



## UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

---

Office: (306) 752-2288 Email: [melfortuc@sasktel.net](mailto:melfortuc@sasktel.net)

Website: [www.melfortunitedchurch.com](http://www.melfortunitedchurch.com)

Worship Time: 10:30 AM

Ministers: All of us

Worship Leader: Kim Eskowich

Music: Jodie Allen

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter: Glenn George

Scripture Reader: Jeanette Stevenson

### ORDER OF WORSHIP

October 18, 2020

Twentieth after Pentecost, Year A

*[World Food Sunday]*

### WE GATHER AS A COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

*As we gather for worship today we acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 Territory. We honour the Cree and Métis people for whom this place has been a homeland for thousands of years. We respect the sacredness of our home and the ground on which we walk and we are grateful to gather here in peace and hope.*

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS, ANNIVERSARIES & CONCERNS:**

#### **CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Behold, Loving God, these people are your people.

**At your calling, we have gathered; by your leading, we have arrived at this place and time.**

As you have promised, your presence is with us;

**and we seek your renewal and rest.**

Make yourself known to us, Holy Love.

**Come, Divine Life, be with us as we worship.**

**OPENING PRAYER:** *(in unison)*

**Where are you, God?**

**We long to see you.**

**We long to feel you near.**

**We long to be confident of your presence and  
accompaniment.**

**We bring our whole selves to this time of discernment  
and prayer.**

**See in our faces your creative genius, and hear in our prayers  
and songs your melodies of life.**

**Guide and nurture us, we pray. Amen.**

**HYMN (MV 161)** *"I Have Called You by Your Name"*

**PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE:** *(in unison)*

**Loving God,**

**we have looked for you in the wrong places,  
and have missed your presence when it has been right here.**

**We have created gods out of powers and principalities;  
we have bowed before wealth and privilege;  
and we have admired the external glamour that comes with  
excess and easy access.**

**But we have missed your presence in meekness and  
diversity;  
we have walked right past your essence in mutual need and  
interdependence;  
and we have neglected to notice the divine beauty of internal  
grace and shared love.**

**Forgive us, we pray and help us to see you all around.**

**Free us from our bondage to fear and greed.**

**Reveal yourself in all your glory and guide us in the ways  
of mercy and goodness.**

**Teach us to see, hear, feel, and know your presence today  
and always. Amen.**

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE:**

Know that the Divine is present in every breath we take,  
every kindness we share, every glory we witness,

and every beauty we embrace. Be assured of God's forgiveness just as we can be assured of the sun rising each morning.

## **PRAYER RESPONSE (MV 182) *"Grateful"***

### **WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD TO US**

#### **ESPECIALLY FOR THE CHILDREN:**

**HYMN (VU 289) *"It Only Takes a Spark"***

#### **MINUTE FOR MISSION:**

#### **INVITATION TO SUNDAY SCHOOL:**

Now children - please leave the sanctuary and join Rachelle downstairs for Sunday School.

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER:**

**HYMN (VU 374) *"Come and Find the Quiet Centre"***

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS:**

#### **RESPONSORIAL READING:**

**PSALM 99** (VU p. 819)  
*God is a ruler who delights in justice.*

#### **HEBREW READING:**

**EXODUS 33:12-23**  
*God speaks to Moses face to face as a friend.*

#### **EPISTLE READING:**

**1 THESSALONIANS 1: 1-10**  
*We always give thanks God for you.*

#### **GOSPEL READING:**

**MATTHEW 22:15-22**  
*Give to God the things that are God's.*

## SERMON:

What belongs to God must be given to God –  
Matthew 22:15-22

So while looking for a sermon to discuss today's gospel reading it was suggested to look for another one because the message might come across as just asking for money! It was noted that some of the bible commentaries ignore it completely and there isn't even a hymn in Voices United that is based on it. It was suggested that I read the passage from Matthew and use it as my message and you will begin to see another meaning in the verses.

