

**New Castle United Methodist Church
510 Delaware Street
New Castle, DE 19720**

The Message for November 15, 2020

“Who Will You Serve?”

Pastor Ray Eck

"Render unto Caesar" is the beginning of a phrase attributed to Jesus in the synoptic gospels. The synoptic gospels are considered Matthew, Mark, and Luke because they all include many of the same stories about Jesus... just written from different points of view. They were written between 55 AD and 65 AD, just 22 to 32 years after the death of Christ. They knew Him. They lived with Him. They had followed him for over three years. These three Gospels were written by the apostles during their lifetime so that first-hand knowledge could be preserved. Their stories are historical, factual encounters with the living Christ. The fourth Gospel, the Book of John, was believed to have been written at Ephesus, in Asia Minor, about 30 years later, about 100 CE by the Apostle John.

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's,
and unto God the things that are God's."

This phrase has become a widely quoted summary of the relationship between Christianity and the Roman authority of the day. All three of the synoptic gospels state that hostile questioners tried to trap Jesus into taking a stand as to whether Jews should or should not pay taxes to the Roman authorities. The accounts in Matthew 22:15-22 and Mark 12:13-17 say that the questioners were the Pharisees and Herodians. The combination of these people approaching Jesus was intriguing. Matthew tells us that the Pharisees came together with the Herodians. The Pharisees did not want to give money to their pagan oppressors and were opposed to paying taxes to Rome. On the other hand, King Herod's position of power came from the Roman government, so even though the taxes were widely considered to be oppressive, Herod had a vested interest in keeping the Roman taxes paid. And so, it seems that both parties had their own agenda. They gave Jesus no way out. If Jesus spoke against the tax, he would anger the Herodians and lead to a charge of treason against Rome. If he spoke in favor of the tax, he might upset most of the crowd that followed him. He could not speak in favor of the tax without alienating most of those that followed him.

Luke, chapter 20, tells us this... the Pharisees anticipated that Jesus would oppose the tax and their purpose was "to hand him over to the power and authority of the governor." The governor was Pilate, and he was the man responsible for the collecting of taxes in Roman Judea. Pontius Pilate was the fifth prefect of the Roman province of Judea, from AD 26–36. As prefect, he was in charge of the administrative tax collection office in Judea. He is best known for presiding over the trial of Jesus and ordering his crucifixion.

At first, the questioners tried to flatter Jesus by praising his integrity and devotion to truth. Then they asked him whether or not it is right for Jews to pay the taxes demanded by Caesar. The Gospel of Mark adds this provocative question; "Should we pay, or shouldn't we?" Jesus turned his adversary's attempt to trap him, into a powerful lesson. As God's followers, we have obligations to both God and our government. But it's important to keep our priorities straight. When the two authorities conflict, our duty to God always comes before our duty to the government. Jesus said, "Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?" Jesus had asked for one of the coins used in paying the tax. It equaled about one week's wages. He was setting his own trap.

Remember when Jesus chased the moneychangers from the outer courts of the temple? It seems that these moneychangers had a business going on because each citizen was required to exchange their pagan currency for Temple coins, a Denarius, before doing business in the Temple. Carrying an image of Caesar into the temple was considered sinful. So, when Jesus asked for a Denarius, one was quickly handed to him. Jesus asked,

"Whose name and inscription are on this coin"?

They answered, "Caesar's," and He responded:

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's;
and unto God the things that are God's."

The questioners were impressed by his answered. Matthew 22:22 states that they "marveled" and being satisfied with the answer, and they went away.

My friends, we live in a society where we too are governed. Mostly by elected officials that, in theory, try to help us to have a safe and enjoyable life. They help provide services that we all enjoy like public transportation, safe roads controlled by traffic lights, public schools to educate our children, and a military that helps safeguard our security. And we have policeman and fireman to help keep us safe. These government officials try to insure clean safe drinking water and food that is safe for us to eat. Without government, we would all live in chaos and simply try to fend for ourselves. When they are effective, and work for the people they serve, they help provide order. We don't always like how they govern and that's why we have elections where we can elect new leaders with new ideas.

