

Happy Tax Day 2016!

CGGC eNews—Vol. 10, No. 16

April 15, 2016

I know that's an odd title, but it seemed appropriate for this day. I know for those who are still working to make the deadline to file your 2015 taxes, this probably isn't a "happy" day. I often have mixed feelings when it comes to paying taxes: while I appreciate good roads and infrastructure, schools, police and fire protection and the like; I also struggle with the inefficiencies, overspending and carelessness that we often see in our government's handling of funds.

Taxes always seem to cause a certain amount of controversy, even in Jesus' day. Matthew 22:15-22 gives a glimpse of this age old tension:

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. 16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"

18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? 19 Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, 20 and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

21 "Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

22 When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

It just so happens that our ancient Jewish brothers and sisters weren't thrilled with taxes either! The trap was set. If Jesus answered "yes, pay your taxes to Caesar", He would be seen as a Roman sympathizer and risk drawing the ire of his fellow Jews. If He were to answer "no", He would have been pegged as an insurrectionist and potentially gain the attention/oppression of the Roman government.

Jesus' response is brilliant. Everyone could agree that it was Caesar's image on the coin used to pay the tax, "so give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Of course there is something that's unspoken but powerful here. Caesar's image was on the coin so it ultimately belonged to Caesar, no one could disagree with that. The unspoken question here is "whose image is on you?" We know, and these ancient Jews knew that human beings are made in the image of God! Give Caesar back his coin and give yourselves back to God because you bear His image, you ultimately belong to Him!

This is the call of discipleship my brothers and sisters – to offer to God what is rightfully and ultimately His because He's placed His image on us! Pay your little tax to Caesar, give your life to the One who gave you His image to bear! Pay what you owe to Uncle Sam, but give your life to the One whose image you bear. We're tempted to give our lives to lots of different efforts, idols, and causes, but we were made in His image and therefore we are to respond by offering our lives to Him.



Here are three ways in which this passage challenges me today:

It brings clarity to my priorities and my allegiances: Because I'm made in His image, my allegiance to King Jesus is to take precedent over all other allegiances in my life. More than my allegiance as a citizen of the United State of America, more than my allegiance as a person of Scotch-Irish descent, more than my allegiance as a son to Marlyn and Bonnie Finley, and more than my allegiance to the Churches of God, General Conference; I am an image-bearer of King Jesus and my chief allegiance is to Him and His kingdom. Am I giving to God what is God's?

It helps me resist the temptation to compartmentalize my life: We are prone to compartmentalize: this is my work life, this is my home life, this is my church life, and this is my _____ life. This call to follow Jesus requires more than paying a temple tax or tithe, it requires more than just the participation in religious activity once or twice a week. Because I bear His image, all of my life belongs to Him. Every aspect of my life is a part of my discipleship and giving of myself to Him. How do I give myself to Him in my work, my recreation, my relationships, my finances, my home and my family? Am I giving to God what is God's?

It reminds me that I'll never meet someone who doesn't bear His image. Think of the crustiest, meanest, foulest, vilest individual that you can bring to your mind. That individual is made in the image of God. Jesus speaks to them, just as he spoke to the disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians, "give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's". To everyone that bears His image, Jesus' invitation to "give to God what is God's" stands open. Am I giving to God what is God's?

Let's respond to His love by offering up our lives, which rightfully belong to Him. Give to God what belongs to God!

Full-time Senior Pastor – The Crossover Church – Mattoon, IL



We, The Crossover Church in Mattoon, IL, in the Midwest Regional Conference, are seeking a full-time pastor. We are in need of a Spiritual Leader who is personable and leads with Grace and worships in Spirit and in Truth. Our church has 50-60 regular attendees with multiple ministries. The ideal candidate should have strong communication skills, leadership experience, and have/establish a presence in the local community.

Our mission is very important and we are seeking someone who understands and is willing to invest in our passion to: "Love God, Love People, Serve Locally, Serve Globally, Sharing God's Love Beyond Sunday."

Please send the following by April 30, 2016, to Jeff Gates at 8165 East County Road 250 N, Lerna, IL 62440, or email jeffgates3@consolidated.net Subject: Pastoral Resume.

- Resume with cover letter
- 2 professional and 1 personal references