

Name above all names

Worthy of all praise

My heart will sing

HOW  
GREAT  
IS OUR  
GOD!

October 18, 2020

**Introduction**

**Invitation**

**Prelude**

**Call to Worship:**

How great is our God! We worship together today as we praise God for loving us and drawing us together as part of God's family. We give thanks for God's forgiveness and grace, and we open our hearts and minds to receive God's message for us. Let us worship!

**Hymn:** "More Precious Than Silver"

**Reading the Word:** Matthew 22:15-22

**Ministry of Music**

**Message:** "What Is God's?"

**Prayer:**

Giving God, you provide for us in so many ways, and yet, we seem to reach for more and more material goods and possessions. Remind us that everything is from you, and we are called to be faithful stewards of the gifts we have been given. Help us to share generously with others and to continue to re-center our lives in you every day. Thank you for your love, forgiveness, and acceptance. Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

**Hymn:** "My Faith Looks Up to Thee"

**Blessing**



## Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, 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. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They 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." When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.



**SERMON TRANSCRIPT  
GIVEN BY  
Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson**

October 18, 2020

“What IS God’s?”

A woman wrote to me a number of years ago and told me that she couldn’t afford to come to our church anymore. What? I had to stop to think about that one. What would cause her to think that money was the criteria for coming to church? What are we saying and how are we approaching our requests for financial support of the church?

Pastor Lindy Black wrote: “Our world is made up of two boxes: A Caesar box and a God box. Caesar box seems larger because we are so much into it. It’s in this box that we pay taxes, library fines, driver’s license fees, go to school, buy groceries, put gas in the tank of the car, etc. In the God box we are guided by rules and encouraged to love, to give to help others, to share willingly of our resources, to provide money to support the church’s budget so we can have Sunday school, pay the pastor and other staff, and care for the church building. After differentiating between the two boxes, take the Caesar box and place it INSIDE the God box to show that the God box is with us no matter how involved we get with the Caesar box. (Text This Week, in the commentary section for today’s gospel reading, adapted)

Jesus understood that the God box was large enough to hold everything. All that we have is God’s; all that we have been given comes from God; God is the creator of all things. Today’s gospel lesson challenges us to think about where our priorities are and with Whom. Jesus was at the temple, where earlier in Matthew’s gospel he had already driven out the money changers who were buying and selling their goods in the temple courtyard. His actions had not set well with the temple leaders. In this passage, the Pharisees and Herodians (Herod’s henchmen) were testing Jesus to try to trap him into making a statement so they could either accuse him of blasphemy against God or being an anarchist against Caesar – they thought they had him either way. Jesus saw through their attempts and asked some questions of his own that, interestingly enough, turned the tables on them. When he asked them to produce a coin, they HAD one AND they had taken it into the temple, a breach of Jewish law, the law they were trying to uphold!

The Jews were not supposed to carry graven images, and a coin that had Caesar’s image on it along with the title “Son of God” engraved on it was clearly a violation of the first commandment: “I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me.” So THEY were the ones who had broken the commandment, and by producing the coin, they exposed themselves as frauds. Jesus didn’t stop there; he continued by telling them to give Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and God the things that are God’s. If they took the commandments seriously, they would know that in Jewish teachings, EVERYTHING belonged to God. It was clear that once again, Jesus’ wisdom was far greater than their attempts to trick him.

This episode increased the Pharisees and other temple leaders desire to silence Jesus. Money. Taxes. Tithing. Giving first to God. These are highly charged issues. As one who pays taxes, I can understand how that can weigh heavily on most of us. The government, and especially the IRS, has a lot of power over us. Having a lot or not enough money can run our lives if we let it. Our economy is tightly driven by money, and I think it’s helpful to remember that God is not. God’s power, care, and love are not tied to material things but relationships. Our hope can be in God who will provide for us whether we have material goods or not.

In fact, if we allow the need to make more and more money, it can become too much of a driving force in our lives, making us forget about God all together. Philippians 4:6-7 says: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. God’s presence in our lives creates us, sustains us, gives us hope, builds us up, provides companions on the journey, and gives us talents and abilities to care for ourselves and others.