In return for their efforts, we pay taxes which pay salaries and buy supplies needed to help take care of us. We render unto our government leaders some of our money so that they can help provide what we all desire. We call it taxes. No one likes to pay taxes, but we all like to be safe, don't we?

Leo Tolstoy wrote:

According to the words, "Give to Caesar the things which are Caesar's," it signifies the necessity of obeying Caesar. If that were so, Christ would have said directly, "Yes, it should be paid." But He says, "Give to Caesar what is his." That is, the money due him for the services he provides, and give your life, and everything else, to God. And with these words, he not only does not encourage obedience to power, but points out that everything, including our lives, belongs to God.

Mohandas Gandhi, a man of peace said this:

Jesus evaded the direct question put to him because it was a trap. He was in no way bound to answer it. So, Jesus asked to see the coin used for paying taxes. And then said with scorn, how can you, who traffic in Caesar's coins and receive benefits of Caesar's rule, refuse to pay taxes?

Our first obligation is to God. What God wants is nothing less than to come and live in your heart. You have been made in his image and likeness. God loves you so much that he keeps a picture of you in his wallet and your name is written in the palm of his hand. Jesus didn't care about the tax. His real concern is that you live in service to others. You begin to live in the image of God, in that moment, when you change your life to be more like Jesus.

Giving back to the church truly does matter, but merely giving money to the church is only part of the picture. He wants us to be involved in the lives of others. He wants us to read His Word, the Bible. The Bible is God's love letter to each of us and he wants us to read it daily. How else will we know how he wants us to live?

God loves you and he wants you to love him. He created you to love him. We show Him our love by obeying his commandments and by sharing his love with others in the many things we do in the name of love. But know that we are saved by Faith – not by what we do. We do good things for others because of our Faith in God. Everything we have has been given to us by our Heavenly Father. It is our privilege and joy to give back to Him some of which he has already given us. Place God first in your life. Don't give him what you have left. With your tithes and offerings, you help others to understand and to spread the message of his love.

In the Old Testament, the Lord promised Moses that He would go with him, lead him, feed him, and guide him, and he makes that same promise to us today. And he says this: In your life, I will go with you and I will be with you every day. I will be with you in your joy and in your sorrows, and I will be with you when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will walk with you right up to heaven's gate.

My friends, we are all on a journey. We are all traveling to the same place. We can walk alone, stumbling and getting lost along the way, or we can walk together. Traveling together, we can pick each other up when we fall. Everyone falls, but together we can help each other get back on the path, the path that will take us all – home.

All praise to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit who lives within us when we believe. 2,000 years ago, Jesus asked his disciples, Who do they say that I am?

"Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the loving God."

The Pharisees came to test him. Let us not test him, but let us honor him, obey His commandments, and let us all be faithful as together we continue on our journey.

Close your eyes for just a moment and just think about it. Can you imagine what it will be like to walk through that gate and see those you have loved that have gone on before you? Then, you will see the face of God as he welcomes you home. God's word says this... It will be better than all you have experienced before. It will be more marvelous, then you can ever imagine.

For those who believe, the gate will open wide and you will know that you are home.

So be it,

Thanks be to God, Amen.



Music for November 15

-- Bill Mathews, Director of Music Ministries

Our music for this week and next will include songs of thanksgiving. We open with *For the Fruit of All Creation*, written by Fred Pratt Green, one of the best-known 20th century hymn writers from the British Isles. Ordained by the Methodist Church, he has written lyrics to 18 hymns in our hymnal! This particular one is among my favorite, with lyrics that refer to our responsibilities on God's earth followed by a recurring response to that task. In this version, the hymn is sung to a familiar Welsh melody, "Ar Hyd Y Nos," known to many of us as "All Through the Night."

