

Isaiah 45:1-7

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue nations before him
and strip kings of their robes,
to open doors before him —
and the gates shall not be closed:
²I will go before you
and level the mountains,
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron,
³I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me.
⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.
I arm you, though you do not know me,
⁶so that they may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
⁷I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe;
I the LORD do all these things.

Matthew 22:15-22

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" ²¹They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." ²²When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Matthew 22:15-22, 2014h

Jesus has finally moved on from the temple where He really has challenged the church leadership, but some more leaders of the church and community come after him.

It is clear that the authorities want to get rid of Jesus and this is another plot to do so.

It is important to understand who these two groups are. First are the Pharisees and we have heard about them before.

They are the orthodox Jewish teachers who are the political quietists,

in spite of the fact they despise having their country occupied by Rome and paying Roman taxes.

The Herodians however are closely tied to Herod and Rome. They help facilitate and they support Roman occupation and the collection of taxes.

These two groups are normally at bitter odds with one another, but here you see them joined together against a common enemy, and by joining together in this plot and by asking this question they believe they can get Jesus to offend either Rome or the church,
either having the same tragic results for Jesus.

They really think they have Jesus boxed in when they ask this question:

Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not?

Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, to God what belongs to God.

Often this gospel lesson is used as a stewardship lesson to remind us to give to God, or more specifically the church, and in the spirit of that I want you to take out the largest bill you have in your wallet.

Look at the front of the bill.

Whose image is on it? Whose name, whose title?

Who does it belong to?

For those of you who are old enough to remember, the words “Property of the United States” was printed on our paper currency called silver certificates.

You won't find that on today's currency and that is a whole different conversation so,

suffice it to say that you use these to pay for the things you buy, to facilitate trade, to measure your wealth.

NOW, turn it over and read what is on the back.

In God we trust.

Now who does this belong to?

Now, keep your bill out and take out one of your credit cards, the one with the largest balance.

This you also use to make purchases.

At each end of each pew there is a magic marker. What I would like for you to do is to draw a cross on both the dollar bill and the credit card you are holding.

Now when you spend that money, or the next time you use that credit card you will have a reminder that they, and everything they represent belongs to God, and you can ask yourself,

“Am I using this in a way that honors my relationship with God?”

While there is a stewardship message in this gospel lesson, I believe that Jesus’ purpose is not solely to teach about stewardship.

Jesus is not concerned about the use of money in this conversation.

He isn’t telling the Herodians that the money ought to go to the church instead of Rome.

Nor is He telling the Pharisees that they shouldn’t pay taxes

Jesus is getting at the other point; in whom do you trust, or better yet,

to whom do you belong?

He is trying to get them to see that they belong to someone other than the one whose picture and title is on the coin,

and that the one to whom they belong has come into their midst

if they would just open their hearts and minds to see and hear.

There is a sense in this story that Jesus is referring to humankind as God’s coin bearing the image of God as the creation story in Genesis tells us,

and that humankind belongs to God just as certainly as that currency you hold in your hand belongs to the United States.

Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, to God what belongs to God.

And what does not belong to God?

In our Old Testament lesson (Isaiah 45:1-7) we are given a perfect example of something you might not expect belonging to God.

We hear part of the story about God enlisting Cyrus as an instrument of God's redemption for the people of Israel.

You remember this is during the Babylonian Captivity.

Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed,

and the people are scattered, at least oppressed and many enslaved.

But Cyrus was not an Israelite.

He was a pagan, a heathen, and a worshipper of the mythological god Marduk.

Yet of Cyrus God says this:

“He is my shepherd and he shall carry out my purpose... Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I grasped; ...I will go before you.”

And then God goes on to list the miraculous things he will do to prepare the way for Cyrus to redeem God's people Israel.

Cyrus is not an Israelite, but He was created by God and belongs to God, and God can use Him anyway He wants.

It is God who is the creator of all things,
and the possessor of all things.

It is God who created the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the coin Jesus held in his hand, even Caesar himself although he doesn't know it.

It is God who had created Cyrus and used him for His purposes in setting the people of Israel free from their captors.

It is God who created you in His image and created all you have.

To whom do you belong?

Is it God? Is it the currency you just had in your hand or something else in your life?

If we go back to Genesis chapter 1 we read:

27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

You bear God's likeness.

But you lose sight of that. You lose sight because unlike the coin in our gospel lesson that bears the clear image and title of the one from whom it comes, namely Caesar, you do not bear such a clear image of the one who created you.

You get to be like a worn out dollar bill that is hard to read.

