

THE POLITICS OF JESUS
October 2, 2016 morning service
Mark 12:13-17

We are in the book of Mark for these five Sundays and there are questions that religious leaders have been asking our Lord. Last Sunday we were in chapter 11 and the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders asked Jesus where He got His authority. Then today those elders and chief priests and scribes sent some people to ask Jesus a second question and we find that in chapter 12, beginning in verse 13 where I am preaching on Jesus and politics.

It has jokingly been said that the word politic comes from two words in the Latin which is poly, which means many, and tic which means a bloodsucking – that is not correct, alright? So cast that out of your mind. Politics is very important. It's been a part of our world since government first was founded. We as followers of Christ have a dual citizenship. We are in this world but yet we are of another world. We are not at home in this world because we are going to another place yet we are a part of this world and we are to be as we often say salt and light and there are other influences that we should offer. So today I come to try to be offensive to everyone in this room and I probably will be successful.

I've probably had more people through my years here that have gotten angry with me about it when they say, "You preach politics." That's a rarity for me. We just preach the Bible and sometimes that hits on a topic that is political but rarely do we just dive into that. Our Lord got in it pretty heavy in this second question that he has been asked. In Mark 12, we begin reading in verse 13.

Then they [those people that we just talked about back in chapter 11, they, the chief priests, scribes, and elders, then they] *sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement.* [Let's just pause there. The Pharisees are religious Jews and the Herodians are Jews that would say yes to Roman rule so they're divided. The Pharisees and the Herodians were not friends. They did not run in the same camp. They were not bosom buddies but yet they were sent together to ask Jesus a question and trying to trap Him.] *They* [the Pharisees and Herodians] *came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.* [They were a bunch of suck-ups is what they were, sycophants. They came trying to butter Him up. Here's our question.] *Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay or shall we not pay?"* [Now the Pharisees would have said, "No way should we ever pay." The Herodians would've said, "Yes, we should pay," because they were partial to Roman rule.] *But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." They brought one* [and they laid it before Him.]. *And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him* [as they looked at it], *"Caesar's."* *And Jesus said to them* [in a verse that most believers know], *"Render*

to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.¹

"Lord, You're a great teacher. So should we pay this tax?" There were three taxes that Rome had placed. You see, when Caesar had divided Palestine, what was known then as the Holy Land, into three separate parts and he'd put three of his sons in charge. Then the tax, there were three taxes. There was the ground tax. This was on grain, on wine, on fruit. Secondly, there was what we would call an income tax. It was a one percent tax. Then there was this poll tax. The poll tax was one denarius for every person in your home above twelve and under 65. So when you became 12 years of age there was this one denarius that had to be paid. Every boy, every girl, your wife, the husband. The Pharisees and the Herodians said, "Should we pay it or not pay it? Is it lawful or is it not?" Jesus said, "Let me have a denarius," and they reached in their own pocket. He didn't have one. At least He didn't admit to having one. He asked the question, "Whose image is there?" You see Caesar on the money and his picture was on it and so the Lord would say, "Give back to Caesar that that's his. This is his money so he can call it if he desires, so render to Caesar that that's Caesar's." Then then he added, "Render to God what's His."

You see, friend, what's not said in this but is implied, while Caesar's image is on the denarius, the image of God is in your heart. You're made by the Lord and that image that's in you is not stamped on a coin like this 1887 silver dollar that I have in mint condition that was given to my daddy by his father, that was given to me, that is placed in my coin collection. On that we see that liberty that is there. It's marked, "In God We Trust." It's American coinage. That denarius was Caesar's Roman coinage. It was his to give back.

So our Lord says two things and we look at them this morning. First, render to Caesar. Now let's say some things about Caesar. Number one. When we read in scripture from Romans 13, we know that the state is ordained by God. Government is ordained by God. If you do not have a form of government, you have anarchy. Not every form of government is equal. There's socialism. There's communism. There's Nazism. There's democracy. There's a republic that we are in today but varied forms of government are founded across the world. They are there. We walk in a republic. We call it a democratic republic because there is democracy where we vote but it is a republic because we are ruled by a Constitution. If you do not have some semblance of order, you'll have anarchy. That's why someone has to say, "You can drive this fast but you can't drive that fast." That's why people set boundaries on property and you cannot come on my property and take my stuff.

