**“Render”**

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Isaiah 45:1-7

Psalm 96:1-9

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Matthew 22:15-22

 20th Sunday after Pentecost

“They brought Him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, ‘Whose likeness and inscription is this?’ They said ‘Caesar’s.’ Then He said to them, ‘Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bridge

**The** **Fourth Commandment** **demands** that we “Honor our father and our mother (those placed in authority over us), that all may be well with us, and that we may live long in the land”. **Here, Jesus demands** that we “**render**” **to** **any of them what’s due their positions** in **whatever their position dictates in honor, obedience, taxes**, bit culminating in all of that **first, foremost, and above all** **(even super-ceding all that’s owed to anyone or anything else) rendering to God what’s God’s.**

“**Render**” is the instruction … and it’s according to what’s **due** and **appropriate** to “**render**” (or **give**) rather than just taking, “**submit** as (**after to God**) **as if (in all cases) to God Himself**. “**Whose** likeness and inscription is on this coin?” Jesus asked Pharisees who were asking about **taxation**. “Caesar’s”, they said, and I was reminded of **my “likeness and inscription” of my parents, seeing them again after returning from my vacation**. I **look like my dad** … but my **mom too**. And **I bear dad’s name** (or “**inscription**”) at the end of my own first name. I sign the name **he inscribed upon me** every time I sign my name … **it’s his**, so I bear **my parent’s “likeness and dad’s inscription”** so think about that in light of this command of Jesus’. I’m due and owing them honor, **“rendering” to them both what’s their’s** **having (for so long) been charged with a care of me**.

I’m also to appreciate what I owe to other care-givers of me in policemen, government officials (my President and Governor), my doctor, nurses that care for me, the medical industry (as a whole) as they try to find a cure for a flu that could harm me, the military that physically protect me from foreigners or even domestics that could harm me. They’re **owed what I pay them … they’re owed what you do**. They deal with things **we don’t want to** (or, maybe, **can’t**), and we’re often not very **appreciative** and **friendly** as they provide to us what we need but may not want, they care for us in ways better for us than we might at the moment agree with (but not perfectly).

Overall, I appreciate our way of governing and its gift of protection and systems for preserving laws and peacefulness and health and participation. I appreciate the “likeness and inscription” of our **flag (the American flag)**, and am always drawn to the sight of it flying in the breeze or draped over the casket of a soldier killed **demonstrated how much that moniker was worth dying for**. Every American shares in the benefits of what that flag’s “likeness and inscription” **means** **because of the sacrifices of everyone** **who made and makes it mean that for us**.

Text

**Conceptually**, no reasonable human has a problem with **what’s expected by Jesus’ command**. “**Civilization**” means that decisions have been made by humanity to, jointly, **adhere to responsibilities under authority** and **(as a society) agree to have those in authority restrict those who break the rules**. We even **legislate** the “rendering to **Caesar**” **what’s due him** because we know that, overall, **it’s the right thing to do** and **beneficial to make things “well with us”, so that we might “live long in this land”**.

Yet, even, we do that flawed if we ignore parents or spout hatred campaigns toward a duly-elected government official, or disrespect the American flag or give cause for the police to deal with us upholding laws which we’ve agreed to as **necessary** to keep us doing **what** **common sense should have us do on our own**.

And, then, there’s **God**. By His very title one would think that, above all, **He** would get **humanity’s respect and honor. Conceptually sometimes** **maybe**, but (**in practice**) everything **but** **Him** gets attention **first** and energy **first** and diligence **first** and practice **first** and homage **first** and our ears and mind and hearts **first**. “In **God we trust**” is a **slogan** we **generally recognize** as binding for Americans, yet “**trust**” **(from an appropriate level of understanding of Him)** is seldom what we really do. **Regular** “**attendance**” even at places for the worship of Him is declining and a second or third (or beyond) thought (**once a month**, even, **Christianity’s idea of** **“regular”** **now in worship attendance** and the study of Him in anything further is out of the question).

Jesus said: **of course “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s**”, but **He didn’t** **stop there**; “**render**” **(in a** **so-much the more prioritative of ways)** “**to God the things that are God’s**” …

.. and, maybe, that’s where His “likeness and inscription” upon things makes that more obvious: **all things are God’s** since He’s the creator of all things (marked by His image) the earth, sky, animals, breath, but especially men and women and our abilities He’s given to do thing like work and learn in schools, to relax (or rest) in the en**joy**ment of a home around family and friends and play sports and make decisions about where to **“render” some resemblance of that “likeness and inscription” (image of God) that’s upon us**. All creation (when **acting** **appropriately**) honors (yields to and bows down toward) God who is Father authoring and Son redeeming and Spirit enlivening everything Good that happens or is available. We (humans) were most to be created specifically **in the image (or “likeness”) of God** and **under the “inscription” of His name (God’s children)**. We were **meant to be His … and should be and always act like it**.

The Son of God (Jesus) gave His life so that people could **return to the created “likeness and inscription” of God**. “The Father’s beloved sons and daughters” gained (with that sacrifice) an return, through baptism and belief, to a place in the blessings and under the authority of the name of “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”. God **re-makes them** (through water and promised known as what it is) to be renewed **chips-off-the-old-block** (“**children of His**” brought back to where they were **always supposed to be anyway: under His care and Fatherhood**).

And it’s **knowing that component of the Fourth Commandment’s relation to the First** that should make us **appreciate it all** by **honoring that fact and Him** so that **all eternal things (first)** might be **forever “well with us** and that **we may, indeed, live long in the land” of God’s kingdom which our baptism starts and our faithful lives here reflect and our inheritance of Heaven completes.**

Where **disrespect** **or dishonor displays itself**, **there’s** **why** the Son (Jesus) came to earth incarnate (as also like, then, us) to die upon a cross with our sin. With hypocricy of what we should be but aren’t most often, Jesus (in the “likeness and inscription” of His Father, certainly, but also in the likeness of sinful man) got crucified (killed) as **perfect yet filled-with-us** so that we could become, then, **(repentant and forgiven) filled-with-Him**.

Application

And what we **do** **reacting to all that (appreciating it)** is the **least of what we can do in return … it’s the least of our due**. Where we don’t appropriately or appreciatively, we have much to confess. As we venture through our days and weeks both reacting to things and strategic about them (dedicating ourselves to things that we know are appropriate to where honor’s due), may our **foremost dedication** be to God.

We, **FIRST, FOREMOST, and ABOVE ALL** should honor **God** and **then** every authority that God expects us to honor **for Him after we honor Him**. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.