I think one of the things that makes this reading harder to understand is that part of it is so well known. How many people know the saying, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars"?

The reading is quite complex and intricate for such a short amount of words. Yet in it we will find conspiracy and cunning, plans and alliances, traps and escapes. The story starts with the Jewish church leaders looking for some way to get rid of Jesus. They know that they do not have any power to do anything to him themselves, except flog him which might just have made Jesus more popular. So they tried to find ways to get him to say something against the Romans so they will be forced to do something. This has a small problem. A lot of the ordinary people regarded Jesus as a prophet.

So they come up with a plan, and they see no reason why it won't work. As is often the case, these leaders are not willing to take a chance themselves, or to show which side they are on, and they get others to do their dirty work.

This is their plan. There were two main groups arguing against each other at that time. One was the Herodians. These were not a church group but a group of Jewish people who supported Herod and wanted closer and better ties with more. They supported Roman taxation, believed it was only right that every one pay taxes. This tax was not based on income but was like a poll tax, something that everyone had to pay, which meant that the poor paid a much larger share than the rich.

The other group was the Pharisees. This group was a religious group and they objected strenuously against paying anything to more. They based this claim on the fact the tax had to be

paid in Roman coins which had an image of Caesar on them. They refused to pay anything except the temple tax, which was paid in Jewish shekels.

It is quite hard to see how two such opposing forces could work together, but they did. They had, in fact, been working together and trying for some time to come up with an idea. The Pharisees and the Herodians had started plotting together when Jesus had healed a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath. The way Jesus spoke then stopped them from taking action, but now they thought that they had a foolproof plan. They thought they had a question that no matter what Jesus answered, he would condemn himself. The question was "Is right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

The conspirators thought there were only two possible answers. Yes, it is right to pay taxes or no it is not right. Either answer would condemn Jesus. If Jesus were to say it was wrong to pay taxes, then he would prove he was against more. The Jewish leaders would be able to say Jesus had shown himself to be a revolutionary and he could be handed over for trial and execution. Either result would please those who put this plan into action. Whatever happened, Jesus would be out of the way and they would not get the blame for it. They must have felt really pleased with their cunning plan.

So they sent off their (Luke, in his version, calls them spies) to set up Jesus. Their first action was to try and flatter Jesus and lull him into a false sense of security. They say that they know Jesus to be a man of integrity who would not say anything just because it was easy or convenient, but would speak fairly and honestly. Then they ask their question.

I bet they smiled to themselves and thought "gotcha!" as they waited for an answer. Before he gave an answer, he asked to see a Roman coin. One was presented straight away. This showed the hypocrisy of objecting to Roman coins, when they were in common usage. He then asked whose image and inscription was on it. This was a good question, because at that time, any item with a person's stamp or inscription on it belonged to that person.

Therefore the coin belonged to Caesar. So if it belongs to Caesar, then give it to him. But there was another part to the answer. But also give to God what is God's.

It seems the most perfect and simple answer and it certainly put a stop to the Pharisees and Herodians plans. Yet, when did

Jesus ever say something that did not have a lesson, or message in it? This passage is no different. The message in his answer was valid then, and is still valid today.

The message is; first, there is no reason why government and church cannot work alongside each other to improve the lives of those they serve. Indeed they should.

Secondly, when we have a structure, such as government, to administer and run the laws of the land, then it is right that we pay for that support and protection. Israel at that time, was under Roman rule but it was not all bad. They had lost their independence but had also gained much. For example, they had roads, peace and security. The Jewish church was allowed to keep going and people could still worship as they wanted. So it was right for people to pay taxes -- using the coin with the government's stamp on it.

Thirdly, we give to God that which is his. But what do we give to God? What is it that has the stamp or mark of God on it? The answer is -- we do! We were made in the image of God and bear his mark!

So we give our taxes to the government and ourselves to God! There is no conflict in this. We must act in accordance with God's law. The state only exists in this world; God's law exists in this world and the next.