You are supposed to be recognized as God's people. But that image wears off because of what happened in Chapter 3 of Genesis; humanity's fall into sin.

Because sin came into the world you bear only a distorted resemblance of God rather than the pure likeness you were created with.

So God fixed that problem also.

He has marked you with a new sign of His likeness, with a new sign to remind you to whom it is that you belong;
His Son Jesus Christ.

That sign is the sign of the cross you bear on our foreheads. It is the sign you received when you were baptized; when you were forgiven the sin you are conceived into, when you received the Holy Spirit and were reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life.

This is an unusual sign, this cross.

The world looks for the sign of God in glory and victory, but the sign of God you bear, the cross, is **the** sign of the weakness, suffering, suffocation and death that Jesus will face within days of this encounter with the Pharisees and Herodians.

There are many things going on in the world these days that bear no likeness or image of God.

There are many things that have no explanation other than evil at work in the world, and some of that came into our own community on Friday when a man shot his three children and killed himself.

You can only grasp a small part the magnitude of what happened there, and never understand. And yet, they were created by God, loved by God and redeemed by God.

You cannot see any purpose that God may have in much of what you see or experience, and that is because those things are not of God.

But I am reminded, and I remind you, that even in the midst of all this God calls you back to where you can see Him;
where your likeness of God can get polished up, where you can get photo shopped,
and that is at the foot of the cross that makes no sense to anyone but us who believe in Jesus.

God calls you back here to this sanctuary, a place in, but not of the world.

You can come here and again see the signs of Christ as you walk past the baptismal font as you enter and dip your hand in the water and make the sign of the cross, and be reminded that you bear that sign yourself.

You can gather around this table of Christ, come into His presence, and receive the meal of His body and blood in the bread and wine. You can be strengthened and nourished for faith and life because you belong to Jesus.

AMEN

15

To,te to,te ab (adj adverb)**poreuqe,ntej** poreu,omai vpaonm-p (verb part aor pass dep nom masc pl)**oi` o` dnmp** (def art nom masc pl)**Farisai/oi** Farisai/oj n-nm-p (noun nom masc pl)**sumbou,lion** sumbou,lion n-an-s (noun acc neut sing)**e;labon** lamba,nw viaa--3p (verb ind aor act 3rd per pl)**o[pwj** o[pwj cs (conj subord)**auvto.n** auvto,j npam3s (noun pronoun acc masc 3rd per sing)**pagideu,swsin** pagideu,w vsaa--3p (verb subj aor act 3rd per pl)**evn** evn pd (prep dat)**lo,gw|Å** lo,goj n-dm-s (noun dat masc sing)

poreu,omai impf. **evporeuo,mhnÈ** fut. **poreu,somaiÈ** pf. ptc. **peporeume,nojÈ** 1aor. **evporeu,qhn** *go, journey, travel, proceed*; (1) lit. (a) of going fr. one place to another *go, travel* (LU 13.33); (b) w. indication of the point of origin *depart* (from) (MT 25.41; LU 13.31); (c) w. indication of destination *go* (to), *proceed* (toward) (AC 1.25; 18.6); (2) fig. (a) euphem. and idiomatically **poreu,esqai** (**eivj qa,naton**) lit. *go* (to one's death), i.e. *die, leave this life* (LU 22.22, 33); (b) of behavior, *conduct oneself, live, behave* (LU 1.6); (c) imper. **poreu,ou**(**poreu,qhti** as a command involving a sense of mission *go* (MT 2.20; 8.9); Hebraistically, the ptc. foll. by imper. has a similar imperatival sense (MT 9.13); (d) w. **ovpi,sw** in the sense of seeking a close relation w. someone or someth. *go* or *follow after, act in the same way* (LU 21.8; 2P 2.10).

