

**God and Caesar, Church and State
(The Last Temptation of Christ)**

Matthew 22:15-22

Pastor Peter Hiatt

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This last fall, I received an e-mail from a friend of mine in our church. He'd just read an article sent to him by a liberal, gay friend. The article talked about disillusionment over the last election. Then my friend writes,

I am stunned by the complete and seemingly accurate portrayal of the past election from [this other] perspective. My mind races, thinking the intercessors broke through; Satan has suffered a great defeat. Yes, the intercession in this election has made an impact. Yes, there will be a resultant significant, strategic, structural shift in this country regarding moral issues, through the selection of the next several Supreme Court justices. We won. Christ will prevail.

However, I feel empty inside. Something is missing. In the corner of my mind, I can see a picture of Satan. He is licking his wounds, like a dog. Something is weird though. I look at his face, and see what seems like a smirk. He stares back at me. Then, as I look at him, the smirk changes as he studies my face. He seems concerned about something he sees while looking at me. I sense that he can not figure

out why I am not celebrating this apparent victory. I turn my head, I don't want him to see what is in my mind.

Satan "licks his wounds" and "smirks."
Why would Satan be smirking?

Matthew 22, "*Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk.*"

Now Jesus already warned His disciples in Matthew 16 to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. (It's teaching that misses the spiritual and traps us in the physical.)

"They sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians. . . ."

That's fascinating because the Herodians and the Pharisees represent opposing political ideologies. The Herodians were aligned with Herod and so advocated cooperation with Caesar and Rome. The Pharisees hated submission to Rome and were sympathetic to the Zealots who violently opposed Rome.

Saying the Pharisees and Herodians came to Jesus is like saying Barabbas and Caesar or the terrorists and politicians came to Jesus.

. . . saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men."

You're not a respecter of persons. Literally, "you don't look on the face of persons." You speak the truth instead of the party line. You don't judge people by their faces, male or female, slave or free, Jew or Greek, Semitic or Roman.

"Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test [tempt] Me, you hypocrites?"

Why do you tempt me?

The word translated "test" or "tempt" is "peirazo," and this is the fourth and last place it occurs in the Gospel of Matthew. The first place is Matthew 4 where Jesus is led into the wilderness and tempted by the tempter. You'll remember Satan tempts him with a pack of Marlboro's, the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue, and a beer.

Now, if we wrote the Gospels, that's the way we'd write them. But Satan is far more subtle than that.

Satan tempts Jesus with relevance, spectacle, and power. He tempts Jesus with 1) bread for the world (turning stones into bread), 2) spectacular signs and wonders (angels catching Jesus as He falls from the temple), 3) power, political power (all the kingdoms of the world)—relevance, spectacle, and power. (That's the way many of us would pick a church.)

Well, the tempter tempts Jesus three times in Matthew 4. Then Matthew records Jesus being tempted three times as the Gospel progresses. This is the last "peirazo."

It's politics, and, in specific, taxes.

If Jesus advocates taxes to Caesar, He'll alienate the crowd and be accused of idolatry.

If He advocates not paying the tax, He'll be charged with sedition and could face punishment.

Well, Jesus will alienate everybody. He plans to be crucified by the end of the week. So it's not like Jesus is scared now. He just won't join their argument or fight their battle. He won't be trapped by that temptation, but wow, what a temptation.

Verse 19, Jesus says, "*Show Me the tax money.*" *So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"*

The tax was a poll tax required by the Romans. One denarius for every person, but it was a denarius that was specifically minted for this purpose. In that day, a sign of a king's authority was currency. So when a king rose to power, one of his first goals was to mint a coin with his image, to express his dominion.

The Jews were required to pay *this* tax with *this this* coin with *this* image and inscription. This is that Roman silver denarius:

The image is Tiberius Caesar. The inscription is "Tiberius Caesar Majestic Son of the Divine Augustus." The coin was a graven image of an idol named Caesar who claimed to be the son of God.