Some of you may have read poetry written by Helen Steiner Rice who was the talented daughter of a railroad man and an accomplished seamstress, and who nurtured her faith in God and her love for Scripture. Helen’s belief sustained her during her long, eventful life, which was punctuated by tragedy.

The death of her father during the 1918 flu epidemic devastated young Helen, but it also launched her on the path to becoming a major figure in the fields of public relations and advertising. After her father's death, Helen obtained a position as a window trimmer for a public utilities company and rose through the ranks to become one of the few female advertising managers in the country. In January 1929, she married banker Franklin Rice. The first few months of their marriage were idyllic, but tragedy struck when the stock market crashed in October. The couple suffered a severe financial loss, and Franklin lost his job. As the debts mounted, Helen decided to accept a position with Gibson Art Company in Cincinnati. Her new job made it necessary for her to leave Franklin at home during the week and return to their house on the weekends. Franklin sank into a deep depression from which he never fully recovered. He committed suicide four years after they were married.

The death of her husband was one of many dark moments Helen experienced during her life. She acknowledged that her suffering not only brought her into close communion with God, but softened her heart to the pain of others. The seeds of her sorrow gave birth to some of her most uplifting verses, as well as helped her to appreciate more intensely God's abundant blessings. (Christian Book.com) Helen was able to rise above her tragedies, not because she was wealthy or held the right position in society, but because she had a sustaining relationship with God. She relied on God in spite of her losses and in spite of her tragedies. Even during those times of financial struggle, she used her God-given gifts and talents to keep going - that's stewardship.

Today's passage leads us to what it means to be a steward of God's gifts to us. I'm sure the first thing that comes to all our minds when we mention stewardship is money, and certainly that is part of it, but stewardship is even more than that. It is living as God's children, made in God's image, and living to carry that image into the world. Helen Steiner Rice lived her faith in God first, and then she used her resources to live in the world. She gave to God; she trusted God; she placed her hope in God and inspired millions through her poetry and perseverance. When Jesus told the Pharisees to give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, he was saying that God comes first.

Stewardship is caring for God's world through the effective use of our time, talent, and treasure. As I thought about this lesson, I know that I can become too wrapped up in keeping up with myself and my obligations than giving God quality time. I end up thinking in the "Caesar box" as I worry about schedules, balancing life, and trying to do my work. I'm so grateful for God's grace. Without that grace, I would be sunk - we all would. God's grace teaches us about forgiveness, starting fresh any moment of any day, stopping to take a deep breath and acknowledge God's presence with us, and knowing that God sometimes must just smile as we work through our plans. Stewardship in our lives means that we turn to God first, ask for forgiveness for our sins, seek God's guidance, thank God for grace, and live our lives to the best of our ability in that grace, caring about others because God cares about us.

Stewardship is a way of living that honors God and reflects God to the world. Yes, stewardship includes how we manage our money, which is an integral part of our lives, woven into our society, into our means of living, into the necessities of life. But stewardship is a way of life, and it begins with and is steeped in our relationship with God. That relationship informs all that we do, the choices we make, the words we speak, and the ways we relate to others.

May we give to God all of who we are and trust that God will continue to bless us, guide us, and work through us. I would like to share one of Helen Steiner Rice's poems that seems to fit today's theme. Amen.

#### Heart Gifts

It's not the things that can be bought that are life's riches treasure,

It's just the little heart gifts that money cannot measure.

A cheerful smile, a friendly word, a sympathetic nod are priceless little treasures from the storehouse of our God.

They are the things that can't be bought with silver or with gold...for thoughtfulness and kindness and love are never sold.

They are the priceless things in life for which no one can pay,

and the giver finds rich recompense in giving them away.

Helen Steiner Rice ©





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# PRAYER LIST

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Jeanne Westcott

Collins Family

Dennis Hoskins

Erica

Julie Ann

Jim Slater

Amelia and Michelle

Barbara Glidden

Gil Stebbins

Danny Westbrook

Dan Strange

Bobbie Noble

Kathy and James

Rev. Deb & Family

Those who have lost loved ones to  
COVID-19

Those in nursing and assisted living care  
Our Denomination  
Our Church Family