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ORDINARY 29A

18th October 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Take a moment to be peaceful.

If you are able you may like to plant your feet on the floor and concentrate on your body being still (if this is hard then do just sit quietly and comfortably). Notice how you feel and what you are thinking about and let those things float away giving thanks for each even if they are difficult feelings or thoughts.

When you are ready: raise your hands open before you and give thanks for the moment you are in.

Pause

Place your open hands on your lap and consider all that's happened this week and what you might want to lay down before God, asking for help or offering thanks.

Pause

Lift one hand high in the air and think about what you will offer of yourself as you worship today.

Pause

Lower your hands and pick up your service sheet.

If you feel able offer the following prayer:

Loving God, I am here in this moment to worship you. Amen

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation which is known to you.

Readings: Matthew 22:15-22 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

This week, the reading from Scripture gives us one of the most famous sayings of Jesus: "Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

It is such a familiar phrase that we can easily miss just how clever, and provocative, the conversation actually is. The religious leaders and the Herodians come to Jesus with a question designed as a trap. "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

It sounds like a simple question, but it isn't. If Jesus says yes, he risks appearing to endorse the Roman occupation. If he says no, he can be accused of rebellion against Rome. So, Jesus asks them for a coin and there, in the palm of his hand, is the face of Caesar. "Whose head is this?"

“Caesar’s.” So, Jesus gives them his famous answer, but perhaps the most interesting thing about Jesus’ response is that he refuses to give them the simple political answer they are looking for. Instead, he asks a deeper question: what belongs to Caesar?

And perhaps more importantly: what belongs to God?

The coin bears Caesar’s image, but Genesis tells us that human beings bear the image of God. So, if we take Jesus’ question seriously, perhaps the answer is rather more unsettling than a neat division between politics and religion.

Give Caesar his coins, but give God your life, your compassion, your conscience, your relationships, your choices, your attention, your love, and your commitment to justice.

Because there is a danger in hearing this passage as: “Pay your taxes, obey the authorities, and keep your faith to yourself.” That, however, is not the only possible reading, and it sits uneasily with the Jesus we encounter elsewhere in the Gospels.

Jesus repeatedly challenges systems that exploit, exclude and diminish people, he stands alongside those pushed to the margins. He questions religious respectability when it becomes more concerned with rules than people and always stands on the side of justice, mercy and compassion.

So perhaps, “give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar” is not permission for Caesar to have whatever Caesar wants, but a reminder that Caesar has limits. Whenever a government, institution, church or political movement treats people as expendable, Jesus’ question comes back to us:

Whose image do they bear? When refugees are reduced to numbers, they bear God’s image. When people experiencing poverty are blamed rather than supported, they bear God’s image. When minority groups are treated as problems to be managed rather than people to be valued, they bear God’s image. When disabled people, older people, young people or those living on the margins are forgotten because they have less political or economic power, they bear God’s image. When our economic systems reward wealth while leaving others without enough to live with dignity, those who are struggling still bear God’s image. And when we disagree with someone politically, they bear God’s image too.

That doesn’t mean we should become passive or pretend that every political position is equally just, quite the opposite: Christian discipleship sometimes requires us to resist. It requires us to ask who benefits, who pays the price, whose voice is missing and whose dignity is being compromised.

It means that love of neighbour cannot remain an abstract spiritual principle. It has consequences for the way we vote, spend, work, speak, organise, protest, welcome and use whatever power we possess.

Jesus doesn’t give us a political manifesto in these few verses, but he does give us a profoundly political truth: human beings belong to God before they belong to any nation, government or system.

That means our faith should make us neither blindly obedient nor permanently oppositional. Instead, it should make us discerning.

Perhaps the coin is the easy part, the harder question is what we do with the lives that bear God's image, how we play our part in building a world in which everyone has the opportunity to live with dignity, safety, freedom and hope.

That is a much bigger challenge than paying a tax, so perhaps this week we might ask not simply: "What should I give to Caesar?", but: "Where is Caesar, or any other power, asking for more than it has a right to take?"

"Where is God calling me to stand with those whose dignity, voice or freedom is being diminished?"

Whose image do I see when I look at the people our society overlooks?

Where have I become too comfortable with an injustice because it doesn't affect me personally?

What small act of courage, solidarity or generosity could I take this week?

May we have the wisdom to know what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God. May we have the courage to challenge systems that diminish human dignity. May we refuse to let political difference become an excuse for dehumanisation. And may our faith move beyond words into action, into the messy, hopeful work of making God's love visible in the world.

Give Caesar the coin. Give God your life. And when you see God's image being diminished in another human being, don't simply look away.

Amen.

Hymn / Song

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

The Spirit of God is all around you, all the time.
The Spirit of God is flowing through all creation and throughout the whole world.
The Spirit of God is inviting you to join in with the work of justice, joy and peace.
In Jesus' name, may you step out in faith today. Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 19th October

- Opening the curtains, blinds or shutters:
- Take time to pray for the world and in particular those who live and work in your community. The shopkeepers, restaurants and bars. For service providers, hairdressers, beauticians and the Post Office. For health providers like the Doctors and Chemist.

Tuesday 20th October

- God of all grace, come into this space today, I pray.
God of all grace, be at work in my conversations and relationships this day, I pray.
God of grace, help me to operate from a principle of grace, rather than one of selfishness or human nature, today and every day.
- In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Wednesday 21st October

- Looking in the mirror: ask God to reveal to you what part you should play in their plan. What are your special gifts and graces? What in particular might you do today that would show God's love to others?

Thursday 22nd October

- Sit outside (or open a window) and listen.
- What can you hear?
- What do you notice?
- Listen for 5 minutes, breathing deeply and steadily as you do so. Allow all that you hear to simply be there.
- As part of God's world, we are deeply connected to creation and to one another. Consider how you are part of the world you hear around you.

Friday 23rd October

- Using the kettle, oven or microwave: pray for those who are struggling to make ends meet and for whom food and drink are not easy to come by. For those people where starvation is the norm. Consider what you might do to be part of God's plan to ensure all can flourish.

Saturday 24th October

- Today is celebrated as United Nations day, marking the beginning of the UN, after the end of World War II.
- Today, you might like to pray for all involved in seeking to make the world a better, safer place, and understand your part in that work.