First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make for yourself a graven image.”

At the end of the week, Herodians and Pharisees, politicians and terrorists, orthodox Jews and pagan Romans—all the powers—would join together to crucify Jesus, the Son of God, in the name of Tiberius Caesar, false son of God.

And now they’re asking Jesus if He ought to pay taxes to that Caesar.

Jesus could have rallied His troops, called down a legion of angels, and destroyed Herodians, Pharisees, and every Roman—all flesh and blood.

It must have been insanely tempting.

He was being tempted.

Remember Paul wrote that we “battle not against flesh and blood but principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness.”

In 1962, Hendrik Berkhof wrote Christ and the Powers and reminded the church of something we had overlooked with our modernistic mindsets. We had assumed that the Bible didn’t have much to say about things like economies, sociologies, systems of production, and forms of government.

Well, Berkhof argued that when Paul talked about “principalities and powers,” that’s exactly what he was talking about. “Principalities and powers” are the spiritual hosts of wickedness that inhabit and manipulate the systems, institutions, and governments of our fallen world.

So when John, in the Revelation, talks about the Beast from the sea, it’s more than just a big demon but political power manifested then as Rome or Caesar. When he talks about the Beast from the land, it’s more than a big demon, but religious institutions like the Pharisees. When

he talks about the Great Harlot, it's not just a big, sleazy demon that rides the Beast. It's global economy, dependent upon global, political powers.

It's not just a demon and not just an economy or government. It's a social fact inhabited by spiritual realities. I think they are the old pagan deities of race and tribe.

So the Nazis, for instance, were more than simply the sum total of their parts but social systems inhabited by dark, spiritual realities, even old, pagan deities.

I think that's why there are places in the Old Testament where God would command the Israelites just to wipe out whole cities or people groups. They were mercy killings. Those societies were utterly infected with evil. Yet the Israelites didn't have the weapons to extricate the evil and were in great danger of being infected with the evil themselves.

Of course, the story of the Old Testament is that they were infected. Zion and the fortress of Law could not protect them. Indeed, they turn on the Son of God and crucify Him on a cross.

According to Paul, apart from Christ, we're all dead and imprisoned to the "prince of the power of the air," following the "course of the world," which is to live by the "passions of the flesh," that is, the desires of the self.

The systems of this world run on self-centeredness. They're all about taking.

Yet, Paul also tells us that thrones and dominions, principalities and authorities were all created through Christ and for Christ.

So it appears the “principalities and powers” were created by God to serve God. But just like humanity, they’re fallen and under the authority of the evil one somehow.

Paul writes that we do battle with them. In fact, we, the church, proclaim the manifold wisdom of God to them, as if the Word we proclaim is a sword.

So the world is fallen and under the dominion of the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness. They either are or at least inhabit and tempt the government and systems of this world. So this world needs a revolution, but not just any old revolution.

Isaiah prophesied, “Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given and the government will be on his shoulders. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.”

Jesus came preaching, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” When He cast out demons, extricating evil, He said, “The kingdom of heaven is upon you.” At one point He said, “The kingdom is among you and within you.”

Yet most people would look around and say, “Hey, we don’t see any kingdom. Where’s the flag? Where’s the king? Where’s the country? Where’s the city? Where’s the building? Where’s the army?”

They could not conceive that we would be the army, be the building, built into a city (not made by hands), a heavenly country, ruled by a king who touched lepers and befriended the poor, and that His flag, His banner over us would be love, and that “of the increase of His government there would be no end.” For His kingdom will storm the gates of hell, and when the old world is dissolved by fire, His kingdom of faith, hope, and love will endure.

For this kingdom is radically different from
the kingdoms and principalities of this world.

So this revolution is far more than new slogans, new laws,
and new T-shirts covering the same old hearts.

