

# HAEBEA Home Worship – “Give to God what is God’s”

18<sup>th</sup> October 2020 – Revd Blair Kirkby

## Call to Worship

It was not Caesar who made the stars and set them in their cosmic ways,  
nor him who made the fish, the deer, the bird, or any other beast that walks, or swims, or flies.  
It was not Caesar or any leader since who ruled, or rules, in government who pressed His image  
to our hearts and thus created all of us with some wondrous likeness of Himself.

It was not Caesar who died one day upon a cross for all our sakes  
and later rose to show the power of Grace.

It is not Caesar who rules my heart, and bids it beat and work for Christ and Christ alone.

So, Caesar’s tax I’ll pay to him but keep the better part, the “all” of me,  
for Him who asks me now to love.

## An Opening Prayer

Loving lord Jesus, I pray draw close to me as I think about the life I live,  
and how you might call me to live it differently.

Every day, there are many decisions to make about how to use my time, my gifts, and my talents.  
Every day, I have to choose when to help, and who help, and how to help.

Help me, therefore, to use all I am and possess to do good

and use the coins I have to serve not one whose image is printed there upon,

but instead to give my all to Him whose image is printed deep on me. For I ask it your name. Amen.

## Our Bible reading Matthew 22.15-22

<sup>15</sup>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.

## A few thoughts about this text

I learned today that not long after President Trump took office he had a new presidential “challenge coin” made in his own honour and stamped with his own image. How could this be, I hear you ask, that such a humble man as Trump could do such a plainly pompous thing?

But then I learned that this was not unusual. It turns out that other presidents have done this too. His was bigger though, and thicker, and more golden. What’s more, the national motto was replaced with his campaign slogan. Check it out on the internet if you like. You can buy one still today for as little as £2.59, and you will have the added bonus of knowing that your money will be helping the Republicans win another election.

The line between politics and religion, it would seem, has always been a thin one and politicians of all stripes have always sought ways to stamp their images not just upon our coins but upon our souls. The Roman coins that circulated throughout the first century empire, are a case in point.

They were stamped with the image of the current emperor and they served not just as legal tender but as symbols of both political and religious power. The Romans claimed that their emperors were not just powerful men but gods, and there were good sound political reasons for making such a claim. It helped keep the masses quiet and subservient, for who would dare to challenge a god?

The Jews knew better, of course, and were so confounded by Roman coinage that they would not allow it to be used in the Temple. The sacrificial animals had to be bought though, and so money changers were given tables in the most religious place of all, so that they could convert Roman money into temple money. It was a system that may have worked for a while, but it became so corrupt that on another occasion our Lord overturned the moneychangers tables and vented his anger against it.

The question at the heart of our text today is, "What belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God?" Notice, Jesus does not say, "Don't pay your taxes," or, "don't trust politicians," or, "we don't need any government because we have God." He doesn't say any of that and so we may surmise that he may have agreed with St Paul (Romans 13:1-6) in thinking that governments, politicians, and taxes have a God-given role to play that requires our support. However, his statement to the Sadducees and the Herodians makes it clear that Caesar and God and not to be confused. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's" should have indicated to those were trying to trap him, that he did not think that Caesar was God and neither should they, or we. Leaders have an important function, taxes can fund vital services, but only God is God. Every leader and every tax are ultimately accountable, as are we all, to that same God. Coins which suggest otherwise will have no value in the coming Kingdom.

**Hymn: O worship the King** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dv2BqFgm6 M>

O worship the King, all glorious above!  
O gratefully sing his power and his love!  
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,  
pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might! O sing of his grace!  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.  
His chariots of wrath  
the deep thunderclouds form,  
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air; it shines in the light;  
it streams from the hills,  
it descends to the plain,  
and sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.

O measureless Might, ineffable Love,  
while angels delight to worship thee above,  
the humbler creation, though feeble their lays,  
with true adoration shall all sing thy praise

## Prayer

Gracious Lord, you have our hearts, our souls, our minds, our strength. In you we find our lives. In your will we find our purpose, to share Christ's gospel, to serve our neighbour, and do our part. Save us from the idolatrous allure of money and power, of position and prestige. Guide the thoughts and actions of those given positions of authority in our lives, that justice might be their goal, and integrity their path. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## The Lord's Prayer

### The Blessing

Loving God, help me this day to serve you well.  
Bless my words, my deeds, and my thoughts,  
that all of these may show forth my faith in you. Amen.