***For the Fruit of All Creation*, UMC Hymnal no. 97,
as sung at First-Plymouth Church, Lincoln, Nebraska**

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=mqXt-t9LNFY>

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Verse 1:

For the fruit of all creation,
Thanks be to God;
For His gifts to every nation,
Thanks be to God;
For the plowing, sowing, reaping,
 silent growth while we are sleeping
Future needs in earth's safekeeping
Thanks be to God.

Verse 2

In the just reward of labor,
God's will is done;
In the help we give our neighbor,
God's will is done;
In our worldwide task of caring
 for the hungry and despairing
In the harvests we are sharing
God's will is done.

Verse 3

For the harvests of the Spirit,
Thanks be to God;
For the good we all inherit,
Thanks be to God;
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound us,
Most of all, that love has found us,
Thanks be to God.

music continues on the next page

Our second song of thanksgiving, *All Good Gifts*, is from 18th century Germany. The writer, Matthias Claudius, was a literary editor in Hamburg who went on to become Commissioner of Agriculture; while serving in that position, he studied philosophy and became disenchanted with the religion of his youth. However, after suffering a serious illness, he returned to Hamburg with a new religious spirit. In 1845, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote of him, "None of his poems are used in the churches; nevertheless, they exercise a great influence of the religious life of the country." After a translation into English in 1861, it became quite popular in hymnals, and although it is not found in our present one, it was in our 1966 hymnal. In 1971, the lyrics were paired with a new tune by Stephen Schwartz for the musical Godspell. In the show, the song is preceded by the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13), saying:

"...That which fell among good soil –
they hear the word with a good and honest heart
and through their perseverance yield a harvest."

All Good Gifts, from the 1973 film, Godspell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mURti-s0jc>

Verse 1

We plow the fields, and scatter
the good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand:
He sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
and soft refreshing rain.

All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord for all His love.

Verse 3

We thank Thee, then, O Father,
for all things bright and good,
The seed time and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food.
No gifts have we to offer
for all Your love imparts,
But that which Thou desirest,
our humble thankful hearts.

All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord for all His love.

And finally, a very different song of thanks. He came into our homes for 36 years and for many of us, everything else stopped when "Jeopardy" was on. A number of years ago, my mother-in-law was battling cancer at Kent General Hospital in Dover when there was a power outage around 7PM. It was all my wife, Cindy, could do to keep her from pressing the button for the nurse as she exclaimed, "But Jeopardy's on!" Thankfully, there are generators. When my father moved in with us 5 years ago, it became part of our evening. Alex Trebek, with his kind manner toward the contestants as well as his audience, made us all feel OK even when we didn't know the "question" to the answer. From what I've seen in recent interviews, he was the same in real life. So, thank you, Alex – I am sure this was playing as you entered the gates of heaven...

From the Radio City Music Hall Organ: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXGPESEQhyU>



**“ZOOM” Worship
every Sunday @ 11am**

Order of Worship
and sign-in information
are on pages 7-8.

Click on this link (or copy it into your browser):

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/76997795253?pwd=VFR2eThNb0VlanVtVTdRalFPWXEvUT09>



✓ **Food Closet Needs**

- ✓ Instant Potatoes
- ✓ Instant Oatmeal packets
- ✓ Rice a Roni or 1 lb. bags of rice
- ✓ Canned entrees – stew or chili
- ✓ Canned fruit

And remember, store brands are always acceptable.

Thanks to Joan Forster for bringing us the following information...

**Jean Norvell (aka Esther Lovlie’s mother) will be presenting a program called
"London in Wartime: Ration Books, Bomb Shelters, and the Blitz"
on Saturday, November 14 at 2:30 pm.**

Sponsored by the New Castle Courthouse Museum,
the program features Jean’s childhood experiences living
in war-torn London during World War II and the Blitz.

To see the presentation via ZOOM, register at this site:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_G1WnXxSYRZODL05sN6yuLQ.



