer. But Matthew, through his careful placement of this story, and through the build-up of the question and answer, makes us pause. What does the answer mean?

Some Bible commentators concentrate on the *'render to Caesar'* part of the story, to abstract some kind of Christian response to a secularized authority. But it is not Caesar whom Jesus introduces into the conversation, he was put there by the Pharisees!

The Pharisees are pretending to want guidance about their duty to *'Caesar'*, but they are patently refusing guidance from Jesus about our duty to God.

We note, in our reading from Matthew's gospel today, this confrontation comes after a series of parables from our Gospel readings over the past two Sundays:

- The landowner, the vineyard, the tenant farmers and how they ended up murdering the son and heir, representing Jesus.
- And then last Sunday's reading, the wedding banquet the king (God, and the son Jesus), about people who refuse to give God his due, and who will not recognize and rejoice with His Son!

So now, in today's parable, when the son from the two earlier parables, stands in front of a group of religious leaders, and says '**What do you think your duty to God should be?**' the response is plain. Their duty is to use all their supposed knowledge of God, to recognize the Son, and allow others to do the same.

But this is the one thing they are absolutely determined not to do!

We ask ourselves:

- Why? Why? Why?
- Why do the Pharisees hate Jesus so much?
- What is it about Jesus that challenges them so much?

It is not enough to say that they thought he was a mad impostor. Jerusalem was full of mad religious impostors, so they did not require large conspiracies on the part of the Pharisees to remove them.

No, the trouble with Jesus was precisely that they could not be sure that he was an impostor. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that they really didn't want God to get that close. And they were right to fear!

To their blinkered mindset, it would certainly be much easier for God to be like Caesar. So that they knew for sure when they paid their taxes!

And so we finish with this punchline, to answer the question of the Pharisees, and maybe our own, ***if God is really like Jesus, then we might need, painfully and humiliatingly, to recognize Him over and over again, and give him everything, not what we consider to be His share.***

Amen!