This story happened over 2000 years ago. What could it mean today when so much has changed? But has it? In many ways nothing has changed, and the answer Jesus gave to the Herodians and the Pharisees still applies.

First, we cannot act as a society without some form of law or government. We could not possibly manage to support the frail and the vulnerable without some system in place. Yet while the laws of the land should serve to protect our human lives and human future, it does not and cannot support our spiritual life and spiritual future. That is the job of the church -- to support God's people and to teach them about the lord.

Second, it is also right that we should pay for the service that government provides. We don't have the freedom the Pharisees seemed to have had, to choose not to pay taxes. If we choose not to pay we are likely to end up in prison. And if no-one paid anything, where would the hospitals, doctors, teachers and all the other services needed to make life run smoothly come from?

Third, we have to give ourselves to God. Like the Jews, we don't seem to have much choice over the government and the way it runs our country. Often it seems as far away and as dictatorial as ancient more. We get little choice on paying taxes. What we do have a totally free choice in, is in what we give to God.

This is the bit that is usually left out when people quote from this passage. "render unto Caesar" -- is what they say, and forget the rest.... "and what is God's to God", that is where we have our choice. This is where we can decide whether or not we pay. Yet in some ways it might seem that God has a harsher tax regime than anyone else. Our government may have many tax rates. 20%, 35%, 50% and all varying year by year. God only has one rate. 100% !

When we give ourselves to God, we have to give ourselves 100%. 90% on Sundays doesn't really count. We have to give ourselves totally to him, all day, and every day. But there is one major difference in what we pay in taxes and what we pay to God. If we find that we cannot find the money to pay our taxes, or forget, then we face a punishment.

If we forget to give God his due, he doesn't send in the bailiffs, he forgives us the debt, he allows us to start again. You might want to cheat on a government you hate, but do you want to cheat on someone that you love? Just what does Jesus want from us?

I think that Jesus gave us the answer when he was asked what the most important commandment was. He told us that the most important commandment was to love God with all our hearts, all our souls, all our minds and all our strength. The second commandment was to love one another.

We take the commandment to love one another as one of the basic ways to live as a Christian. But there is no way we can live this way if the very foundation of the way we live is not based on having the love of God at the heart of who we are, and in everything we do.

With the love of God as the centre of our beings, then things in this world become less important. God's love is forever. We can still support and pay taxes to a government that provides the framework of modern life. We can still oppose that same government when it works unfairly or unjustly.

We can still obey the laws of the land, when they work with God's law, and oppose them when they don't. God comes first! Remember Jesus' complete answer: "give to Caesar what is Caesar's and what is God's to God." There was no either...if and or

but! -- and. We have to do both, God's law comes first. The question Jesus was asked could have been, "whose side are you on? Israel or Rome?" Jesus' reply was not Israel, it was not Rome. His answer was "on God's side"

Finally, the question could also have been; "who do you love?"

How would you answer that? Whose side are you on? Who do you love? This world, a place of growing discontent, a place where people put themselves, money and power before the care for others, a place where more and more people seek instant gratification?.....Or God's world, a place where love grows, a place where you are just as valued as your neighbour, a place where we can live in peace, and forgive our enemies, and be forgiven by the lord when we fall.

What would your answer be?

Amen.

I hope you noticed I didn't ask for money?

But I did ask you to give something of much greater value!

*[Adapted sermon by Rev. Dave Whalley. Used with permission]*

## **OUR RESPONSE**

### **OFFERING:**

*(Please use the offering box at the front/back of the Sanctuary as you exit. Thank you!)*

### **HYMN (MV 191) "What Can I Do?"**

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (in unison)**

**Generous God, out of our privilege we give.**

**Out of our longing, we seek your face.**

**Bless these coins, bills/notes, and promises and claim them for yourself, knowing we give them to you happy to release their hold on us.**

**Use them toward your mercy, goodness, and glory; we pray. Amen.**

## **PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:**

Holy One, even though we have not always been aware, we know you have been with us along the journeys of our lives.

