

- In our Gospel reading we find Jesus in a tough spot.
- The Pharisees (Jewish leaders) want to get rid of Jesus because he keeps criticizing them for being too attached to power and wealth rather than loving and serving their people.
- But the Jewish leaders have to be careful because many of the Jewish people they lead are listening to Jesus and accepting his teachings of love and care for others. So the Pharisees come up with a plan to trip Jesus up.
- Here's the plan: The Roman government imposed oppressive taxes on the Jewish people (kind of like Westchester county) The Jewish people despised the taxes and the romans but it was a reality they lived with. If the Pharisees could get Jesus to speak out against the taxes, in a public place where the romans would hear Him, if they could get Jesus to say it was wrong to pay taxes, the roman government would arrest Jesus- problem solved!
- So they ask Jesus the question in a crowd full of roman soldiers and Jewish people. "Is it right to pay taxes to the Romans?"
- Only Jesus was very cool. He asks for the coin the Jews used to pay the taxes, he asks whose picture is on the coin, when they respond Caesar-Jesus

says “Its Caesars coin, give him what belongs to him”.

- That sentence gets Jesus off the hook with the romans but if he stopped there many of the Jewish people who were following Jesus may have gotten angry and turned away.
- But Jesus’ answer didn’t stop there. He added a little something more ”Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar but give to God what belongs to God”.
- With that one sentence Jesus sets the pecking order, the priority list for the Pharisees, the people following Him back then and all of us today. **Give to the world what belongs to the world but above all give to God what belongs to God.**
- What a tremendous message for all of us: We live in the world- but we belong to God.
- A message that poses two questions: What must we give to the world? And what must we give to God?
- While we are in this life we will need to give the world what belongs to the world. The world will tug at us. There will be demands placed on our time and efforts... things like... working to earn a living, going to school, paying bills and filing taxes. We all live in the world and to some extent we have to give to the world what belongs to the world.

- But we must be careful, at times the world asks for, even demands things that **don't belong to it**. It may ask for too much of our time; it may try to draw our attention away from the things that matter most - by enticing us with desire for material things.
- Be careful not to fall into the trap. Remember your heart, your soul; the things, deep down, that you treasure - don't belong to the world. Prayer time, married time, family time, date nights, listening time, resting time, loving time with others –these things don't belong to the world, they belong to each of us as a gift from God.
- But there are things we can give to the world that will make it a far better place.
- The world is desperately in need of God's love, His presence, His compassion. We can bring that love, and presence and compassion into the lives of others. We can give the world an example of what real love, God's love looks like.
- We can let people see God in our marriages, our homes, our workplaces. We can let people feel God's love and presence when they are with us.
- We can reach out in love and service to those around us. It's why each of us was created and it's why Jesus calls us to be His followers.
- What can we give to God? Simply put – a warm welcome.

- God wants to be part of our life- never forget that. Welcome Him in. Begin each day with a prayer to Him, thank Him before each meal you share, tell Him your needs, accept with gratitude the love and peace and joy and strength He gives to you. Teach others, especially our children - teach them about Him. Make your hearts, your home and your families a place for God to dwell.
- Remember, the Holy Spirit dwells in each person. When we give love and respect and care to each other we give those things to God also.