

***WHO'S IMAGE ARE YOU?***  
**Genesis 1:26-31, Mark 12:13-17**

**(Read Mark 12:13-17)**

**Intro:** Here's a quick quiz:

Name the person who's image is on these coins:

The Penny – Lincoln

The Nickle – Jefferson

The Dime – Franklin Roosevelt

The Quarter – George Washington

The Half Dollar – Kennedy

A bonus, who was on the half dollar before Kennedy? Franklin

Here is the Denarius coin with the image of Tiberius on it.

Who's image is on you?

Who do people see when they look at you?

The short account I read to you a bit ago occurred in the days leading up to Jesus's arrest and his crucifixion. It was during what we call Holy Week and he was finalizing his teaching. His messages and actions were hard hitting and memorable. It was obvious that Jesus was calling the people of God, both genuine and supposed, to task. He was asking tough questions and preaching pointed messages.

The Pharisees were some of those people of God he was preaching too. Oh, his disciples and the crowds that just naturally were drawn to him were there, but he always had a cadre of fact checkers and hostile observers who followed him around trying to catch him in a slip-up. This was nothing new since the religious and political leadership had been gunning for Jesus his entire ministry. In Mark Chapter 2 he healed the paralyzed man who had been lowered through the roof of the house where he was preaching and he was questioned about his authority then. In Mark 3 he healed a man on the Sabbath and the religious leaders were grumbling under their breath about it – and then Mark records, *The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.* Mark 3:6. The Pharisees and the Herodians HATED each other – but they hated the threat to their power that Jesus represented more – so they were out to get him.

So on this occasion where Jesus is questioned by these same Pharisees and Herodians, he knew what they were up to as they buttered him up with some syrupy flattery about how he was only about truth and how he didn't worry about what people thought about him – which, by the way, was very true. But they didn't believe their own words and so they were the very personification of hypocrisy. What he also knew was their flattery was designed to catch him in a trap.

The Pharisees wanted to catch him in heresy and the Herodians wanted to catch him in treason – because either charge would get him eliminated and out of their hair.

He knew that. Jesus, God the Son, knew their stinkin' thinkin' so he didn't fall for the trap – instead he set his own trap.

*Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?* Mark 12:14b. It's a good question when it's not the bait on a trap.

The Pharisees hated the Romans, but they paid their taxes.

The Herodians played nice with the Romans so they could stay in power in Judea so they gladly payed their taxes.

Other Jews, like the Zealots (by the way, one of Jesus's disciple was Simon the Zealot) HATED the Romans and did not pay any taxes – at least willingly.

Most of the people Jesus was talking to didn't have a denarius to give to the Romans.

The question put to Jesus was designed to ensure that no matter what Jesus said, someone would get mad. As I just said – most of the people there didn't have a denarius to their name and Jesus was one of them – he had to ask someone else to produce the coin (worth 18 cents) so he could do an object lesson. He held the coin up and asks:

*“Whose likeness and inscription is this?”* Mark 12:16b

“Caesar’s” they answer.

It was the only answer they could give. They were trapped.

And then he snapped the trap, *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”* Mark 12:17a

He turned the awkward moment on them and they had to face the truth. Their buttering-up words – *“Teacher, we know that you are true . . . but truly teach the way of God.”* Mark 12:14 – had been so true the words blew up in their faces, and they had to face that truth.

And do you know what? We do too.

We are citizens of one of the greatest countries on earth – many would say THE greatest country. We have a responsibility every time there is an election to, as it were, render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. We have the privilege to go and vote our convictions and our consciences. It's awesome!

At the same time, as Christ Followers we have a higher calling – we are citizens first and foremost of the Kingdom of God by our confession of faith in the very one who held up that denarius coin and lured his questioners into their own trap.

Here's my point – as American citizens we have the privilege to render our civic duty whether it's voting or paying taxes or attending City Council, County Commissioner, or School Board Meetings (or running for any of those offices). We don't need an appointment to do it – we can just do it! We are rendering unto Caesar. But, let me ask, who's image are you when the rubber meets the road?

In the Genesis passage we heard earlier in the service, we heard God – in community as the Trinity (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) – say, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

*So God created man in his own image,*

*in the image of God he created him;*

*male and female he created them.* Genesis 1:26-27

We have been in God's image since the dawn of time. We have his likeness stamped on our soul. If you are a Christ Follower you have that image imprinted into your very being.

That means, in Paul's words, *whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* 1 Corinthians 10:31b. You have Jesus imprinted on you – the world is watching. They are wondering what Jesus would do as you live your life. They are watching for how Jesus lives out in your life. They are waiting for you to mess up. They are setting traps the same way they did for Jesus. How will his likeness hold up?

I'm asking this because, the things of this world, like presidential elections, and politics in general have caused great division in our country. Not only does it cause division on election days and in congressional strife, but many families can't even gather anymore without duking it out over who's candidate is the best, the worst, the only hope, or the primrose path to destruction. Families are supposed love each other.

Christ Followers MUST love each other. No matter who your favorite candidate is, your brothers and sisters in Christ are of much more importance than him or her. No matter who or what you vote for in any given ballot, your neighbor, Christ Follower or not, is infinitely higher on God's mind than earthly politics. That is because the image of the Creator is on them. And because the image of Christ is on us, we MUST reflect him. So, what is included in the likeness of Jesus? Let me name just a few – I'm sure you can come up with others:

Dedication to God, the Father

Holiness

Compassion

Consistency

Forgiveness

Grace

Peace

Purpose – and by purpose – I mean living out the Great Commandment. Later in this very same chapter in Mark, Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment is and he answered, *you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.* 'The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' Mark 13:30-31. And our purpose is to make disciples, which is the Great Commission, *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* Matthew 28:19-20a.

Who's image are you?

We have a calling ABC. We are a diverse group who vote differently but we love each other the same. The image of your maker is on us and because of that our higher calling is to be a Christ Follower. Let's be examples of that love and likeness to a hurting world. Amen.