16

kai. kai, ch (conj superord)**avposte, llousin** avposte, llw vipa--3p (verb ind pres act 3rd per pl)**aúvtw/|** aúvtó,j npdm3s (noun pronoun dat masc 3rd per sing)**tou.j** o` damp (def art acc masc pl)**maqhta.j** maqhth,j n-am-p (noun acc masc pl)**aúvtw/n** aúvtó,j npgm3p (noun pronoun gen masc 3rd per pl)**meta.** meta, pg (prep gen)**tw/n** o` dgmp (def art gen masc pl)**~Hrw|dianw/n** ~Hrw|dianoí, n-gm-p (noun gen masc pl)**le,gontej**(le,gw vppanm-p (verb part pres act nom masc pl)**Didá,skale**(dida,skaló,j n-vm-s (noun voc masc sing)**oi;damen** oi=da víra--1p (verb ind perf act 1st per pl)**o[ti** o[ti ch (conj superord)**avlhqh.j** avlhqh,j a--nm-s (adj nom masc sing)**ei=** eivmi, vipa--2s (verb ind pres act 2nd per sing)**kai.** kai, cc (conj coord)**th.n** o` dafs (def art acc fem sing)**o`do.n** o`do,j n-af-s (noun acc fem sing)**tou/** o` dgms (def art gen masc sing)**qeou/** qeo,j n-gm-s (noun gen masc sing)**evn** evn pd (prep dat)**avlhqei,a|** avlh,qeia n-df-s (noun dat fem sing)**dida,skelij**(dida,skw vipa--2s (verb ind pres act 2nd per sing)**kai.** kai, cc (conj coord)**ouv** ouv qn (particle neg)**me,lei** me,lei vipa--3s (verb ind pres act 3rd per sing)**soi** so,j npd-2s (noun pronoun dat 2nd per sing)**peri.** peri, pg (prep gen)**ouvdeno,j** ouvdei,j apcgm-s (adj pron card gen masc sing)**ouv** ouv qn (particle neg)**ga.r** ga,r cs (conj subord)**ble,peij** ble,pw vipa--2s (verb ind pres act 2nd per sing)**eivj** eivj pa (prep acc)**pro,swpon** pro,swpon n-an-s (noun acc neut sing)**avnqrw,pwn** a;nqrwpoj n-gm-p (noun gen masc pl)

maqth,j(**ou/**(**o`** (1) as one who directs his mind to someth. *learner, disciple, pupil* (LU 6.40); (2) in a more technical sense *disciple, an apprentice*; specif. in the NT, as one who attached himself to a spiritual leader, such as Jesus (MT 12.1), John the Baptist (JN 3.25); (3) in a broader sense, a *disciple, follower*, one who adhered intellectually and spiritually to relig. leaders such as Jesus (AC 11.26), the

Pharisees (MT 22.16), John the Baptist (AC 19.1), Moses (JN 9.28b).

17

ei=pon vmaa--2s (verb imper aor act 2nd per sing)**ou=n** ou=n ch (conj superord)**h`mi/n** evgw, npd-1p (noun pronoun dat 1st per pl)**ti, ti,j** aptnn-s (adj pron interrog nom neut sing)**soi** so,j npd-2s (noun pronoun dat 2nd per sing)**dokei/** doke,w vipa--3s (verb ind pres act 3rd per sing)**e;xestin** e;xesti vipa--3s (verb ind pres act 3rd per sing)**dou/nai** di,dwmi vnaa (verb inf aor act)**kh/nson** kh/nsoj n-am-s (noun acc masc sing)**Kai,sari** Kai/sar n-dm-s (noun dat masc sing)**h' h;** cc (conj coord)**ou;È** ouv qn (particle neg)

doke,w impf. **evdo,kounÈ** fut. **do,xwÈ** 1aor. **e;doxa** (1) trans. of subjective opinion *think, presume, suppose* (MT 6.7); oft. foll. by an infin. transl. as a finite verb (1C 3.18); *choose, be disposed to* (1C 11.16); (2) intrans. *seem, have the appearance, appear* (AC 17.18); of having a reputation for someth. *be recognized as, count for, be regarded as* (GA 2.6); (3) impers. **dokei/ moi** *it seems to me, I think*; used w. dat. of pers. and an infin. to express one's will or pleasure *it seems best or good, decide* (LU 1.3).

18

gnou.j ginw,skw vpaanm-s (verb part aor act nom masc sing)**de.** de, ch (conj superord)**o` o`** dnms (def art nom masc sing)**VIhsou/j** VIhsou/j n-nm-s (noun nom masc sing)**th.n** o` dafs (def art acc fem sing)**ponhri,an** ponhri,a n-af-s (noun acc fem sing)**auvtw/n** auvto,j npgm3p (noun pronoun gen masc 3rd per pl)**ei=pen**(ei=pon viaa--3s (verb ind aor act 3rd per sing)**Ti, ti,j** abt (adj adverb interrog)**me** evgw, npa-1s (noun pronoun acc 1st per sing)**peira,zete**(peira,zw vipa--2p (verb ind pres act 2nd per pl)**u`pokritai,È** u`pokrith,j n-vm-p (noun voc masc pl)

ponhri,a(**aj**(**h`** only in a moral and ethical sense in the NT, of intentionally practiced ill-will *evil, wickedness, malice* (LU 11.39); pl. for various expressions of evil-mindedness *wicked ways, evil doings, malicious deeds* (AC 3.26).

