

Morning Prayer

In the name of Christ, who died and was raised by the glory of the Father, welcome: grace, mercy and peace be with you.

And also with you.

We have come to the city of the living God to the heavenly Jerusalem, with thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

Alleluia!

We have come to God the judge of all, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant with thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

Alleluia.

Pause

Lord, direct our thoughts, teach us to pray, lift up our hearts to worship you in Spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Please sit or kneel

Christ our Passover lamb has been offered for us. Let us then rejoice by putting away all malice and evil and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

Pause

O Jesus Christ, risen master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief. We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection. We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing. We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven. In your mercy, forgive us. Hear us and help us.

God who is both power and love, forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

And the Collect for today

O Lord, from whom all good things come: grant to us your humble servants, that by your holy inspiration we may think those things that are good, and by your merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Bible Reading

Mark 12v13-17

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 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 to Caesar or not? 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." They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image is

this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. 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.

Thought for Today.

Have you ever thought that people have been trying to catch you out, or make you say things that might not show you in a good light. We see it in the media day by day, whether it is here over news stories like Dominic Cummings or in America where Donald Trump labels anything he doesn't agree with as fake news. The news media reporters love to spin a story and chase after it like a pack of hyenas or vultures. This was the impossible situation that Jesus found himself in when asked question who should we pay our taxes too, the hated Romans or to something else. The Pharisees were hoping that Jesus would answer yes to the Romans, which would perhaps cause him to become unpopular with his followers and the general public that loved to be where he was. The Herodians were hoping he would reply with a NO – give nothing to the cruel Romans for then they could make the case that Jesus was a Fanatic. This would give cause for the Romans to see Jesus as a threat, leading to his arrest and death. The trap was set and it appeared fool proof; even how it was asked was done in a way that bigged Jesus up, a man of integrity, not swayed by others, truthful and wise. It played to his Ego.

But, the answer Jesus gave amazed them and his answer served as a rebuke and provided his followers with a principle to help them as they lived as a dual citizen of God's kingdom and of the world.

Jesus asked, "Whose image and inscription is this?" Jesus was asking the simple question: "To whom does this coin belong?" If we look at a bank note today we see the image of our Queen and a promise from the Bank of England to pay the bearer, the piece of paper is relatively useless it represents a sum of money as instructed by our government. In asking his question whose image is on the coin the answer given was "Caesar's." Jesus then commanded, with great authority, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

Jesus was saying that, since the coin belonged to Caesar, they should give it back to him. If they were going to use Caesar's money, they would have to pay the price.

Jesus was demonstrating the principle that, if a person is going to benefit from the services built on that money, then of course those that benefit should pay up. Give back what is owed. Pay the tax. I do not enjoy paying tax on my earnings each month. But I do appreciate driving on tarmac roads and when a fire engine or police car drive passes it reminds me that I am contributing to that. I am thankful for our state paid education system and at this time of COVID19 we are all thankful for the NHS. These things are available to me because we render to Caesar what is under his control.

But this is not the end of the answer that Jesus give – he tells them to give to God what is God's. It reminds us that God is sovereign over all human affairs, including political affairs. Gods ways should be at the centre of our political decision making, Gods ways should be at the centre of all we do.

If we follow the teachings of Jesus, then we are a member of God's kingdom and we need to be living examples of that kingdom here on earth. Serving God with love, joy, peace,

patience, self-control, and justice. We have a responsibility to remind and help the Government to live up to these God ordained standards. Donald English who was an influential Methodist in the 1960s said, "Governments need consistently the reminder which Christians can give, that only God ultimately reigns, and that all policies should be worked out in relation to that."

And who can forget William Wilberforce who understanding how God wanted us to treat each other used his position of political influence to teach the British Government regarding the evils of the slave trade. He worked tirelessly to help government to properly obey God.

How amazed are we today by the words of Jesus? Are we challenged to live our lives showing the fruits of Gods spirit, talking to him in our prayers as we would a friend? Do we stand up against injustice and wrongdoing, are we challenged to speak out about hardship and deprivation in our own community. I am thankful that I am part of a church that does bring in food to feed those that are hungry, that we can and will again be a Place of Welcome on a Tuesday and a Safe Space for our young people on a Thursday. That we can be a place of caring on a Monday at Bowls. And that on a Sunday we can be a place of worship to our God who reigns over all the earth. Amen

Lets take a moment of silence for Reflection - before we declare our faith in God.

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high. We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Please sit or kneel for the Intercessions

Lord God, make your ways known upon the earth: your saving power among all the peoples. Renew your Church in holiness: and help us to serve you with joy. Guide the leaders of this and every nation: that justice may prevail throughout the world.

Let not the needy be forgotten: nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Make us instruments of your peace: and let your glory be over all the world.

Pour your healing power upon us; and upon all those we love who are suffering at this time.

As you sent your Son into the world: so send us, to make your glory known.

Amen.

And now may The Father, whose glory fills the heavens, cleanse us by his holiness and send us to proclaim his word.

The Son, who has ascended to the heights, pour upon us the riches of his grace.

The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, equip us and strengthen us in our walk with Jesus. Amen.

And now may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, be amongst us and remain with us always Amen

Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord In the name of Christ. Amen.