

Study Guide Week of October 22, 2017

Theme: Made in God's Image (Matthew 22:15-22; Psalm 96:1-13)

In this brief, yet complex exchange between Jesus and those who seek to entrap him, our consummate teacher does not cease to amaze us, and them. In a rather politically dangerous "gotcha" question, Jesus silences his critics. This is not done with malicious intent but to force us all to stop and quietly ponder the depths of our great Creator, who is right here with us, always in our midst.

The theological question(s) that Jesus asks (in the subtlest of ways) is difficult to just answer off the cuff. Prayerful thought and meditation are necessary. The first question seems simple enough: What is the right relationship between obedience to the state, and obedience to God? The second question is intoned to but never verbalized. It's a simple question on the surface but it becomes more complex as we begin to truly understand it's importance and impact that it has on our lives. That question is: What belongs to God?

Read: Matthew 22:15-18; Exodus 30:11-16

Jesus asks for a coin. Did you notice that he does not have one? But he holds it up and has them describe the coin to him. On it is the image of Cesar. In pointing this out, Jesus also making us look at the other side of the coin...which is to say God's side.

Q: When you look at the people in the story, where and how do you see yourself?

Q: In what ways have you put God or your faith in Jesus to the test?

Q: If you had to pick sides, who would you give your allegiance to?

Read: Exodus 20:1-7; Matt. 22:19-20; Romans 13:1-7

Shane Claiborne writes, "Peasant like Jesus' family in Galilee were usually so enslaved to debt and taxation that over 50 percent of their income went to paying Caesar. So it's not surprising that one of the traps that authorities tried to set for Jesus involved taxes." He also adds this context: "Since coins were a way for Caesar to communicate his message across the empire, Jesus' question might be equivalent to asking, 'Who controls the media?' It's probably a good idea to have as few of Caesar's coins and TVs as possible."ⁱ

Q: What does a coin say about us?

Q: What does the inscription on our coins "In God We Trust" and "Liberty" mean to you? How would Jesus interpret it's meaning in light of the Exodus passage?

Q: Is there room in your life to render unto Caesar AND unto God? If so, what does that look like to you?

Read: Matthew 22:21; Genesis 1:27; 5:2; 2 Peter 1:3-4; Ephesians 4:4-6

Jesus' use of a coin is a great visual reminder to us, as it was to his inquisitors. It forces us to think about image; the material image such as a coin and the immaterial such as the soul. One is human and finite. The other is Divine and infinite. In essence Jesus is asking whose image is imprinted on you?

Q: What does it mean to you to be created in God's image?

Q: What responsibility does that require of you?

The early church and ancient mystics taught God is already in us. We are made in God's image, made to be in union with God, or One with God. God is in us therefore we are in God. In John's Gospel Jesus says "I am the father are one" and "if you know me you know my father. From now on you know him because you have seen him" (John 10:29-30; 14:7).

In the book *Waiting For God* Simone Weil writes, "Christ likes us to prefer truth to himself, because before being Christ, he is truth. If one turns aside from him to go toward the truth, one will not go far before falling into his arms."

Q: How do people identify the image of God in you?

Q: How do you see the image of God in others? Does it change the way you approach people, or judge or love others?

Think about how our worldly currency honors the Godly currency of flesh and blood. It begets our daily struggle to keep a constant eye on how our money is "spent." Does it honor God? Does it help the world see God in the flesh?

Remembered whose image you were made in and the currency by which you were bought. This ministry relies on your generosity and financial gifts. But we also need your support in other ways too: prayer, participation, and providing feedback, words of encouragement, and sharing our message with others. Please help us were you are able (Psalm 96:8).

Meditation: Psalm 96:1-13

As you slowly read this passage, what words or phrase does the Holy Spirit place in you? In what way are you living this psalm of praise bear witness to God's image throughout creation?

Prayer: Loving Creator God, help me to always see you, in your divine word and in the Word made flesh. Through Christ Jesus, I am made free from my sins and am able to delight in your will. Enlighten my path today by shining through me, so others might be enlightened to your glory that is already at work in their lives. Amen.

ⁱ Claiborne, Shane; Chris Haw. *Jesus for President*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 2008. pp. 116-17.