It's amazing to me what we would set for our own personal property we are now arguing over about a nation. It's amazing. You must have rules, laws. They're not perfect. They're made by man. But without them, anarchy is there and man rules however he feels in his old wicked, depraved heart. Not only is the state ordained by

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God but secondly, state benefits call for personal responsibility. If you walk out there, there's a water fountain. You can get your drink of water today. It costs you nothing. How do you know that water won't kill you? Well because the state looks after that. Sometimes they put stuff in it you wish they wouldn't. Sometimes they do but it's pure and you can drink it. It won't make you sick.

How'd you get here this morning? Most of you came in a vehicle and you rode on a road that you didn't pave but together we made the roads. You see, the state benefits call for responsibility. Are we perfect with the water? No. Are the roads perfect? No. You run in a pothole. But you see, together we do that and because of the benefit there are responsibilities.

The number one question I'm getting these days about rendering to Caesar is of course in 37 days we all go to the polls. That is we vote. I have dear friends that will not vote for Secretary Clinton and they will not vote for Mr. Trump. They just simply say, "I cannot vote for either of those. I will either write in or a third party or I will just not vote." Well every American – people ask me. They say, "Can we do that?" Well sure you can. The question is not, can you? The question is, should you? What should you do? So you have to make up your mind.

For me there are parties to look at, there are platforms to read, and there are personalities to evaluate. All of those things are there. Most of us are affiliated with some kind of party. Most of us will not take time, though we should. I hope you will read the platforms of those parties and what those people have signed onto. Then it's the personalities and this is where the real rub is coming in this election because of the two individuals. You're like me. Everybody in here has said it. How can we have 300 million people in America and those are the two we get to choose from? You know, your momma and my momma would be better. So you say, "Well, it's just the lesser of two evils." That's not a good phrase, beloved. Don't use that phrase. You see, we all want what's best from our vantage point. You see, what we've got to come to is truth must override what we think is best. You've got to get to a truth factor.

For me there are five big issues that you've got to weigh in on in this election when you render to Caesar to vote. As an evangelical, as a Christ follower, remember dual citizenship now. We don't just live on this plane, alright? We live on this one too. So this one gets first priority of this and so this must regulate this.

Number one is religious liberty. This old land's founded on it and where we are in America, we are the last bastion of missionaries sending and the reason for it is because the church must be free. You must always side with candidates and parties and those that will lead you to allow you to have religious liberty so that this pulpit and your lectern and where you speak is always free and not fettered so that we can speak and preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Religious liberty is a big issue in our world today, to be free as the church.

Secondly will be Supreme Court nominations. Now what you think about guns and immigration and so forth is going to be very important because if both of these candidates live for the next 37 days and then the election comes, either Mr. Trump or Secretary Clinton is going to be elected the next president of the United States. They will immediately nominate the one open seat for the Supreme Court and there will probably be at least one more in their four year term and if they are elected twice, they will probably name five Supreme Court justices. This world will change for at least 50 years on the election that is about to come up. So you must look and say, "Who is the person and what platform and what principal is it where I need to go on religious liberty and on the Supreme Court?"

Thirdly for me is on the protection of Israel. I always look, "How do these people speak about the protection of Israel?" Number four is the issue of abortion. Do we make it more readily available or less readily available? Do we stand for life? Of course, Reagan had the greatest line ever about abortion. Everybody that's for it's already been born and that's true. How do they stand on these issues about abortion? And then the fifth one is the priority of the family and what the family looks like and the makeup of the family. There are many, many other issues. Taxes come into play. The immigration issue of course comes into play. There are a lot of issues that come into play. But now listen to me. If you want to know how I'm going to vote, you come ask me and I'll tell you. I had a lady last Sunday walk up. She said, "Pastor, you've always said if we want to know, come ask you." And I told her. I've made up my mind. I vote early and I know how I'll mark the ballot. I won't hold my nose. I'm not taking the lesser of two evils. I have a choice set before me and I'm going to make it.

But now listen me. I am told in America there are 30 million evangelicals, 30 million, half of which, 15 million, are not registered to vote. Of the 15 that are registered, half of them will never make it to the polls this year. Unbelievable that we would not go and mark a ballot. You mark for my candidate. You mark for another candidate. You write somebody in. You vote for a third or fourth but I'm telling you, you cannot sit this out and render unto Caesar that that is his.

Do you know that there are people around the world that would absolutely walk miles barefooted to get to a polling place to do what you can do easily and they're never afforded the opportunity? You must participate. You say, "I don't know what to do." Well come ask me and I'll give you an opinion but then you can decide. I know this is not easy but we must render to Caesar that that is Caesar's. That includes your taxes, your obedience to law. In our world you give honor to the authority even when you would disagree with the authority.

