2026 10 18 WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

This week we read about Jewish leaders who sought to entrap Jesus with a question about allegiance to the emperor and to God. Jesus counters with a carefully worded answer – give to each what they are due. The leaders decided to leave Jesus alone – for now. Religious leaders posed challenging questions to Jesus, testing his position to civil and Jewish law. Jesus' response to those leaders challenges us about our responses to giving and to stewardship as we explore what it means to be a child of God.

As always, my thoughts and prayers are with you as you go on through the coming week and I wish you every blessing, *Margaret*.

Call to worship:

Through the ages, priests and prophets have called to God and he has answered them.
Today, let us call on God through our Lord Jesus, knowing that God will hear our prayers.

Old or young, we are all made in your image, Lord.
When we lose our enthusiasm for life, renew your image in us.
When we are powerless or when we abuse our position, renew your image in us.
Rich or poor, we are all made in your image, Lord. When we fail to share what we have, renew your image in us, this day and always. Amen.

The words to 'Lord Jesus Christ' written by Patrick Appleford [b.1925] Singing the Faith 592

1 Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us,
you are one with us, Mary's Son;
cleansing our souls from all their sin,
pouring your love and goodness in;
Jesus, our love for you we sing – living Lord.

2 Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day,
teach us how to pray, Son of God.
You have commanded us to do
this, in remembrance, Lord, of you;
into our lives your power breaks through – living Lord.

3 Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us,
born as one of us, Mary's Son;
risen from death to set us free;
living Lord Jesus, help us see you are Lord.

4 Lord Jesus Christ, we would come to you,
live our lives for you, Son of God.
All your commands we know are true;
your many gifts will make us new;
into our lives your power breaks through – living Lord.

Prayer:

God of integrity, may your word sink deep into our hearts today and move us.
May it leave its mark on our minds and inspire us.

May it imprint your desires into our actions and guide us.
May it instil in us a sense of belonging to that which is true and beautiful, so that we may draw others closer to you and that they fell a sense of belonging. In Jesus' name we prayer. Amen.

Living God, you are the one we look to – you are the one we would follow – you are the one we adore. Help us, we pray, to become more like your Son – to display more clearly the marks of your love – to give more generously wherever we can – and to imprint on our world the message of your salvation. Amen.

Faithful God, forgive us when we mar your image and others don't see your compassion mirrored in our lives.
Forgive us when the mark we leave on the lives of those encounter is a negative one.
Forgive us when we seek only to identify with the powerful and not the vulnerable.
Forgive us when we give our allegiance to that which is not healthy.
Forgive us if ever we are reluctant to identify as your disciples.
Cleanse us from the mark of sin, Lord, and have mercy on us. Amen.

Dear God – we thank you for your gift of forgiveness, and that you remain loyal to us, even when our loyalties drift elsewhere – that, in spite of our mistakes, your grace ensures your imprint on our lives is never fully erased – that, because of your love, we can be confident in belonging, and that we can begin again with your blessing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And leads us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 22: 15-22 – taken from The Holy Bible – New Living Translation – copyright 2000
Then the Pharisees met together to think of a way to trap Jesus into saying something for which they could accuse him. They decided to send some of their disciples, along with supporters of Herod, to ask him this question: 'teacher, we know how honest you are. You teach about the way of God regardless of the consequences. You are impartial and don't have favourites. Now tell us what you think about this: is it right to pay taxes to the Roman government or not?'
But Jesus knew their evil motives. "You hypocrites!" he said. "Whom are you trying to fool with your trick questions? Here, show me the Roman coin used for the tax."
When they handed him the coin, he asked: "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?"
'Caesar's,' they replied.
"Well then," he said, "give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God."
His reply amazed them and they went away.

Comment: look at your thumb. What do you see? Sir Isaac Newton said: 'In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God's existence.'
Is it, then, 'a mark of the maker' – a reminder that we carry the imprint of God?

Our thumbs are part of the wonder of who we are and our uniqueness. We use our thumbs for many things; some things would not be possible, or would be very difficult without them. But on its own a thumb can do very little. Perhaps a signal – thumbs up – but little else. Our thumbs work in conjunction with our hands and the rest of our fingers.
Similarly, we who bear the imprint of God cannot act alone. We need each other – those we know or sometimes outsiders – to help us to make our unique contribution.

Meditation of a bystander as Pharisees tried to trick Jesus – taken from A Most Amazing Man Year A – copyright 2010 Nick Fawcett.
They thought they had him, the two-faced devils, but thankfully that ingratiating grin as they sidled up to Jesus fooled no-one, least of all him.
They were out for blood, and hoped to be the wolves, but instead of turning tail, Jesus turned the tables, leaving them lost for words as he slipped deftly from their trap.
'Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'
Very nice! It took the wind right out of their sails, which perhaps explains why they missed what bugged me immediately: how can we tell which is which? It's all very well pointing to a face on a coin, but does it really answer the question? I don't think so – or, at least, not as fully as I'd like, for life's conundrums are rarely as clear-cut as that, the edges more often than not blurred – lines hard to follow.
'What things *are* God's?' – that's what they should have asked, but they weren't sure themselves and feared digging a deeper hole than they were in already.
How about Jesus? Did *he* know? Or was his point that there are no hard and fast rules, no immutable laws set in stone – that what is right in one circumstance might be wrong in another – not even the commandments exempt? He's suggested as much, many times, speaking of a *new* command in which love interprets all, and if that's really true – if love alone is what God requires – then that reply of his wasn't just a *clever* answer, it was the *only* answer he could give.
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Loving God, we have responsibilities in this life in relation to our loved ones, our employers, our government and to the world as a whole. There are laws to observe, duties to discharge, conventions to fulfil, care to show – and we are honour bound to play our part in each of these as best we can.
Yet we have responsibilities also in relation to you – a summons to serve, call to witness – challenge to walk the way of Christ. In short, to do your will as summoned up in the two commandments; to love you and to love one another.
Help us, then, to live wisely in this world yet still faithfully to seek your kingdom – to give of our best both to others and to you, by your grace and to your glory. Amen.

Close:
Living and true God,
You have chosen us to be your friends and helpers.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit of joy.
Make us welcomers of all whom we meet – examples of your loving ways – and followers of your Son, who rose from the dead and delivers all from evil. Amen.

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