

What Would Jesus Do About Politics  
Matthew 22:15-22

Okay, here's the scenario for today. Let's say you are driving through town minding your own business when all the sudden you see a big, red octagonal sign with white letters saying S T O P. What do you do? You stop? Why? Because it's the law? But I thought scripture tells us we are no longer under the law but under grace. In fact, in **Romans 10:4** it says that Christ is the end of the law. As a believer in and follower of Christ, do I still have to stop at stop signs? Why?

So, we are no longer under the Old Testament law of Moses, the law that requires sacrifice for our sins to be made by bulls and goats and such. Jesus made Himself that sacrifice for us. But we are under man's laws. And that is actually a good thing overall. I have to stop at stop signs because it is a law but the law is there because it's a safety issue. It is for my good and the good of others.

**Romans 13** tells us that we have to submit to governing authorities because those authorities are put there by God. They are established by God and ordained by God. And I know that can seem hard to believe when you look at the corruption and filth and perversion that comes all the way from the White House down to the local levels of government. But this is when you just have to believe that God is in control. Like I said a couple weeks ago, God owns it all. He is in control of it all and He provides it all, even our government.

**Romans 13** goes on to tell us that to rebel against authority is to rebel against the One who instituted that authority and that is God. So, we are to be obedient to the government, not only to keep from getting in trouble but also because it is the right thing to do. So, Jesus said in **John 17** that we are not of this world. But while we are here, we have to be in this world and as long as we are in this world, we will have to obey at least two authorities. The first and foremost authority is the Kingdom of God but under that is the kingdom or government or authority of this world.

So, as we continue our study of what would Jesus do, let's turn to the first Gospel, the book of Matthew, and let's see what Jesus would do about politics. And I know, I know, I know, some of you cringe at the thought of talking about politics in church. That's not our mission. That's not our responsibility. That's not what we ought to be spending our time talking about.

Well, let's define some terms first. What is politics? I believe you can boil politics down to doing what is necessary to order society. We want society, our neighborhoods, our country, our jobs and livelihood to be ordered, not chaotic. So, that's where politics comes in. It is through politics that we get laws. And as we have seen, laws are there to protect us and preserve order.

Now, what is the church for? Well, basically, in this context, we are to be the conscience of society. I've heard it said that you can't legislate morality and that's technically true. You can't make a law that makes people moral. But you can make a law that keeps people from acting immorally. I can't make you not want to kill me but I can make it illegal for you to do it. And the church helps guide the nation into what is moral. Of course, the church is here to provide support to Christians and to save the lost and to do and be other things but, like I said, in this context, we are the conscience of society.

Now, before we get into **Matthew 22:15-22**, I want to set your mind at ease in three ways about preaching on politics. Number one, some people are concerned about the separation of church and state. They think we might get in trouble by preaching on it. Well, don't worry. The phrase "separation of church and state" is not in the

Constitution anywhere. It is not an issue. I have a copy here of the Constitution and I have read it and so should you. And neither the phrase nor the concept of separation of church and state is in there.

That is a phrase that Thomas Jefferson wrote in a personal letter to some Baptists who were concerned about the state overreaching into the affairs of the church and Jefferson was assuring them that in this new republic that they were establishing that would not be a problem. So, that phrase shouldn't bother you either.

Secondly, some people are worried that preaching on politics will somehow make us lose our tax-exempt status. Nothing to worry about there either. It has never happened and only would happen if a church's sole existence was for the support of a certain party or candidate. If we changed our name to Harris Fellowship or Trump Fellowship, and only met to show our support for them, then we could possibly lose that status since we wouldn't be a church at all anymore. So, you don't have to worry about that.

Thirdly, some people are just turned off by the ugliness of politics and they hear enough about it and don't want to be told who to vote for and for whatever other reason, they don't like it. Well, I don't blame you. And honestly, to me, it's like preaching on money. I wouldn't do it if scripture didn't talk about it and I believe that this message might just go in another direction than what you might think. So...finally...you can just sit back and relax and let's look at what Jesus would do about politics by studying **Matthew 22:15-22**. Let's read that right now.

*Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. <sup>16</sup> They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. <sup>17</sup> Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" <sup>18</sup> But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? <sup>19</sup> Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, <sup>20</sup> and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" <sup>21</sup> "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." <sup>22</sup> When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.*

When you understand what is really going on here, you realize just what a masterclass Jesus put on here with His response. First, let's see who is here. It says the Pharisees sent their disciples to Jesus along with some Herodians. Not much is known about the Herodians except they were big supporters of Herod, obviously, and that they hated the Pharisees. The Pharisees had tried to trip Jesus up before and failed so they sent some of their supporters in their place. And they conspired with their enemies, the Herodians to do it.

The Pharisees hated being ruled by Rome and Herod was the leader there at the time so you can see why this was an odd alliance. And you can see the catch-22 trap they think have set for Jesus. If He says it's not good to pay the tax, the Herodians will arrest Him. And if He says you should pay the tax, the Jews will hate Him. It reminds me of the old Batman series of TV shows when the Joker or the Riddler or Mr. Freeze or whoever would have Batman trapped and they just knew they had him now, right? And then Batman would pull out a laser beam from his bat belt or something and get away.

