

Semicontinuous

Exod. 33:12–23

Ps. 99

Complementary

Isa. 45:1–7

Ps. 96:1–9 (10–13)

1 Thess. 1:1–10

Matt. 22:15–22

A Roman Coin

Goal for the Session

Children will examine Jesus' answer to the Pharisees and work out ways to follow his words in their lives.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Matthew 22:15–22

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Susan Grove Eastman

Then comes the trick question: “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” (v. 17). The Roman tax referenced here was levied annually on harvests and personal property, and determined by registration in the census. It was administered by Jewish authorities, but it put heavy economic burdens on the impoverished residents of first-century Palestine. So if Jesus answers, “Yes,” to the question, he risks alienating the oppressed Jews of Palestine; if he answers, “No,” he can be accused of fostering sedition. Brilliantly, Jesus refuses to do either, and in his answer he shows what is truly “lawful”—that is, what fulfills the law of God.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Andrew Purves

If Christianity remains the cult of the private, the community, or the institution, it sanctions civil religion and ratifies the religious sanctification of society as it is. While eschatology forces Christianity to refuse to identify the present structures of society with the kingdom of God, demythologizing civil religion, the cross of Christ forces Christians to become involved in concrete struggle for public freedom. In the light of the resurrection of Jesus and the coming kingdom of God, we set death and present social, political, and economic reality in a redemptive perspective; death and the deadly systems that kill and dehumanize people are criticized and mobilized against.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Richard E. Spalding

When we look at each other, or in the mirror, we tend to see the inscriptions that our business with the world has left on us: you are what you look like, what you have, what you wear. Nevertheless, underneath all those inscriptions is a much deeper mark: the watery sign of a cross made once upon a time on the forehead, the image of all those children in the arms of their mothers. All those faces are a part of your face, when you begin to see the image that God sees, the God who, in Jesus, stands behind us with full faith and credit.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Marvin A. McMickle

Many issues speak to the places where this passage challenges the church today. There are devout Christians on both sides of all these issues. The question for the church is not whether we should or should not pay taxes. The greater question is, what do we expect from and demand from the government that is supported by our tax dollars? Not only that, but what does conscience demand of Christians when the actions of their government and the teachings of their faith appear to be in conflict? This has never been an easy issue, but Christians have never been excused from engaging it.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Matthew 22:15–22

Focus on Your Teaching

The youngest children in this age range have little understanding of the value of money. For them, you go to the bank or the ATM and get it. Children at the other end of the age range recognize that money buys things and can be used to help people. Giving to God may be too abstract for the children. Nevertheless, they know that helping others is an important way to show God's love and will approach Jesus' words with that perspective. This focus scripture can also provide an occasion to talk about giving to the church during this traditional stewardship time.

Generous God, show me the way to teach the children about giving generously. In Jesus' name. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- votive candle and matches or battery-operated candle
- Bible
- offering basket
- newsprint, marker
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- Resource Sheet 1
- variety of coins
- Color Pack 12

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils, markers, construction paper, glue
- option 2: Color Pack 13, children's pledge cards (optional)
- option 3: disposable foam plates, paper, fine-tipped markers, dull pencils, small paint roller or brayer, acrylic paint, spoon
- option 4: card stock, markers, bags or baskets

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, print the opening lines from Gathering on poster board if you have not done so, and save to use in future weeks. Print the response for Closing on newsprint. Gather coins from different countries. For option 3 in Responding, cut the strips of foam plates and paper. For option 4 in Responding, seek permission for the children to collect money, if that is necessary.

As the children arrive, play "The Whole World Is in God's Hands" (track 19 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Invite them to help set up the worship table with the green cloth, candle, Bible, and offering basket. When everyone is present, recall that the green cloth indicates that the church is in Common Time or Ordinary Time. In this case, it is the weeks after Pentecost until Advent.

Light the candle, and lead the following:

Leader: *During these weeks, we gather to praise God and study God's Word.*

Children: *We want to be faithful followers of God's Word and of Jesus.*

Everyone: *Loving God, thank you for our group and our church. May your Spirit show us the way. Amen.*

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle.

Show the group the coins you have gathered, pointing out the different nations. As they look at them, ask:

- ✠ What do you see on these coins?
- ✠ How are they different? Alike?

Show Color Pack 12 and explain that this is an ancient coin, perhaps as old as the time of Jesus. Ask:

✿ How is it alike and different from these coins of today?

Explain that a coin similar to the one in the picture is important in the Bible story today.

EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table, open it to the Gospel of Matthew, and find chapter 22. With the group, recall the stories they have heard from this Gospel in recent weeks (how to reconcile and forgive, the stories of the vineyard and the servant who owed money to the king). Provide visual clues, such as the word pages and Color Pack pages about these stories.

Helping children find Scripture references teaches them to find their way around the Bible.

Tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (A Test for Jesus). When Jesus asks for the coin, ask a child to hold up Color Pack 12. After the story, ask:

✿ How did the Pharisees try to trick or test Jesus?

✿ What did Jesus do?

✿ Why didn't the people trying to trick Jesus have anything else to say?

✿ How do you think these people looked as they walked away?

✿ What did Jesus teach the people about what they should give to God?

From the conversation based on the last question above, prepare to move to Responding.

RESPONDING

If possible, provide two options so the children have a choice. Select one that is more challenging for children who can work on their own.

1. Acrostic Poem The children will think through what it means to give to God as they write poems. In an acrostic poem, the letters of the first word of each line spell a word or phrase. Suggest that the children choose partners or match those with good writing skills with those less experienced in writing. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Acrostic Poem) and pencils to each pair. Explain they are going to write poems based on GIVE TO GOD, so these letters begin each line. Ask a child to read the first line that is completed on the resource sheet. Some children may be ready to continue on their own. If others are uncertain, do another line together. When their poems are finished, provide markers so they can decorate their papers. Mount them on colorful construction paper and display them where the congregation will see them.

2. Stewardship Activity Many congregations have a stewardship campaign in October or November. This Bible story provides an opportunity to introduce the concept of stewardship, giving to God, to the children. Invite a stewardship committee member to tell the children about how money given to God and the church is used, giving concrete examples. Show Color Pack 13. If your congregation provides pledge cards for children, try to have them to send home at the end of the session.

EASY PREP

If the children are stuck on a letter, suggest that it can be a letter within the first word. For example: "inVite others to church" or "rEad Bible stories to older adults."

- 3. Labels** The children will imagine how to use everyday items as though they belong to God. Give each child a 2" x 5" strip cut from a disposable foam plate, two strips of paper the same size, a fine-tipped marker, and a dull pencil. Lead the group in the following steps: 1. With a fine-tipped marker, write "This belongs to God." on the strip of paper. 2. Place the paper over the strip of foam plate and trace over the words with a dull pencil, pressing so the letters are etched into the foam plate. 3. With a small paint roller or brayer, cover the etched side of the foam strip with a thin, even layer of acrylic paint. 4. Place the foam strip paint-side down on a clean strip of paper. Rub the back of the paper with a spoon so the paints transfers evenly. 5. Slowly lift the paper from the foam strip. Talk together about how they might use household items differently if this sign were on them. For example, if this strip were on the television set, how might that change how they used it? Or if it were on a water faucet or a roll of paper towels?

Note: Make acrylic paint by mixing two parts liquid tempera paint with one part white glue.

- 4. Mission Project** The children will select an outreach project to support. Provide two or three projects supported by your congregation. Describe them so the children can select one. Talk together about who will be helped by their project. Make signs naming the project for the children to carry as they collect money following the church school time. If possible, keep the money so the children can count it at the next session.

CLOSING

Play "Let Us Love One Another" (track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021) as the children gather at the worship table. Light the votive candle.

Read the response for the litany from the newsprint together (*Give to God what is God's*). Lead the group in the litany, cueing them for the response.

When we see all the food in our cupboards, we remember Response

When we look at all the clothes in our closets, we remember Response

When we sit in warm homes in the winter, we remember Response

When we think about the love of our families, we remember Response

Amen.

As the children leave, say to each one: "(Name), God loves you. Show God's love to others this week."

October 18, 2020
A Roman Coin

Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 1

A Test for Jesus based on **Matthew 22:15-22**

The Pharisees were experts in Jewish law. They knew every law and tried to keep all of them. They were determined to catch Jesus breaking a law from God. Some of the Pharisees got together and plotted a way to trick Jesus. They sent some people to talk to Jesus. This is what happened:



“Teacher,” one of the men said, “we know that you are truthful and that you teach God’s ways. But tell us, are we Jews to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

Caesar was the Roman emperor. His face was on the Roman coins. Caesar claimed he was a god and he wanted everyone in the Roman Empire to worship him. The Jews lived in the Roman Empire. Caesar wanted the Jews, Jesus’ people, to worship him, not the God of Abraham and Sarah.

Jesus knew this was a trick. Some Roman soldiers were nearby. If Jesus said, “No, don’t pay taxes because we worship the one true God,” the soldiers would arrest him for speaking against Caesar.

But if he said, “Yes, pay taxes to Caesar,” the Pharisees would claim that Jesus was worshiping Caesar and not God.

“Why do you test me?” Jesus asked. “Let’s see the coin that is used to pay taxes to Caesar.”

Someone handed Jesus a coin. “Whose face is on this coin?” he asked.

“Caesar’s,” they said.

“Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and give to God what is God’s.”

The men who had come to trick Jesus had nothing else to say. They walked away.



October 18, 2020
A Roman Coin

Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 2

Acrostic Poem

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