

Worship Sheet for Sunday 18 October – Faith and taxes

It's not difficult to moan about taxes but Matt 22 puts a more positive slant on them while at the same time reminding us that we have obligations towards God as much as to the state. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, give to God what is God's. We need a better response than moaning about the first and ignoring the second!

Call: We're geared up to hold on to what is ours; Lord, you delight to give and to bless. We're well practiced at protecting our own interests; Lord, you gave your life that we might live. We hardly think of taxation as a means of sharing love and blessing; Lord, you are happy to use all manner of tools to expand your kingdom of love. Help us to give our due to Caesar, but even more to you.

Pray Lord, we're apt to draw hard and fast lines – one of them the line between faith and the real world. Show us that your love transcends any such divide – your Son came into the world because he loved us so much. The locus of our love and service isn't behind the doors of our churches but out in the community, among people you love. Forgive us our self-indulgence and focus on our own interests, and open us to your world, your people, particularly those in need. Remind us that all good things come from you and you long for us to share your love with others. Help us and all your people to show our neighbour what loving you means by the way we live, through Jesus your Son, who taught us to pray together: Our Father...

Read Matthew 22: 15 – 22. Render to Caesar. Our responsibilities to the state – and to God!

Thought Unless your job is Chancellor of the Exchequer or something like that you're unlikely to be overly fond of taxes, yet the Bible has quite a lot to say about them. In our passage today, Jesus is put on the spot by his opponents. There had been a discussion about whether it was permissible under the Temple law to pay Roman taxes. They asked Jesus his opinion. They were lining Jesus up for a fall – if he said No, he risked arrest by the Roman authorities for advocating rebellion; if he said yes, he risked alienating the wider population by looking as though he was collaborating with the occupying forces. Sensing the trap he got a coin and asked who's image and inscription is on this coin? Caesar's was the reply. So give to Caesar what is Caesar's but he went on And give to God what is God's. We are allowed to question our politicians, ultimately holding them, to account at the ballot box, but we have obligations to the state and perhaps we need to think more about how we can shape the state to further the interests of people as a whole and not just selfish ends. But we also need to remember the second part of Jesus' answer. We all have obligations to God who has been so generous and forgiving towards us in Jesus. And God operates IN the world. Those politicians who tell the Church to keep out forget that the world is the locus of God's work too. The world is where God's love is done, where love is shown and justice shared.

Praise CH4 721 We lay our broken world v 1,2 4,6.

Pray Heavenly Father, we live in a broken world but it is YOUR world and you care deeply about it and everyone who lives in it. Give us the vision to see your plan and purposes, to your activity in our midst and to be eager to get behind it. Show us how to play our part, to partner with others, to bring our gifts and talents, attributes of faith and love that we might make a difference for your sake, for our neighbours' sakes. Given the subject matter of our passage we bring to you those who are responsible for raising and spending our taxes, running our economy, prioritising public spending. May they do their job not just with financial expertise but with compassion and a deep concern for people. Help us to get sensitivity and compassion in public service. Beyond that help us to be willing to play our part as individuals and as congregations to be caring and compassionate towards our neighbours on the other side of the globe as well as along the road. Give us energy and imagination to seek ways of engaging in mission which go beyond the well worn tracks and which are relevant and applicable for times such as these. Help us all to counter not just the virus and its debilitating effects on our society but also the spirit of helplessness that pervades us. Send your Spirit of vitality and energy and power that we might love as Jesus loves and inspire many to loving action. In our prayer walk we remember all who live and work in Ferry St. SILENCE

Lord hear our prayers spoken and unspoken and answer them for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen Blessing May the Lord bless you. Amen.