Yesterday I was in Tuscaloosa at a football game and it was homecoming for the people that went to the University of Alabama and the governor crowned the homecoming queen. When he stepped out there, there was an "ooh." Most people don't like him. Not in Alabama. But he still held the crown. He's still the governor. There's lots of folks we have differences with but you've got to be, no, not civil, you've got to be Christian. You speak truth but you speak that in love. There's a marvelous

article today in the *Harvard Business Review* about how to talk politics at the workplace. It's a cracker jack. It'll help you because, you know, you begin to talk about Jesus or politics at the workplace and you can get in an uproar in a hurry, can you not? So you've got to learn how to be wise in dealing with that.

That little article in the *Harvard Business Review* that's posted by the Drudge Report will help you with that. I read it early this morning. If I'd have still been writing on this sermon I would have put some of that in there. There was some good stuff that would help you on how to dialogue about politics. Render unto Caesar. Jesus said, "So give to Caesar your poll tax, your ground tax." But then He added, oh my, "Render to God that that is God's." The image of Caesar is on your denarius but the image of God is on your soul. Genesis 1:26 and 27. While God ordained government and those blessings are there and demand our responsibility, hear me that there is a limit to government in our world. As a matter of fact, the word limited government is often used. You see, we must say what the great apostles of the New Testament – when these things clash we must obey God rather than man. There's a day coming if the slide continues that this pulpit will have to choose to obey God rather than man. That people will listen and say, "God, man, government. God, what do you do?" And we will have to make a choice.

Now there's a word I want to take out of scripture today. There could be a thousand places I could go but there's one word that I want you to see that we must deal with as the church in the world in which we live. Proverbs 21:3 is the first place where I find this. To do righteousness and justice is desired by the Lord more than sacrifice. Righteousness and the word I'm looking at this morning is justice. Justice. Justice.

Isaiah 9:7 says it this way: *There will be no end [he's speaking about the Lord Jesus] to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with [what?] justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.*

Justice and righteousness. You find those words always going together. The word justice is used 28 times in the Old Testament as justice but then translated many, many, many times as the word right or righteous. Justice is just doing right. Do the right thing and then in Micah, that great, great old text. If you've not memorized this verse, you ought to memorize Micah 6:8. *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you [What does the Lord require of all of His people? Let's read those words out loud. What does He require? Here it is.] But to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* There it is. Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly. Let's look. Boy, this is a great, great way for us to deal in our culture when we're dealing with tough issues.

Number one. Do justice. Do that that is right. Secondly, love kindness. You've got to be kind so your neighbor's got a sign in his yard for a candidate you're not going to vote for. So what do you do? Steal his yard sign? No. You love kindness. You do

justice. You walk humbly. If it comes up, you ask some questions. “Why are you going to vote for XYZ?” Maybe engage them if you haven’t but be very, very careful in that regard. You don’t want to lose the opportunity over a ballot to share the gospel with a neighbor. Amen.

We always keep these two flags up here. The Christian flag. It’s on the pole out here. The American flag is on the pole. Eric Schaeffer’s daddy help me put those poles out there. He wanted to know why we didn’t have it and I said, “Well we just haven’t done it.” So he helped me pay for those poles. I always remember Jay when I see those flags flying. A lot of you have asked me the question. What is that flag flying underneath the Christian flag in the front of our church? There’s a small flag underneath the Christian flag out there. I had it asked of me three times last week. It’s only been up there a year.

Andy Andrews, my good buddy, came. Well he was my good friend. We had a little argument the other day and I think he still likes me and I’m trying to decide if I do him. Two weeks ago when Alabama and Ole Miss played, Coach Freeze who’s a dynamic Christian, Oxford, said he wrote every boy on the Old Miss team a letter and they were interviewing him on ESPN. He said, “I have it in their bedroom tonight when they get to the hotel when we play Alabama tomorrow.” He said, “I wrote a personal letter.” One letter but to every kid. He said, “My good friend, Andy Andrews, helped me write the letter. How we’re going to go and win the game tomorrow.”

I picked up my phone. I fired him off a text. Andy went to the University of Alabama. I said, “You can bought for any price, can’t you, son?” He texted me. He said, “They’re not telling that on television.” I said, “Oh yeah, they’re telling it right now on television.” He said, “Would you pray for me? I will be locked out of my own house tonight when I get home.”

