

Show Me The Money

A sermon presented by The Rev. Philip A. Rodgers presented Sunday, October 22nd, 2017
at Trinity United Church in Malton, related to Matthew 22:15-22

I was preparing this sermon in my usual way – by reviewing the Gospel lectionary on Monday morning, checking out all the commentaries and scholarly articles on the passage: when it hit me right between the eyes and early in the process. In reading the gospel over I came to that line where Jesus asks to be shown the coin. And my mind went immediately to a scene from a movie I recalled. The movie: Jerry Maguire.

Jerry Maguire is a glossy 35-year-old sports agent working for *Sports Management International*. Jerry is speaking to his NFL football client, wide receiver Rod Tidwell, one of Jerry's star clients (who is disgruntled with his contract and wants a 10 million dollar contract for his family to live on): well here is a sample of how the conversation unfolded. Remember Jerry Maguire is a man who knows the score. Still, there's absolutely nothing wrong with Jerry that a sudden dose of failure can't cure.

[Footballer Rod has just told Jerry he will keep him on as his agent]

Jerry Maguire: *That's, that's great, Rod. I'm very... happy.*

Rod Tidwell: *That's what I'm gonna do for you: God bless you, Jerry. But this is what you gonna do for me. You listenin', Jerry? It's a very personal, a very important thing. Hell, it's a family motto. Are you ready, Jerry?*

Jerry Maguire: *I'm ready.*

Rod: *I wanna make sure you're ready, brother. Here it is: Show me the money. Oh-ho-ho! SHOW! ME! THE! MONEY! A-ha-ha! Jerry, doesn't it make you feel good just to say that! Say it with me one time, Jerry!*

Jerry says: *"Show you the money!"*

Rod: *Oh, no, no. You can do better than that, Jerry! I want you to say it with me, with meaning, brother! Hey, I got Bob Sugar (another top agent) on the other line; I bet you he can say it!*

Jerry: *Yeah, yeah, no, no, no. Show you the money.*

Rod: *No! Not show you! Show me the money!*

Jerry: *Show me the money!* **Rod:** *Yeah! Louder!*

Jerry: *Show me the money!* **Rod:** *Yes, but, you got to yell it!*

Jerry: *Show me the money!* **Rod:** *I need to feel you, Jerry!*

Jerry: *Show me the money!* **Rod:** *Jerry, you got to yell!*

Jerry Maguire: *[screaming] Show me the money! Show me the money!*

It was quite a scene!

Rod Tidwell is not the only one who wants to see the money. We learned today that Jesus wanted to see it too. We read of this financial wrangling in the temple. The challenging conversation was laid before Jesus in the temple, possibly challenging him toward entrapment as he sat amongst the powers of the political and religious world. Present were the Pharisees who possessed some misgivings about the tax structure in Israel, concerning the practice of paying a per-capita tax to Caesar. With them, making strange allies to some of the Pharisees, were the Herodians. These favoured Herod, the King. They held firmly his reconciliatory attitudes of paying taxes toward the

Romans and supporting Caesar. Lastly, but not mentioned here, were the Zealots, who wouldn't give Caesar the time of day, nor a coin from the Jewish people.

Here we see that the conversation began with the group giving high praise to Jesus and his powers of perception. Then, likely having thought they had gained his favour, they pressed a loaded question. Indeed, it was a question that, when answered, would give all a foretelling of Jesus political bent. His politics would then be something to be held up, examined, supported or challenged. If our Lord said that one should pay taxes to Caesar he would offend those such as some Pharisees and the Zealots, both of whom harbored hopes for Israel's independence. If Jesus said not to pay... he would glean accusations. He would risk offending the Herodians, Herod, and Caesar himself. You see, the Herodians could have objected, for the coin itself not only carried the imprint of Caesar, but Jesus saw that the Roman ruler was given a divine title. The title was impressed on that very coin. After examining the coin, our Lord responded. He said to give that which belongs to Caesar to Caesar, and that which belongs to God to God. By answering in that way, Jesus countered the intended entrapment.

However, as we examine the response closely, we see great importance for the church. The words did far more than elude conspiring worldly powers. For us, it defines indeed worldly value as to what belongs to whom. If we hold the Caesar and Creator God as co-equal, one might interpret that the earthly, silver coins rightly belonged to Caesar or whatever other earthly power caused their minting and printing. This thought pattern concludes then, that God is interested in a strictly spiritual realm. Earthly coinage is beside the point.

But consider this. Given that our Lord sat in the temple as fully man and fully divine, I would question the claim of Caesar or any other finite power upon either worldly or heavenly riches. You see, I believe that all things fall under the province of God, including denarius, dollar or any commodities trading that trade on any stock market. If we render unto God that which is of God's making we see that all things belong to God. Therefore, Caesar can pound silver or sand into any form that he want but all raw materials are created by God. These things are simply placed into our care. That's what stewardship is all about!

Dr. Mar Aprem of the ancient Chaldean Orthodox Church of India tells a funny story about when a member of the church won a lottery worth 100,000 rupees. The woman went to the bishop and told him that she was afraid to tell this glad news to her husband because he had a heart problem and any sudden excitement could cause a heart attack. The bishop offered to break the news gently to her husband.

He visited the house and asked the man, "Wouldn't it be a good thing if you won 1,000 rupees in the lottery?" The man replied that he still would have to work to support his family.

"What about 10,000 rupees?" the bishop asked. The man still showed no excitement, so the bishop carefully raised the amount to 50,000 and finally to 100,000 rupees. "If I got 100,000 rupees, I would give half of it to you, your Excellency," the man replied. The bishop had a heart attack, and the man called an ambulance.

Knowing that everything belongs to God, we begin rightly. We know that we just tend the garden. Thus how much financial support any person provides to either church or state should be prayerfully questioned, calculated, and freely decided. All this needs be done so to first glorify our Creator God, our Redeemer, and the source of our salvation... and so we give as an offering brought before the throne of Almighty God. And finally remember... you can't out give God, but that it's okay to try.