Tristan Beeson, Pam Whary's nephew, and the Fire Company he's associated with, affected by COVID

Paul Coffin, Michelle Jordan's godfather

Hoover & Anita Counterman

James Costenbader, Hoover & Anita's son-in-law

Joanne Davis

Wilbert Esler, Sharon Kimmel's father

Richard Hastings

Jerry and Sally Knotts

Tammy McAleese

Ron Pochvatilla

Joan Skilton's daughter, Sue, and her family

David Warner

Margaret Weyl

Greyson, a 3-year-old boy diagnosed with neuroblastoma.

Those diagnosed with the coronavirus and the families of those who have lost loved ones

The staff and the patients of our nursing homes

The homeless

Those who struggle with addiction

If you have someone that you'd like included on our Prayer List,
 please let us know
 by contacting either
 Doris Poultney,
 Prayer Chain Coordinator,
 @ 302-378-1184,
 or Pastor Ray
 @ 302-740-3932 or
snowman3girls@gmail.com

New Castle United Methodist Church

"Zoom" Worship Service

November 15, 2020, at 11am

The 24th Sunday after Pentecost

If you have a computer, smartphone, or tablet...

Click on this link (or copy it into your browser):

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/76997795253?pwd=VFR2eThNb0VlanVtVTdRalFPWXEvUT09>

For those using a regular phone... the number for our Zoom Communion is (301) 715-8592. Remember... the phone number is long-distance and you should be sure your phone plan covers it.

Meeting ID: 769 9779 5253

Passcode: 12345. On a computer, then hit "Enter." On a phone, then hit "#".

Order of Worship

The Greeting

Pastor Ray Eck

Introit: *O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee*

Bill Mathews

Verse 1: O Master, let me walk with thee
in lowly paths of service free;
tell me thy secret; help me bear
the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Verse 2. Help me the slow of heart to move
by some clear, winning word of love;
teach me the wayward feet to stay,
and guide them in the homeward way.

Verse 3. Teach me thy patience;
still with thee in closer, dearer company,
in work that keeps faith sweet and strong,
in trust that triumphs over wrong;

Verse 4. In hope that sends a shining ray
far down the future's broadening way,
in peace that only thou canst give,
with thee, O Master, let me live.

...UMC Hymnal, no. 430

The Lord's Prayer

Call to Worship

Pastor Ray and Rick Schiller, Liturgist

Pastor: Blessed are those who do not walk in the council of the wicked; or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of scornful;

Liturgist: but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on that law they meditate day and night.

Pastor: They are like trees planted by the rivers of waters that yield fruit in its season. Their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

Liturgist: The wicked are not so but are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgement; nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous, for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly will perish.

Opening Prayer

Rick Schiller

Holy Lord, it is you that hears our prayers. You have said that you will be present whenever two or three are gathered together in your name. We welcome your presence and grace in our lives this day. We ask that you manifest your glory within us and shine your light on us. Through your light, may we illuminate the lives of those around us. As we feel your presence in worship today, may our knowledge of your divine mysteries continue to grow and change our lives forever.

Our Joys and Concerns and Pastoral Prayer

Pastor Ray

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 22:15-22

Rick Schiller

The Message: “Who Will You Serve?”

Pastor Ray

Benediction: “May the Lord bless thee and keep thee while we are absent, one from another.”

Closing Hymn: *Living for Jesus*

Bill Mathews

Verse 1: Living for Jesus a life that is true,
striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

Verse 2. Living for Jesus who died in my place,
bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace;
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
follow His leading and give Him my all.

Verse 3. Living for Jesus wherever I am.
doing each duty in His holy name,
Willing to suffer affliction or loss,
deeming each trial a part of my cross.

Verse 4. Living for Jesus
through earth's little while,
my dearest treasure –
the light of His smile,
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,
bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

Chorus:

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;
I own no other master, my heart shall be Thy throne;
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ for Thee alone.

...”The Faith We Sing,” no. 2149



Thanks to Denise Lingenfelter for the photo of our altar.