The T-shirt may say, “Go Herod,” or “Go
Pharisees,” “Go Caesar-Tiberius,” “Go Barabbas,” “Go
Republicans,” or “Go Democrats,” “Go Israel,” or “Go
Palestine,” “Go USA,” or “Go Stalin, Hitler, or
Mussolini.” Yet they cover the same, dead heart.

In the movie, The Last Temptation of Christ, Satan
tempts Jesus just to settle down, get married, be a good
citizen and join the crowd but not die on a cross for the sins
of the world.

In our text (through the principalities and powers)
Satan is tempting Jesus to join the principalities and
powers, like he told Jesus in the wilderness, “I’ll give you
all the kingdoms of the world, if you worship me.”

Well, Jesus didn’t argue Satan’s prerogative in
making that offer, but He knew those kingdoms would still
contain the same old heart.

Even if they wore T-shirts that said, “Go Jesus,”
they’d ultimately be worshipping Satan.

So the Herodians and the Pharisees ask together,
“Should we pay the tax?”

Jesus says, “Show me the money.”

One of them hands Him a denarius with a graven
image of Tiberius and an idolatrous inscription.

The Jews had thrown riots over Romans bringing
standards into the city that bore the image of Caesar, and

now one of them produces the graven image and idolatrous inscription which he'd been carrying in his pocket.

Maybe it's not Jesus that's been trapped in temptation.

Jesus takes the coin and says,

“Whose image and inscription is this?” [On your coin?] They said to Him, “Caesar's.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. . . .”

Render, that is, “Give it back to him, then. If he likes this stuff, give it to him. It's got his name on it.”

You know,
the kingdom of God
is not dependent on Caesar's stuff.

And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

It appears that there are
certain things that belong to Caesar, and
certain things that belong to God.

We evangelicals tend to complain about the separation of church and state. Yet, historically the idea is traced back to Jesus.

During the last century, the famous historian, Lord Acton, wrote,

When Christ said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s,” He gave to the State a legitimacy it had never before enjoyed, and set bounds to it that had never yet been acknowledged.

Then he goes on to write, that guarding those bounds “became the perpetual charge of a universal church.”

By universal church he means the true, invisible church—all those persons under the dominion of King Jesus, the King’s dominion, the Kingdom.

That invisible church is hidden in the visible church, that is, the institution we call church... programs, budgets, buildings.

Well, the institution of church is separated from the state because the church is easily seduced by the power of the state.

The state is separated from the church because the state is constantly tempted to claim the authority of the church.

Judeo-Christian theologians throughout history have said temple and state or church and state should be separate institutions. But not until the United States of America have they purposefully been made so separate.

Philip Yancey writes,

It was an unprecedented step in history and a gamble that appears to have paid off: as historian Garry Wills says, the first nation to separate Christianity from government produced perhaps the most religious nation on earth.

That's amazing.

Yet when you're about to get crucified, legislation and political intervention look pretty good.

On Friday, Jesus will be crucified. Yet He still says, "Render unto Caesar, the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."

Well, the obvious question is, "What belongs to Caesar?"

Number one, taxes, at least. (That's a bit ironic since we evangelicals are known for opposing taxes.) You realize this particular tax paid for stuff like Roman crosses and the guys' wages who pounded the nails.

Well, we're to render unto Caesar taxes, prayer for governing authorities, honor, respect, and subjection.

Romans 13,

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear

of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

You know, Paul traveled through the Roman empire preaching the Gospel, and when he did it, he traveled on Roman roads. He spoke in a common language provided by the empire. At one point he even appealed to Caesar and traveled on his dime.

Paul was blessed by Rome and rendered subjection to a point... to a point.

Remember Paul spent a good chunk of his life in Roman prisons. He refused to worship the emperor, and he died at the end of a Roman sword.

So Rome was an authority, instituted by God for the public good... an authority, but a fallen authority. So Paul was subject to a point.

Theologians have argued for 2,000 years over that point.

Paul writes that governments have been granted the sword.

Theologians debate whether or not and how a Christian can swing that sword. Those that say he can, or should, say he must only do it on behalf of the government he serves, for if he, himself, “lives by the sword, he’ll die by the sword.”