When Andy came here to speak for us several months ago he brought that flag that’s out there. As a matter of fact, the very one that’s on the pole he brought and he gave it to me. It’s the flag of a green tree. It’s the flag, a replica, it’s the flag that General Washington flew going across the Delaware and the flag is there. The words on there are a call to America to repent and pray for revival. Can you imagine? President Obama today runs a flag up the pole on the top of the White House and says, “This flag is emblematic of praying for revival and spiritual awakening in America.” Can you imagine any president in the last fifty years doing that? No. Washington did. That’s why I’ve got it out there on that pole. It’s underneath the Christian flag. It flies right under. You can see it. Go look it up.

Then there’s the American flag. I pledge allegiance to the flag. Now when the pledge was first written it did not say the United States of America. It just said, “I pledge allegiance to the flag.” And to the republic for which it stands. One nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all. That was in 1892. In 1923 we added the flag of the United States and in 1954 we added – Eisenhower added and had Congress add “under God.” But it has always been in the pledge, “With liberty and” what? Justice.

For who? For all. Now not everybody in our nation feels like they get liberty and they don't feel like they get justice but hear me today, the pledge of allegiance does not say that we've always done it right. It says that it is the goal for us to do it right. We're pledging that we will work toward liberty for every person and justice of every person. That justice should begin at the house of God. That's what we render unto God Himself. Justice. Justice for every man.

Now I want justice not with God. I want justice here but I don't want justice over there. I don't even want mercy on the other side. Lord, no, I want grace. Amen? You see, justice is you get what you deserve. Mercy is you get less than you deserve. Grace is you get the opposite of what you deserve. I deserve hell. So do you. Don't smirk. For by grace are we saved. We deserve to die and go to hell but God demonstrated His grace toward us. It says while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Hallelujah. Sometimes I get less than I deserve. That's at my house. My wife shows mercy. Amen.

I don't know how it is on that screen. I do not have leprosy. I have spots on my face today. I had my annual dermatology checkup and they sprayed that stuff on my face. One is on my lip here. You remember when Isaiah, in Isaiah 6 it says that the seraphim took the coal off the altar and put it on his lips? That's the way it is when they spray that stuff on your lip. I'm telling you, I had Pentecostal fire when she popped me with that thing. I didn't shout glory though, I'm telling you. Oh my. Justice. Justice. Justice. Mercy. I wanted a little mercy.

You see, in our world here, every man deserves justice. Let's just be dead honest. We've got a real clash about justice in America right now and if you've never had a dialog with some of your black friends you should have a dialogue with some of your black friends about justice. You can say, "Well, right, wrong." I'm just telling you, it's what they feel within their soul. I've talked to good men. These are men that sit in the pew with you, they go to work with you, they're home when they're supposed to be, but there's a fear factor that is there. You need to listen to that. You don't have to agree with all of it but you need to listen to it because there's a hurt, there's a mistrust.

I'll tell you, when old Chief David Alexander spoke down at that 9/11 service I'd liked to turn to flips sitting on the stage. I'm telling you, that old boy brought the thunder about reconciliation to God and to man. You say, "Well he didn't have to fear anybody. I mean he's wearing all that stuff." Yeah, but he hasn't always worn that, growing up through it. You say, "Preacher." I'm not telling you what's right. I'm telling you what some people feel in their heart. You can get to right and have that dialogue but you're going to have to walk through their hurt in order to dialogue with them. That means you have to listen and talk.

I was walking last night by myself going to my car after a ballgame. There was a black gentleman and his wife in front of me and we got to the red light and he started on across like men do when the light had turned. She reached out and grabbed him and yanked him back. I put my hand up on his shoulder. I said, "Well, I was going with you

until she snatched a knot in your neck.” You say, “Why’d you do that, preacher?” Because I find it advantageous to talk to people that are not like me. When you can have a little fun doing it, it goes a long way. You need to have those dialogues because this justice issue. I’m telling you, it runs deep in the spirit of the black culture. Again, I’m not talking right or wrong here. I’m talking about the perception of what’s there. We’ve seen way too much of that. The only way you’re going to solve that is begin to have that kind of talk and dialogue and work, one conversation at a time, one department at a time. It can get better. It’s gotten a lot better than it was in the 50s. It’s gotten a lot better than it was in the 20s. We’re making progress.

