

HOW TO TRAP JESUS IN HIS LOVE  
Know his Word -- Hold him to his Word.  
Matthew 22:15-22

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

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Many of us may have used this incident from the events that are recorded of that Tuesday of Holy Week to speak about what the Bible teaches about the divine distinction between Church and State.

Concerning the Lord's Church, Jesus would tell Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor who represented the world's great Roman Empire: *My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.* In 18 The Kingdom of God and its servants who are the Church, that is all who believe in him, advance the Kingdom of God on earth by the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through these tools the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus in the one true faith.

But the Kingdom of the State is God's gift to humanity that is intended to maintain law and order on the earth. That is why the Apostle Paul also writes: *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ... For he (the government) is God's servant to do you good. ... This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him...* Ro 13 So when the Pharisees came with their "trick question" to trap Jesus with his words, Jesus used an object lesson to teach what we already know. He took a Roman coin, asked them who minted the coin and told them: *Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.* In other words, even though God gives us all things, he has also given us governments who are to serve God and the people under their jurisdiction.

But their question was: *Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar...* especially since the Romans persecuted the Jews and oppressed them. They were ripe with corruption, sexual immorality. They had abortion, the murder of the unborn. Is it right to pay taxes to that? Jesus' answer told them that it is not the responsibility of God's Church to rule the governments of this world, but to obey them. Because God's Kingdom IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.

Having said that, let us consider what these Pharisees were actually trying to do to Jesus. The Bible says that with evil intent *the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.* While their intent was evil, our Savior leaves us with the opportunity to "entrap" him in his love. We do this with God's Word when we KNOW God's Word and hold him to his Word.

More than all the immorality in our world today, the alarming rise in violence and terrorism, the disintegration of families and the traditional values upon which our beloved country was founded and grew into a world power, is the seriousness of the ignorance that people have concerning the Word of God. Because people do not know the Scriptures they are easily entrapped by the deceptions of Satan and the godless who have evil intentions.

Go back to the history of Adam's fall into sin. What was Satan's tactic: *Did God really say???* Ge 3 Eve answered correctly, at first: *God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden...* Ge 3 Satan then immediately contradicted God's Word: *You will not surely die, ... For God knows*

*that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.* Question, then contradict.

Those Pharisees thought that they had the plan to discredit Jesus with their question on paying taxes to the most corrupt generation of Romans. How could Jesus possibly condone paying taxes to Rome? Rome was in a moral free fall. Everybody knew that. They were oppressing the Jews, the people of God. They thought for certain that Jesus would say that they do not owe tribute to Caesar. By the way, when Jesus did not forbid their responsibility to pay taxes to Rome, you will remember that at Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate, the governor of Rome, one of the charges that they brought to Pilate was this: *He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king.* Lu 23

Today, it is alarming to see how so many who call themselves "Christian" have been deceived by words and teachings that are not God's Word. Marriage is no longer honored by most. Marriage is no longer the highest expression of human love between a man and a woman. How many know or even care what God's Word says? What's even worse is that so many who call themselves Christian may not participate in sins against marriage, but they do not know Scripture well enough to teach their children or grandchildren these things.

Also, note carefully that the Pharisees who came to Jesus with their evil intentions asked Jesus, not what does the Bible say, but for his OPINION: *Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?* What we know, confess and teach is not our opinion, but is must be and is God's own Word!

What do you say? Is the confession of your faith, both in what you say and teach your children, presented as your opinion, or do speak with the authority of God by knowing God's Word? People will often ask us, "What does the Wisconsin Synod say about this or that?" Your response should be not what does the WELS say, but what the Bible says. Don't fall for that opinion thing, whether it's yours or "the synod." Say, "Let's forget about the WELS. Let me tell you what God says in his Word." Luther's Small Catechism is a superior help to us in reviewing what the Bible says. If you don't have your Catechism anymore, buy one!

Without God's Word you will be trapped by Satan, sin and wicked people. Knowing God's Word, however, you will be able to teach them how to something amazing. Teach them to trap Jesus himself, and hold him to the blessed promises he has given us for our salvation.

What I mean by this is that God has tied his own hands with promises of grace and mercy which he will not, and cannot escape. In the Old Testament it is written: *God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?* Nu 23 And again in the New Testament it is written about Jesus: *if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.* 2 Ti 2 Even though godless evil men were attacking Jesus with evil tricks to entrap him, in less than three days Jesus would mount the cross to suffer and die as the Sacrifice of God to pay for all the sin of the world. Jesus didn't change his mind. God spoke and then God acted. *God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* Jn 3

One blessed example of how God's hands were tied, and Jesus was trapped into pardoning a very evil man was that criminal who died next to him on the cross. He heard Jesus pray: *Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing!* Instead of feeling sorry for himself for the judgment brought against him by the government, he turned to Jesus and pleaded: *Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!* What could Jesus possibly say? God had declared Jesus to be the Sacrifice, and Jesus had prayed for the forgiveness of all. So Jesus, based upon the promises of God declared: *I tell you the truth! Today you will be with me in paradise!*

Our own government takes a lot of taxes from us, and that money is being spent on lots of wicked and sinful things. But we pay our taxes because that's what God commands us to do. However, we also gladly give lots of our money in support of the work of God's Kingdom on earth, namely, the preaching of the Gospel. The ministry of the Gospel keeps before us the blessed promises of forgiveness of our sins as well as God's forgiveness for all. Our prayers are not just for ourselves but for those who have not yet learned of God's

power that has captured our hearts with the assurance that we are going to be saved through Jesus.

With these promises of God, clearly revealed in the preaching of the forgiveness of sins sealed by the blood Jesus shed on the cross, these promises of God clearly revealed in the water of Baptism which is God's own pledge of a clean conscience before him, these promises of God fed to us personally in the blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion, we are kept in that Holy Communion apart from all that is in this world. With these promises by which we are able to hold God to his saving Word, we will stand.

Never let Satan, the godless world, or even your own Old Adam ever question these promises in your life. Hold to God's Word and you will hold on to Jesus. Amen