So we render taxes, prayer, honor, and subjection, and, in America, we render a vote. Remember, the separation of church and state is not the separation of faith and politics.

Faith and politics or faith and anything cannot be separated. The very idea that church and state should be separate is a statement of faith. Everybody has faith in something... atheism, themselves, but something.

So love your country and do it with your vote, but everything you do should come from faith in Jesus. You are the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.”

Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and render unto God the things that are God’s.

So what are some of the things that are God’s?

1. Well, justice. Caesar can imitate justice, but *infinite* justice belongs to God.
2. Salvation. “Salvation belongs to our God,” says scripture. Caesar can imitate salvation and free people from physical bondage, but enduring freedom belongs to God.
3. Trust. In God alone, I am to ultimately put my trust.
4. Allegiance. I’ve been purchased with His oath, His covenant, His blood, His pledge.

5. Identity. God tells me who I am. “I am a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people,” and so I’m to live in the world as an alien and exile.

So what belongs to God?

Well, really, everything, even what I’m called to render to Caesar.

On Friday, Jesus will stand before Pilate and say, “You have no authority except that given to you from above.”

You see,

the principalities and powers,
the kingdoms of this world,
including the kingdom of Satan,
*they are not equal and opposite kingdoms
to the kingdom of God.*

They’d like to make you think so,
but they’re not.

So it only makes sense that Caesar will try to claim what belongs to God. As Lord Acton said, we, the church, must stand guard.

After 9/11, our government named our war on terror Operation Infinite Justice. They changed it a few days later because Moslem groups complained that only Allah can bring “infinite justice.” Well, Christians believe only Jesus brings “infinite justice,” and it looks really different than Allah or the U. S. Military.

To his credit, our president changed the name to Operation Enduring Freedom.

But only Jesus can produce “enduring freedom.”

I'm so grateful for George Bush in many regards,
but someone needs to remind him, only God through Jesus
operates infinite justice producing enduring freedom.

On the denarius it said, "Tiberius Caesar, Son of the
Divine Augustus." On all our money since 1957, it says,
"In God We Trust."

The rock band, Creed, sings,

"Only in America we stamp our god,
in God we trust."

That's a bit scary when you think about it.

I wish our money said, "You ought to trust in God
and not this money."

"In God We Trust."

Is that true?

True of the world's largest producer of
pornography?

Consumer of such a disproportionate
amount of the earth's resources while
others suffer?

Our money circulates the globe and is a symbol of
our economic dominion. I hope it reminds people to
trust Jesus who had no place to lay His head, who said,
"You can't serve God and money."

I've pledged allegiance to the flag, but it makes me
nervous. "Under God..." What does that mean?

Don't get me wrong, if I'm to take an oath to any
earthly country, I'd want it to be this one above all others.
But the thing is, this isn't my real country.

And if I pledge my allegiance to America,
so I can't criticize America,
I'm a slave to America, and

I can no longer bless America, and
America is no longer “under God.”

It has become an idol.

So Caesar tries to claim the things of God, and
Caesar tries to get us to fight his kinds of battles.

Because I’ve said some disparaging things about
George Bush, some of you just thought,

“Wow. Peter’s on our side.”

Others of you just thought,

“I’m so mad. Peter’s on their side.”

I hope I’m on neither side.

But when the Democrats are in office, I need to
preach against entrusting justice, salvation, faith,
allegiance, and identity to the Democrats.

And when the Republicans are in office, I need to
preach against entrusting justice, salvation, faith,
allegiance, and identity to the Republicans.

They’re both playing the same game, and
those things belong to neither.

You see,

Satan tempted Jesus with the Herodians and Pharisees, just
like he’ll tempt you with the

Democrats and the Republicans,
conservatives and liberals,
Presbyterians and Pentecostals.