The church has got to render unto God justice. You’ve got to do it. Kindness. Mercy. Give it. When you’re dealing with all of this, you’ve got to seek real truth. You’ve got to determine to make a difference. You’ve got to have a good attitude, a good attitude. You just can’t feel like you’re getting run over. Then you’ve got to talk to God daily about America. You’re to pray every day about America. Render unto Caesar that that’s Caesars. That’s your tax. That’s your vote. That’s your responsibility. Then render to God. What do you give to God? You give Him your life. You give Him your all. You give everything to Him. You give your tithe. Amen. You render. You’ve got that in your pocket. You give to Caesar what’s his. You give to God what’s His.

I’m telling you, if I didn’t have to pay my mortgage and tithe, that would be pretty cool, wouldn’t it? I’d have a little more money in the bank. But I’ve got to render unto Caesar that that’s his because it’s honest and I’ve got to render unto God because that’s kingdom investment. Amen. You’ve got to give your life. You’ve got to give your all. You’ve got to give your tithe. You’ve got to give your service. You’ve got to serve the Lord. You render unto Him.

I saw it this week. As a matter of fact, I put it on my Twitter account. Mark Richt got saved in Tallahassee when he was a football coach at Florida State University. Bobby Bowden led him to Jesus. He sat him down in the office one day and led him to Christ. He became a Christian. Coach Richt continued to coach and live for the Lord. Then he wound up at Georgia and was there for several years. Then he got fired and then they put him in the mission field at the University of Miami. That’s why God fired him in Athens. He sent him to the mission field. Hugh Freeze put a letter in the room, the hotel room of all those players two weeks ago. Do you know what Mark Richt gave every University of Miami football player before they played this weekend? A New Testament with their name on the front of it. Can you do that? Render unto Caesar that that’s his. You say, “He can’t do that.” Oh yeah he could because he put this caveat on there. He said, “Boys, I just want to give you a gift. Reading is optional.” They had the playbook. He said, “That’s not optional. You’ve got to read this playbook but here’s another playbook. It’s got your name on it.”

Those kids may never read that book but I’ve got a feeling when that crisis comes, they’re going to say, “You know, coach gave me a book. It had my name on it.” Oh yeah. Why? Let me tell you, you take this book right here. It’s powerful. Just let it

lay around in a hotel room and some old boy with a broken heart will open it up and sometimes they just – now be careful. Don't read your Bible like that. If you do, you'll open it up one day and you'll land your finger on there. It'll say, "Judas went out and hanged himself." You say, "I don't like that verse," and you'll turn it and you'll go like that and it'll say, "Go and do thou likewise." You'll be in trouble. You be careful how you read the Bible, alright? But thank God for a man with guts and grit to render unto God that that's God but render unto Caesar and put it in those boy's hands. Amen. It takes courage to live for God in Caesar's world but that's our job. We must live for God in Caesar's world. It's why God put the church here.

We've got to be involved but I just want to give you an encouragement. America does not hinge on who gets elected president in 37 days. America will rise and fall in how the church responds to the call of intercession and service in our culture. If you want to know how to vote and want my opinion, you come ask me. I'll tell you what I'm going to do because I know what I'm going to do. Some of you won't do what I'm going to do. Whatever you do, don't check out. Get involved. Be there. Check your box. If you're not registered, go do it. Get involved. Be a part.

Well, Jon, come on. I've been really excited about sharing a little bit out of my heart about this. I've just said, "God, I don't know what to do with this." But it was the next question and it was so appropriate to us. I may not have helped you at all today but the word of God will help you. Many have already been to this altar. Praise the Lord for that. Jon's going to just play the piano and we're going to fellowship with each other in a minute and I'm going to move out there in the foyer. If you're here today and you've never asked the Lord to save you, I'd love to talk with you out there in the foyer a minute. If you're here and you'd like to join Olive Baptist Church and be a part of our family.

Some of you are here for the first time. Let me tell you, I've been preaching here 26 years. I've never preached and talked about stuff I talked about today. I'd encourage you, if you'd like to be a part of our family, come by and see me. We'd love to talk to you about that very thing.

Hey, church family. I love you. Thank God for you. It's a good day in the Lord's house. We're walking forward. A lot of good stuff going on in this body called Olive. If you'd like to know the Lord, come see me. If you're not a part of our church then go right out there. Don't forget if you haven't turned in that deacon ballot you can give that to one of the ushers on the way out and just gather them out there, take them to the welcome table, that kind of thing. Many of you put them in the offering plate already so that's good. That's what we wanted you to do with them but if you haven't handed that in, make sure you get that to us.

Now I want you to find a Democrat or Republican and hug their neck before you leave here today, alright? Amen.