

October 19, 2008
 Messiah
 Pentecost 23 - A

Matthew 22:15-22
 "God is Above All"

Introduction

1. Who's in charge?
2. We look out over this vast creation, we see the changing seasons, the grandeur of mountains, and the intricacies of the human hand – and we ask "who's in charge of all this?"
3. Someone's trying to run a business, every employee thinks they have best the solution for every problem, there's no line of authority – and someone finally asks, "who's in charge here?"
4. We live in a messed up world: the stock market it like a roller-coaster, the presidential race has everyone anxious, nations seem to be at great unrest with each other, we have personal problems of our own – and we ask, "who's in charge over all this?"
5. And through it all – demonstrated in our Old Testament Reading, in our Gospel Reading today, and yes, today in our world in our lives - the answer comes down to this: **GOD IS IN CHARGE! GOD IS ABOVE ALL!**

I. **First of all – as demonstrated from our Gospel Reading today – God is Above all hypocrisy**

- A. By this, I do not mean God is the ring-leader of all hypocrisy – what I mean is this:
 - a. He's on top of it –
 - b. He knows what it is and He's not afraid to call it for what it is
- B. This is hypocrisy: saying one thing, and your actions show the opposite; or saying one thing, but your heart is somewhere else
- C. The Pharisees were hypocrites
 - a. Their very purpose in coming to Jesus in the Gospel today was to trick Him, to prove Him false
 - b. And so they come up to Him and say this, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way to God truthfully..."
 - c. Now, they didn't believe that for a moment
 - i. In a few short days from this event – they kill Him because they accuse Him of teaching and preaching lies – they are already setting the trap
 - ii. Jesus teaches that the WAY TO GOD is through Him, through His coming death and resurrection – but these Pharisees believe they are saved by their good deeds, their outward show of good works
 - iii. And yet – they try to charm Jesus by saying they believe He teaches the Truth

- D. The thing they failed to understand is that just as Jesus can see right through our hypocrisy, so He saw right through these Pharisees
- a. Jesus, being God, knew their heart and their unspoken thoughts
 - b. You see – Jesus being “above all hypocrisy” means that He knows it when it happens, and He calls it for what it is!
 - c. By nature – everyone of us is a hypocrite
 - d. We say we believe in Jesus, and yet break His commandments every day
 - e. We say we love God, and yet our love for lust is often stronger
 - f. We say God is first in our lives, and yet we are in debt and our offerings to Him are often times mistrusting of Him
 - g. Our hypocrisy condemns us every single day!
 - h. And God knows it, He calls it for what it is, and we stand guilty as charged!

II. But the Gospel Reading, then, turns a little political

- A. The Pharisees ask Jesus, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”
- a. Taxes – that’s one of the big subjects in our national election today – especially with the introduction of Joe, the Plumber
 - b. Who among us likes taxes?
 - c. The Jewish people, including the Pharisees, were under the control of the Roman Government, with Tiberius Caesar as Rome’s leader
 - d. Rome demanded taxes of the Jews
 - e. There wasn’t a Jewish man or woman alive who loved the Roman Government
 - f. And there wasn’t a Jewish man or woman alive who wanted to pay their taxes, their hard-earned money, over to the enemy, to Rome
 - g. Jesus is kind of caught in a quandary here, isn’t He? – at least, this is what the Pharisees thought
 - h. If Jesus says you must pay taxes to Rome – His own Israelite Jewish people will rise up and stone Him
 - i. If Jesus says you must NOT pay your taxes to Rome – there would have been an arresting Roman Centurion in front of Jesus before you can say “Julius Caesar!”
- B. Jesus does not play their game – He knows their trap, and in responding to their trap, Jesus speaks the truth
- a. And the truth is this: THAT JESUS IS ABOVE ALL NATIONS – He is the King of all the universe and of all that exists, including every power and principality on this earth, Jesus is over every government, and every political party
- C. Look the Old Testament Reading – Babylon had taken Israel captive for 70 years, beginning around 587 BC
- a. And now Persia overtakes Babylon – and through Persia, God allows Israel to return to Jerusalem