He'll try to get you to render your worship to some worldly
 principality, movement, or cause so you'll fight some other
 cause

destroying people,
 yourself, and
 the cause in the process.

For we always destroy the idols we worship,
 even as they destroy us and all those around us.

If you love Bill Clinton or George Bush, don't turn
 them into an idol or you'll destroy them, destroy yourself,
 and bring destruction to this country. But pray that they'd
 resist the principalities in the name of Jesus, and that
 government would resist the temptation to play God.

Satan uses Caesar (the worldly powers) to try and claim
 things that belong to God.

He uses Caesar to tempt us to join his battles.

He tempts us with worldly battles so we'd wield his
 worldly weapons

enmity, anger, jealousy, selfishness, fear...
 that's the flesh in the power of the law.

Jesus stood before Pilate and said, "My kingdom is
 not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight."
 Christ's kingdom is not the Republicans or the
 Democrats. It's not America or Israel. It's not the
 Presbyterian church or the Roman Catholic church.

It may be found in any of those places,
 but it's not a worldly kingdom,
 and it doesn't advance through worldly weapons.

In fact, if you study history, you realize that the church has grown fastest and best when it's most separated from Caesar in places and times like

the Roman empire,
 up until the Emperor declared
 Christianity the official religion,
 and then barbarian Europe,
 until Christianity became the state religion.

Today it grows by far the fastest in China,
 where it's illegal.

It has grown fast in America, as well,
 but not since 1956 when we made "In
 God We Trust" our national motto.

I don't know if that was good or bad, so please don't get upset. Just ask the question, "Are we using the right weapons?" Could Satan be smirking?

Because,
 although we fight for the right truth,
 we've abandoned the way,
 and so abandoned Christ, who is the Way.
 And if we've abandoned Christ,
 we've lost sight of the truth,
 for Christ is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

He is how we fight.

Well, Satan uses Caesar to claim what belongs to God, and so tempt us to join his battles, so we'd wield his

weapons and drop ours. For we have very powerful weapons...

[A movie clip of Raiders of the Lost Ark is shown. Indiana Jones is confronted by an adversary wielding a sword. The adversary does impressive and intimidating tricks with his sword until Indy pulls out his gun and shoots him.]

That always reminds me of us.

Satan's trying to lure us into a knife fight through fear and intimidation so that we won't pull the trigger on the gun in our hand.

Christian, you wield a sword, but not a worldly sword.

For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds.
(2 Corinthians 10:3,4)

Do you realize that you have an immeasurable greatness of power in you, Church of Jesus Christ? Satan trembles in your presence. And all he can do is con you into wielding his weapons, instead of yours.

So render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's—taxes, prayers, some honor and respect, your faithful vote, and obedience to a point, even military service, if the point (who is Jesus) so leads you.

Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's—justice, salvation, trust, allegiance, identity, way, truth, life, the kingdom. "Thine is the kingdom," and so is the revolution.

Tomas Borge was a Freedom Fighter in Nicaragua. I don't understand the politics, and so I don't really understand what cause Tomas Borge was fighting for. But during the revolution, he was captured and placed in a dungeon. Chained to a wall, he was forced to watch his wife gang raped in front of him. Then they castrated him.

When the [war was over], Tomas Borge was released, and he was paraded before the cheering crowds of Nicaragua as one of the nation's heroes. But as he marched, he noticed in the crowd the face of one of his captors. It was one of the men who had raped his wife. Borge broke ranks from the parade, ran over to where the man was standing, grabbed him by the shoulders, shook him, and yelled, "Do you remember me? Do you remember me? Do you remember me?"

The trembling man pretended he had never seen Borge before. But Borge persisted and screamed, "I will never forget your face! I will never forget it!" Then he asked, "Now do you know what this revolution is all about? Now do you understand this revolution?" The trembling and confused man could only answer in his fear, "Yes! Yes!"

Borge responded, "No! You don't understand what this revolution is all about!" Then he embraced the man and

shouted, "I forgive you! I forgive you!
That's what this revolution is all about!"

