

First Baptist Church

Staying Connected

Read Matthew 22:15-22

“Staying Focused”



Kathy and I were at our grandson's flag football game last Saturday and the boys had just attempted a pass play and it failed because the receiver missed the catch. The coach began to explain the importance of keeping your eyes on the ball.

Those of you who have played or followed sports, you know that one of the most important lessons in learning to play is to keep your eye on the ball, you need to be alert to where that ball is at all times. If you allow yourself to become distracted and look away, you will lose your focus and make mistakes that can cause the team to lose.

Keeping your eye on the ball doesn't just mean on the ball itself, but it means keeping your attention on the game, on your role as part of the team, and on your commitment to the team to play to the best of your ability.

This goes for nearly anything you do in life. Want to succeed in school? Keep your eye on the ball! Want to do well in business? Stay committed and keep your eye on the goal! Want to stay invested in your discipleship and secure in your faith? Keep your eye on Jesus!

Don't be distracted by the ways of the world, stay firm in your faith by keeping your eye on Jesus.

Keeping your eye on Jesus doesn't mean disengaging from the world. It simply means, keeping your priorities straight. Keeping your life in perspective; always putting God first.

In our scripture for today, Jesus is confronted by a group of Pharisees and Herodian's who want to challenge him on his politics, hoping to twist his words, entrap him, and reveal him as a hypocrite and revolutionary, so that they can diffuse his mission, or better yet, have him arrested.

So, they plotted a way to entangle Jesus in a political conundrum. They asked him, "Tell us what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"

Jews were forced to produce and to use a coin for Temple purposes, it also defined them as a

member of the Jewish faith community. The Temple tax bought them membership into Temple and into community for the year and would have also been used for buying their sacrificial animals and for submitting their tithes.

If Jesus answers that taxes with Caesar's image on them should be thwarted, he risks being labeled a dissident, encouraging people to undermine the Jewish and Roman government.

But Jesus answers their question with a question: "Whose head is this?" "Whose title?"

They answer: "The Emperor's."

So, Jesus replies, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

At this, Jesus has them.

For what belongs to the emperor? "a coin with his head on it."

What belongs to God?

Our faith, our hearts, our souls, the Temple, the people, and all things created.

What belongs to God?

You do. And nothing Caesar can do can ever take that away from them. They are not serving God by giving Caesar back the coin that bears his image.

For every one of them is made, stamped, and sealed by a far greater and more pervasive image: the image of God.

Every one of us has been created in God's image to be a son and daughter of God. We are already signed, sealed, and committed to God by our faith and our relationship with Jesus.

God's people know in their hearts, that God is so much greater than any of these. And that all things belong ultimately to God.

But as Christians, never forget whose image is seared into your heart, and whose currency must supersede the rest. Christ Jesus', who sacrificed his life to save yours.

In His Service,
Pastor Larry