

Give to God the Things that are God's

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap Jesus in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" ²¹They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.
Matthew 22:15-22

"Give to God the things that are God's." This is a beautiful response from Jesus to a question that is complicated by the political and religious realities faced in his time. In this text from Matthew's gospel, we witness the Pharisees attempt to trip up Jesus, but he is not easily foiled. And yet this text is so much more than Jesus talking his way out of conflict. The response "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God give the things that are God's" flips the conversation back to the one who asked the question, the question is now what belongs to God?

Stewardship is so much more than making sure that our churches can pay the bills, it is more than funding ministry, it is more than making sure that we have volunteers for all our lay ministries. Stewardship is, in part, about return to God what is God's, an opportunity to give thanks, and an opportunity to celebrate. There are many aspects of stewardship that we often talk about including creation, time and talents, and financial resources. Jesus's response in Matthew 22 supports an understanding of stewardship beyond just our financial resources, as we are all parts of God's creation, we all belong to God and are invited to give to God what is God's.

When we think of stewardship, one way we can think of it is being invited into a celebration of returning to God what is God's. That our time and talents, our care of creation, our financial assets are all things that have been given to us by God and we are celebrating them.

We see the results of good stewardship everywhere we look. Our congregations that have been sharing the Gospel and serving their communities are only possible because of a willingness for people to give their time, talents, and resources to God. The work of the Northern Great Lakes Synod, the ELCA and our global partners is only possible through that same generosity. We give thanks for the ways that God continues to use the resources of us all to advance the Gospel, as we give to God the things that are God's.

We invite your congregation to use the resources provided to have a Consecration Sunday on October 22nd as an opportunity to put an emphasis on stewardship as we enter the fall, and to give praise and thanks to God for the gifts and resources that we have.

Pastor Mike Markwell

Chairperson of the Northern Great Lakes Synod Stewardship Committee