10-18 Lecture: Rendering to Caesar and to God

Render to Caesar, Render to God

Scripture Reference

- **The Holy Gospel according to Matthew** (**Matthew 22:15–21**)
- **Jesus before Pilate** (**John 19:11** – referenced contextually)

Context of the Scripture

- **The Trap:** The Pharisees (a nationalist political-religious party longing to overthrow Roman occupation) joined forces with the Herodians (supporters and functionaries of the Roman-backed Herodian dynasty).
- **The Dilemma:** They asked Jesus, *"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"*
    - If Jesus had said **"Yes,"** the Pharisees would accuse Him of treason against God and Israel.
    - If Jesus had said **"No,"** the Herodians would have Him arrested by Rome for sedition.
- **Jesus' Response:** Jesus perceived their malice and flattery, addressed their hypocrisy directly, asked for a denarius, and responded: *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

Who God Is and How He Responds to Us

- **God Looks at the Heart:** God is not swayed by empty flattery, superficial compliments, or theological platitudes. He sees past intellectual games straight into our hearts.
- **God Speaks Relational Truth:** Sacred Scripture is not merely an abstract textbook or philosophical treatise; it is the living God speaking person-to-person, heart-to-heart.
- **Sovereign Over All Earthly Authority:** Even secular rulers and earthly systems—symbolized by Caesar—belong under God's supreme authority (as Jesus

reminded Pontius Pilate).
- **The Ultimate Source of Everything:** Everything we have—life, time, creation, material goods, and spiritual gifts—originates from God.

Who God Tells Us We Are

- **Citizens of Two Cities:** Following the thought of Saint Augustine, Christians exist simultaneously in the *City of God* (His Kingdom) and the *Earthly City* (the human world).
- **Receivers and Stewards, Not Autonomous Creators:** Modern culture tells us that freedom means pure self-creation and total independence. Scripture reminds us that we are dependent creatures who have received everything from God and community.
- **Bearers of God's Image:** Just as the coin bore Caesar's likeness and belonged to Caesar, our entire being bears God's likeness and belongs to Him.

Practical Application & Examples from the Pastor

- **Understanding the Word "Render":**
    - "Render" means to *return something to the one who originally gave it to you*.
    - Our praise, worship, and service are not novel inventions of our own; they are returning the gifts God first bestowed upon us.
- **Holding Material Possessions Lightly:**
    - Money, bank accounts, and material goods are temporary and derived from outside ourselves.
    - When paying taxes or managing finances, Christians can hold money lightly because material things will pass away, but our ultimate loyalty remains with God.
- **Returning All Areas of Life to God:**
    - **Time & Creation:** Dedicating our daily hours, food, and the Eucharist back to God.
    - **Daily Work & Citizenship:** Fulfilling civic obligations, acting in solidarity, caring for family, and honoring commitments in the human city as an offering to God.
    - **Love as Fulfillment:** Returning God's love back to Him by loving our neighbors in our everyday vocations.

Summary Call to Living

- Recognize that nothing we possess is purely our own; it is all received grace.
- Stop offering God superficial flattery and surrender the genuine heart.
- Return our time, resources, family, and gifts back into God’s hands, trusting that He returns them with abundant grace in a continuous cycle of divine love.