Well, Jesus didn't need a laser beam. He just used one of their coins. He took the coin that was used to pay the tax and asked a simple question. He basically asked, "*Who does this belong to?*" Well, the picture and inscription were of Caesar so it's Caesar's coin. He could ask for it back anytime he wanted. So, in answer to their question, Jesus said, give it back to him. And it's important to see the actual word Jesus used. It doesn't just mean give, it means to give back. The word the Pharisees used was give. The word Jesus used was give back. And that's important.

I don't know about you but I'm not just real excited about our choices for president or for congress or anything else for that matter. In a nation of over 300 million people, this is the best we have? Both Republican and Democrat parties are full of liars, hypocrites, perverts and corruption. What are now called conservatives would have been far-left liberals just a few years ago. And whenever some politician is caught red handed doing something wrong, they might get a slap on the wrist but most of the time nothing at all happens to them.

It's frustrating. It's frustrating to me and to you and to every law-abiding American parent trying to teach their children right and wrong. And it was frustrating to Jesus. It was frustrating to His disciples. It was frustrating to those law-abiding Israelis who had to deal with a foreign pagan government ruling over them. It was frustrating to those God-fearing Jews who were trying to teach their children right and wrong. But that's where they were and that is where we are today.

Yet Jesus was teaching them and He is teaching us today that we owe the government something. We drive on government-funded roads and send our kids to government-funded schools and enjoy some measure of peace provided by our government and so we owe them our taxes and we owe them allegiance, at least up to a point. Does the government do anything like I think it should be done? No. Nothing. The roads are a mess. The schools are a mess. And our peace and safety are tenuous at best. But it was the same in the days of Jesus and He said to give back to the government what is the government's.

That means we pay our taxes and obey the laws, even those pesky stop signs, and we even respect the offices of those who are in authority. And, yes, that's difficult when the person is corrupt and evil. But just like in the army they say that you salute your superior officer because of his rank, not the person. That person may be horrible but his rank is to be respected. And that is part of what Jesus was saying when He said to give to Caesar what is Caesar's.

But here's the good news in all of this. Here's the hope. Here's the light at the end of the tunnel. Jesus didn't just say to give back to Caesar what is his. He also said to give back to God what is God's. I would love to have seen the face of Jesus when He took that coin. "Aw, it's cute. It's a cute little coin. Lookey there, it even has his little face on it. How sweet. That belongs to Caesar so give him back his little sweet coin."

Now...what is it that belongs to God? EVERYTHING! You belong to God. Your heart that is beating, your lungs that are breathing, your brain that is thinking, it all belongs to God. Caesar belonged to God just like Kamala Harris and Donald Trump belong to God. They are His. **Romans 13:4** says those in authority are God's servants. And God is in control.

So, we give our taxes and our allegiance and our obedience to our earthly rulers. Here ya go. Here's the little bit that I owe you. I will give it even though I don't approve of how you use it. So, I will vote to change how it is used but until then I will give it. BUT, I give everything to God. And just like we learned last week about money, Jesus said to be rich toward God. Thankfully He didn't say we are to be rich toward our government. But He said to be rich toward God.

So, my faith in God allows me to say, "*Here, gubmint, take this amount I owe you and I promise to be a good citizen and follow all the rules and laws **because** I know that my God is in control and so I give Him my everything.*"

I give Him my life, my money, my family, my obedience, my hopes and dreams and I will have peace and joy in this life in spite of the corrupt politicians and I am storing up treasures in Heaven for the next life. So, take your piddly and temporary tribute. I am a child of the one, true King and an heir to all of Heaven for all eternity!

I will give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and I will give back to God what is God's and I am the winner in the end, not because of what I have done or given but because of what God has done and what God has given. Thank you, Lord!

When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he was running hard for a second term in office. One day, after a busy morning chasing votes (and no lunch) he arrived at a church barbecue. It was late afternoon and Herter was famished. As Herter moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line.

"Excuse me," Governor Herter said, "do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?"

"Sorry," the woman told him. "I'm supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person."

"But I'm starved," the governor said.

"Sorry," the woman said again. "Only one to a customer."

Governor Herter was a modest and unassuming man, but he decided that this time he would throw a little weight around.

"Do you know who I am?" he said. "I am the governor of this state."

"Do you know who I am?" the woman said. **"I'm the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister."** *Bits & Pieces*, May 28, 1992, pp. 5-6.

One of these days all these corrupt and perverted politicians are going to get what is coming to them. They are going to stand before God and say, *"Don't you know who I am? I'm the president. I'm the governor. I'm the congressman."* And God will say, *"Don't you know who I am? I am the one in charge of your soul! Now go on. I never knew you!"*

How about you? Oh, you're not a corrupt or perverted politician I bet. You might even be a good person. But do you have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus? That's all that matters. You can. All you have to do is believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for your sins that the Father said was due. We are all sinners and we all deserve hell. But God loved you so much that He showed you grace by allowing Jesus to take your place. Ask Him for forgiveness of all your many sins today and allow Him to come into your life and change you every day to be more and more like Him. Do it right now as the music plays.