I'll bet you a busload of Bibles that Satan wasn't
smirking when he saw that. For God's kingdom is the
kingdom of love. God is love, and so
the revolution looks like forgiveness,
and our unstoppable weapon is grace.

And now, if you're thinking, "Oh, great. I knew
that's where that pansy preacher was going. Doesn't he get
it? If you live in this world like that, you could get
crucified!"

Yeah, I think I'm beginning to get it. That's why he
said, "If you want to be my disciple, pick up a cross."

So render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's
and render unto God the things that are God's.

A few days later,
Jesus picked up Caesar's cross,
but rendered His life unto God,
and with it, all the sins of humanity.

And on that cross,
God disarmed the principalities and powers
making a public example of them,
triumphing over them in Christ.

Every kingdom, principality, and power
took His life.
And behold, He gave it,
He forgave it,
and made all things new.

He is our King

Ruler of our country.
He's who we follow.

He is the weapon we wield.

For on the night that He was betrayed, that night, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body, given to you. Do this in remembrance of me. Take and eat." And in the same way, after supper, He took the cup and He said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you in remembrance of me."

So we invite you to come, tear off a piece of the bread and dip it in the cups. The purple cups are juice; the black cups are wine. They're both blood. We invite you to come forward and join the revolution.

Jesus, King Jesus, You are the famous one. You are the one at the head of the parade, and every eye is watching You. Your glory is revealed in miracles, revealed in nature, but it's revealed by something so much more incredible. We're standing at the edge of the crowd, watching the parade, wondering if You recognize us, wondering if we're just going to be busted because we came to church, and You know who we are, and You know how dirty our heart is, and You know what we have done to You and the last and the least of these. But all of a sudden, You break rank, and You run over to us, You wrap Your arms around us, and You cry out before everyone, "I forgive you. I forgive you. I forgive you. Now do you understand what the revolution is all about? Here, eat it. My body broken, My blood shed. Join my revolution."

So, Jesus, give us courage, courage to walk with you in this world until that day when every eye does see You and every tongue does confess that Jesus Christ is King. He's Lord, to the glory of the Father.

And now, Lord Jesus, before we go, I want to pray for our president. I want to pray for George Bush. Lord God, I have thought so many times, "I would not want that job." Oh, God, the pressure that's on that man... We don't understand. We don't know. We're not in all the security briefings. We don't know what reports have come back from the intelligence agencies. We don't know which ones are right, which ones are wrong. We don't know all the things that he knows, Lord God. He has an impossible task, and no matter what, pretty much about 50% of the country's ticked off at him all the time. So, Lord God, we pray for him, that you would guard him. And Lord God, I pray that you would humble him. Keep him humble or make him humble, but not, Lord, through the voices of his critics, but through Your voice, through Your tender voice, speaking to his heart, reminding him, "George, I love you, I delight in you. You are my child. I made you." Lord Jesus, make him so secure in Your relentless and consuming love that he's not seduced by the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness. Lord Jesus, minister to our president, George Bush, and Lord, give him wisdom as he's charged with wielding the sword of Caesar. Lord, help him.

And Lord God, we pray for our Congress. We pray for the senators and the representatives, Lord Jesus, that You would guard them from the principalities and powers, that they would not be lured and seduced by the powers that would seek to draw us into ways of darkness and evil. Lord Jesus, give them wisdom and keep them humble.

Remind them, Lord God, that there is another kingdom, and the kingdom of the United States of America will pass away.

Lord Jesus, we pray for all of the soldiers and the policemen that get their paychecks from the United States of America. Lord God, we pray that you would remind them, as they wield Caesar's sword, that they have another sword, and that the sword that You have given them, those that belong to You, is infinitely more powerful than the little small sword that the U. S. government gives them. Give them courage, Lord Jesus, to wield Your sword when You call them to wield it. Lord, we thank you for them, and we ask that You would watch over them.

