



Notes for Adult discussion groups at
On-Line@9 Worship Service
on 19 October 2008

Two Sides of a Coin

Addressing the annual dinner of the Institute of Worshipful Company of International Bankers at Drapers Hall in the City of London on 24 September 2008, The Archbishop of York Dr Sentamu said: "To a bystander like me, those who made £190million deliberately underselling the shares of HBOS, in spite of its very strong capital base, and drove it into the bosom of Lloyds TSB Bank, are clearly bank robbers and asset strippers.

1. How much should Christians engage in political issues?

Matthew 22 v 15-22

The Pharisees went off and made a plan to trap Jesus with questions. Then they sent to him some of their disciples and some members of Herod's party. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you tell the truth. You teach the truth about God's will for people, without worrying about what others think, because you pay no attention to anyone's status. Tell us, then, what do you think? Is it against our Law to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor, or not?" Jesus, however, was aware of their evil plan, and so he said, "You hypocrites! Why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin for paying the tax!" They brought him the coin, and he asked them, "Whose face and name are these?" "The Emperor's," they answered. So Jesus said to them, "Well, then, pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay God what belongs to God." When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

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The Pharisees try to trick Jesus with difficult questions. They ask him whether it's right to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor. Today we consider how Christian people can relate to the secular state in which we live.

2. How do we "pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor", and "pay God what belongs to God"?
*Is this about money: taxes and stewardship?
What do we pay to God? - worship, love, service, . . .*
3. How far do we follow what the state requires and how far do we follow our conscience?
*Are there issues where you conflict with the state? How do you resolve them?
Steve knows of a peace activist who ensures her annual income is below the tax threshold so that she makes no contribution to the armed forces - comment?*
4. We can't live our lives in a faith vacuum. Are our daily lives and our faith lives really two sides of the same coin? Or are do we try to keep them separate?
*Does this mean keeping our spiritual life separate from our daily, secular, political life? Or are they intertwined?
What does that mean for us? Do we get involved?*

Jesus recognises the 'pressures' of daily life; there is encouragement for us in the story. Even though the taxes were paid in Roman coins and were paid to the Roman Emperor, ultimately they were still 'of God' - like everything else.

5. Are there things in your life that you want to be reminded are still 'of God'?

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