

Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: Matthew 22:15-22

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Once again, people who opposed Jesus and his message are trying to entrap him. This is the first of three exchanges between the Jewish leaders and Jesus. The lesson begins with them buttering Jesus up, and then asking a question that they thought would show that he was speaking out against the government so that he could get arrested. However, Jesus does not fall for it and calls them to the test instead.

Theme: Giving to God

Before: You will need two translations of the Scripture for today.

Beginning: Welcome people as they gather. As a way of beginning your conversation today, you can ask if any of them have coins with them and if they do – what do they see on the coins?

Opening Prayer: *Loving God, we thank you for bringing us together today. Be with us as we hear your word and help us to learn about how we can give to you. Amen.*

The Story: Matthew 22:15-22

Invite the group to listen for a word or phrase that stands out for them.

Invite a participant to read Matthew 22:15-22.

Pause and ask what word or phrase they noticed.

Once everyone has shared, invite the group to listen for where they see or find God in this lesson. Invite a different participant to read Matthew 22:15-22 from a different translation.

Pause and ask where they see or find God in this lesson.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder why the people were trying to trick Jesus into answering this question?
- What is meant by, “give to the emperor the things that are the emperors.”
- I wonder what Jesus meant when he said give to “God the things that are God’s?”
- How do we give to God the things that are God’s today?

Further Conversation:

In Jesus’ time, you had to pay taxes with a coin that had the image of the Emperor, Caesar on it and an inscription that read “Tiberius Caesar, august son of the divine Augustus, high priest.” The Jewish community saw this as offensive because it was saying that the emperor was a high priest. These coins bore the image of the emperor.

What bears the image of God? (Human beings, creation, our gifts and talents) How do you bear the image of God?

Closing Prayer: *Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. Help us to remember those ways in which we can give back to you and serve you each day. Be with us as we leave this place, and help us to remember your gifts to us. Amen.*

Matthew 22:15-22

The Pharisees went and plotted to entrap Jesus in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

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