19

evpidei,xate, evpidei,knumi vmaa--2p (verb imper aor act 2nd per pl)
moi evgw, npd-1s (noun pronoun dat 1st per sing)
to. o` dans (def art acc neut sing)
no,misma no,misma n-an-s (noun acc neut sing)
tou/ o` dgms (def art gen masc sing)
kh,nsou kh/nsoj n-gm-s (noun gen masc sing)
oi` o` dnmp+ (def art nom masc pl (see context))
de. de, ch (conj superord)
prosh,negkan prosfe,rw viaa--3p (verb ind aor act 3rd per pl)
auvtw/| auvto,j npdm3s (noun pronoun dat masc 3rd per sing)
dhna,rion dhna,rion n-an-s (noun acc neut sing)

evpidei,knumi 1aor. **evpe,deixa** lit. as causing to be seen *show, exhibit, demonstrate* (MT 16.1); fig. as proving to be true *show beyond a doubt, prove, demonstrate convincingly* (AC 18.28).

20

kai. kai, ch (conj superord)
le,gei le,gw vipa--3s (verb ind pres act 3rd per sing)
auvtou/j(auvto,j npdm3p (noun pronoun dat masc 3rd per pl)
Ti,noj ti,j aptgm-s (adj pron interrog gen masc sing)
h` o` dnfs (def art nom fem sing)
eivkw.n eivkw,n n-nf-s (noun nom fem sing)
au[th ou-toj a-dnf-s (adj demonstr nom fem sing)
kai. kai, cc (conj coord)
h` o` dnfs (def art nom fem sing)
evpigrafh,È evpigrafh, n-nf-s (noun nom fem sing)

eivkw,n(o,noj(h` (1) as an artistic representation, such as is on a coin or statue *image, likeness* (MT 22.20); (2) as an embodiment or living manifestation of God *form, appearance* (CO 1.15); (3) as a visible manifestation of an invisible and heavenly reality *form, substance* (HE 10.1).

21

le,gousin le,gw vipa--3p (verb ind pres act 3rd per pl)**aútw/|**(aúto,j npdm3s (noun pronoun dat masc 3rd per sing)**Kai,saroj** Kai/sar n-gm-s (noun gen masc sing)**to,te** to,te ab (adj adverb)**le,gei** le,gw vipa--3s (verb ind pres act 3rd per sing)**aútoi/j**(aúto,j npdm3p (noun pronoun dat masc 3rd per pl)**V**Apo,dote avpodi,dwmi vmaa--2p (verb imper aor act 2nd per pl)**ou=n** ou=n ch (conj superord)**ta.** o` danp+ (def art acc neut pl (see context))**Kai,saroj** Kai/sar n-gm-s (noun gen masc sing)**Kai,sari** Kai/sar n-dm-s (noun dat masc sing)**kai.** kai, cc (conj coord)**ta.** o` danp+ (def art acc neut pl (see context))**tou/** o` dgms (def art gen masc sing)**qeou/** qeo,j n-gm-s (noun gen masc sing)**tw/|** o` ddms (def art dat masc sing)**qew/|** qeo,j n-dm-s (noun dat masc sing)

Kai/sar(**arój**(**h`** *Caesar*, orig. a surname of Julius Caesar, later taken as a title by the chief Roman ruler *the emperor*.)

22

kai. kai, ch (conj superord)**avkou,santej** avkou,w vpaanm-p (verb part aor act nom masc pl)**evqau,masan**(qauma,zw viaa--3p (verb ind aor act 3rd per pl)**kai.** kai, cc (conj coord)**avfe,ntej** avfi,hmi vpaanm-p (verb part aor act nom masc pl)**aúto.n** aúto,j npam3s (noun pronoun acc masc 3rd per sing)**avph/lqan** avpe,rcomai viaa--3p (verb ind aor act 3rd per pl)**avkou,w** fut. **avkou,sw** and **avkou,somai**È 1aor. **h;kousa**È pf. **avkh,koa**È 1aor.

pass. **hvkou,sqhn** *hear, listen to*; (1) foll. by the gen. to indicate sense perception *hear* (AC 9.7); (2) foll. by the acc. to indicate understanding of what was said *hear* (AC 9.4); (3) as a legal t.t. *give a hearing, grant a court trial* (JN 7.51); (4) of being informed about someth. *learn or hear (of)* (MT 14.13); (5) impers.

avkou,etai *it is reported* (1C 5.1); (6) of discipleship *listen to, pay attention to,*

obey (LU 9.35); (7) of inner comprehension *understand, be aware of, listen to* (GA 4.21).