Lord God, we pray for Your church throughout this world, that You would unite us and that You would give us all courage to wield the sword that You have placed in our hands, knowing that You are right there with us. And Lord Jesus, the moment we leave this world, the moment we breathe our last breath, is right before the moment we inhale Your Easter. And so, Lord Jesus, we can have courage that causes the evil one to tremble.

And Lord God, we pray that prayer that You taught us saying,

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. In Jesus' name, we pray this prayer, Lord God almighty, amen.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" . . . From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." . . . But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. . . . Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The very stone which the builders rejected
has become the head of the corner;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes'?

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it."[†] When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. But when they tried to arrest him, they feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet.

Matthew 4:8-10, 4:17, 12:28, 21:42-46 (RSV)

Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of

men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test [tempt] Me, you hypocrites?"

Matthew 22:15-18 (NKJV)

And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" . . . But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. . . . And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Matthew 26:51-54, 21:63-65, 28:18-20 (RSV)

When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!" Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. . . . Pilate entered the

praetorium again and called Jesus, and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?”[†] Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world.” Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice.” . . . Pilate therefore said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?”[†] Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin.” Upon this Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend; every one who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar.” When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

John 6:14-15, 18:33-37, 19:10-15 (RSV)

“Show Me the tax money.” So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, “Whose image and

inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

Matthew 22:19-22 (NKJV)

When Christ said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's," He gave to the State a legitimacy it had never before enjoyed, and set bounds to it that had never yet been acknowledged. And He not only delivered the precept but He also forged the instrument to execute it. To limit the power of the State ceased to be the hope of patient, ineffectual philosophers and became the perpetual charge of a universal church.

Lord Acton

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

First Amendment

It was an unprecedented step in history and a gamble that appears to have paid off: as historian Garry Wills says, the first nation to separate Christianity from government produced perhaps the most religious nation on earth.

Philip Yancey

Ellul points out this lesson, one that the church around the world needs to remember: "Collaboration with power, whether Communist or not, is always ruinous for the church. If the church exists, if it is to have legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it must always stand erect as a counter-power to political power."

Charles Colson

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

Romans 13:1-7 (RSV)

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:18-20 (RSV)

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth

and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (RSV)

† And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. . . . To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; † that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. . . . For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:1-3, 3:8-10, 6:12 (RSV)

For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. † He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. . . . † And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, † having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the

cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him.

Colossians 1:16-17, 2:13-15 (RSV)

For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (RSV)

By the cross . . . Christ abolished the slavery which, as a result of sin, lay over our existence as a menace and an accusation. On the cross He “disarmed” the Powers, “made a public example of them and thereby triumphed over them.” . . . He “made a public example of them.” It is precisely in the crucifixion that the true nature of the Powers has come to light. Previously they were accepted as the most basic and ultimate realities, as the gods of the world. Never had it been perceived, nor could it have been perceived, that this belief was founded on deception. . . . The Pharisees, personifying piety, crucified Him in the name of piety. Pilate, representing Roman justice and law, shows what these are worth when called upon to do justice to the Truth Himself. Obviously, “none of the rulers of this age,” who let themselves be worshipped as divinities, understood God's wisdom, “for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (I Corinthians 2:8). Now they are unmasked as false gods by their encounter with Very God; they are made a public spectacle. Thus Christ has “triumphed over them.” The unmasking is actually already their defeat. . . . The very presence of the church in a world ruled by the Powers is a superlatively positive and aggressive fact. . . . All resistance and every attack against the gods of this age will be unfruitful, unless the church herself is resistance and attack, unless

she demonstrates in her life and fellowship how men can live freed from the Powers.

Hendrik Berkhof

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. . . . For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

Hebrews 11:14-16, 13:14 (ESV)

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.

1 Peter 2:9-11 (RSV)

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Lookout Mountain Community Church

534 Commons Drive, Golden CO 80401

Phone: 303-526-9287 Fax: 303-526-9361

E-mail: info@lomcc.org