- b. God used Persia for His own purposes – and through Isaiah, God speaks to Persia and says, “I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God” – “I am over all”
- D. And even today – God uses nations and governments for His own purpose
- a. “Government” is not evil – for government is the servant of God
 - b. People can become evil and corrupt, leaders in government can become evil and corrupt, even Caesar was a crass unbeliever, a worshipper of idols, and a promoter of some very evil things, including legal abortions in Caesar’s day
 - c. What about taxes – no one wants to be excessively taxed, we become angry when we learn our taxes pad the pockets of corrupt people...
 - d. But for the things that are good: roads and bridges, hospitals and schools, fire departments and military protection, police forces and disaster relief – are these not good things from our taxes?
 - e. And so Jesus says to the Pharisees, “Show me the coin for the tax” – and He asked whose inscription was on it
 - f. They replied, “Caesar’s”
 - g. To which Jesus said, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”
- E. But in the end – God is above them all!
- a. God is above Rome, above Persia, above Russia, China, Iran, France, and the United States
 - b. And not only is God above all, He is the ruler of all – while people live under these various governments, God is the King over all!
 - c. He’s in charge – and while the world may seem out of control, and while this world is rampant and rank with sin and vile power...
 - d. Yet, while God may allow sin to go its course for a while – He rules and reigns over all creation
 - e. Even as we remember the words of Jesus to Pilate, in essence Jesus was saying, “Pilate, the kingdoms of this world shall end, but I am KING over a kingdom that will never end!”

III. When you boil it all down – when we assess this life for what it really is – we come to only ONE BIBLICAL CONCLUSION: “God is over all!”

- A. What was the core issue of the Pharisee’s question to Jesus? And what is the core issue of those who rule governments? And what is the core issue of your life and mine?
- i. Is it not the condition of our hearts and souls?
 - ii. The Pharisees were to be pitied – because their souls and hearts were corrupt with hypocrisy
 - iii. Government leaders are prayed for – because their rule comes from their hearts and their souls
 - iv. And as we assess our lives, it really all comes down to one question: WHO IS IN CHARGE? WHO IS ABOVE ALL?

- B. Look at how Jesus dealt with the Pharisees by saying, “On the Roman coin – whose image is on that coin?” – and it was Caesar
- i. But on your heart and soul – whose image is on IT?
 - ii. If we took a good and honest look at the image engraved on our souls – the picture would be pretty dismal
 1. We see the impression of music like AC/DC, Guns and Roses, P. Diddy, and many more
 2. We see the impression of rebellion like Bart Simpson
 3. We see the image of our stock market portfolio – as we think this defines us
 4. We see the image of all the sights and sounds of internet porn – and this has marked our souls
 5. It’s not a pretty picture – because engraved our hearts and souls is sin and death – and that’s bad!
- C. This is not the way it suppose to be: for when God created Adam and Eve – He breathed into them His image
- i. Impressed on Adam and Eve’s soul was God’s perfect image, His holiness, His absolute righteousness
 - ii. But we lost it – and gave it all up for the world; and we became hypocrites, power hungry, selfish, and spiritually mal-nutritoned
 - iii. In our Gospel Reading – it is just a few days away from Good Friday – and on this day God will RE-CREATE us all!
 - iv. On the cross Jesus will restore His image upon our souls
 - v. In His death and resurrection – Jesus inscribes upon our souls these words and this reality: “Forgiven! Saved! Redeemed! Free!”
 - vi. God, the True God IS ABOVE ALL – even as He hangs above all creation on the cross in order to restore all creation!
 - vii. And as Jesus rises from the dead, He ascends into heaven in all glory...
 - viii. And at your baptism – His resurrection and ascension was engraved on your soul → and yours is eternal life!

Conclusion

1. We get down about life, we become anxious about the world around us, often we feel out of control, sometimes our lives feel like they are crumbling all around us, and we cry out, “Who’s in charge?”
2. And as He hangs on the cross, as He rises from the tomb, as He washes over you in Baptism, as He enters your soul in Holy Communion...
3. God says, “I am in charge... I am in control over all things... In know every hair on your head... and I am with you always... I love you... I care for you“
4. In your life, be content, be confident, trust in the Lord
5. Because God is Above all. God’s in charge! Amen.