We have not always recognized your presence, but we thank you for your abiding love. Your glory is all around us. Your mercy has seen us through. Your goodness is our strength and our renewal. And we thank you for the abundance in which we live and move and have our being.

**We pray today for people who remain on the journey and feel alone along the way...(pause).**

**We pray for those who seek your face in times of sickness and ill-health – who long to feel your healing presence intimately...(pause).**

**We pray for all who suffer under the powers and principalities of this world – who have been treated as collateral damage in a battle for loyalty to false gods...(pause).**

**We pray for our planet – for your true face all around us. Help us not only to see you clearly in all of its wonder, but to remember our commitment as stewards of your lands, your seas, your air, and your creatures. Guide us in our efforts to care and tend to your world (pause).**

We pray that you will help us always to see your face beaming at us in every face of humanity we encounter.

Show us your anguish as well as your delight;  
your struggles as well as your strengths;  
your discouragement as well as your resolve;  
your sadness as well as your love.

And in all of these, help us to know you and your grace more perfectly. We pray in Christ's name. **Amen.**

## **SENDING FORTH**

**HYMN (VU 326)** *“O for A Thousand Tongues to Sing”*

## **COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:**

Face of God, go now and shine! **Amen.**

**CHORAL BLESSING (MV 209)** *“Go Make a Difference”*

**PRAYER RESOURCES:**

*\*Seasons of the Spirit – Seasons FUSION Pentecost 2, 2020; The United Church of Canada Pentecost 2020 Year A Gathering Resources for Worship Planners. Used with permission.*

**NEXT WEEK'S (October 25, 2020) READINGS:**

*Psalm 90;  
Deuteronomy 34:1-12;  
1 Thessalonians 2:1-8  
Matthew 22:34-46*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

---

**THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH**

Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>

Church Office Closed

@ 7 pm - Women Alive

Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>

@ 10:30 am – Finance Committee Meeting

@ 7 pm – Choir

Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>

@ 7 pm – Church Board Meeting

Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>

@ 10 am – Pastoral Care

**Pastoral Care - Contact Information**

Should you need emergency pastoral care please call Ron Nielsen  
@ 306-921-7794 or 306-752-4119.

**Transfer or Applying for Membership**

If you wish to transfer or apply for membership in our church,  
please contact the church office or a member of the  
Membership Committee.

**Changes to Contact Information**

If you have changed your address or phone number, please advise  
the Church Office so that we can keep your information current.

Thank you!

**Thank you to Gene Bayda**

A huge thank you goes out to Gene from Tower Glass for replacing the broken window in the front of the Sanctuary.

**Financial Flash**

The Bake-less pie sale raised \$540. Thank you to Women Alive for organizing the Bake-less pie sale and to all of you for your donations!

**Looking for Volunteers**

We are looking for volunteers on a couple of committees: men and women for the Property committee and someone for M&P. Thank you, Gail Forsyth for joining the reopen committee for rentals. Call Don Neher (306.921.4130) or the church office (306.752.2288) if you can help us out on the other committees!

*TURKEY POT PIE SALE*

*Melfort United Church*

*6" deep dish turkey pot pie*

*\$12.00 / pie*

*Only 250 pies will be sold -so get your order in early!*

*To order:*

*Email: [melfortuc@sasktel.net](mailto:melfortuc@sasktel.net)*

*Phone: 306.752.2288*

*Order by 2 pm on October 29th*

*You will be called ahead for your*

*curbside pickup/delivery time*

*on November 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>*

*Please Use East Side Elevator Door*

**FundScrip Deadline for October**

The next FundScrip deadline is Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. Your order will be available for pickup on Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup>.

*Stewardship Seconds*

*When we are gone, what legacy will we leave? Will it be one of generous giving from God's abundance, or one of hoarding and fear?*