A BETTER WORD

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

Money and Allegiances

◆ *Mark 12:13–17*

THE BIG IDEA

Everything bearing Caesar's image belongs to Caesar; everything bearing God's image, including you, belongs to God.

SERMON SUMMARY

The Pharisees and Herodians, political opposites who agreed on almost nothing, teamed up to trap Jesus with a loaded question: was it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? Either answer seemed to doom him. So Jesus asked for a denarius, pointed to Caesar's image stamped on it, and answered, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Jesus' answer wasn't evasive: it was a claim about allegiance that cuts in both directions. The coin belongs to Caesar, but you, made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), belong to God.

This doesn't dismiss civic duty: Scripture calls believers to honor and pray for governing authorities (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13–17; 1 Timothy 2:1–2), but it does establish a clear hierarchy of allegiance. Because you bear God's image, your ultimate loyalty belongs to him, and that allegiance is meant to be practiced, not just believed: loving God, cultivating the Spirit's fruit, giving generously, and persevering under pressure. What you give yourself to reveals where your true allegiance actually lies.

DIGGING DEEPER

OBSERVATION

1. The Herodians and Pharisees were political opposites who agreed on nothing except wanting to trap Jesus. What does their alliance reveal about the real purpose behind their flattering opening line in verse 14?

INTERPRETATION

2. Jesus' answer hinges on the ancient assumption that a coin belongs to whoever's image is stamped on it. Given that, what is Jesus claiming when he says to render to God "the things that are God's," and what bears God's image, according to Genesis 1:27?
3. Romans 13:1, 1 Peter 2:13–17, and 1 Timothy 2:1–2 all call believers to honor and pray for governing authorities. How does Jesus's answer both affirm legitimate civic duty and still place something above it?

THEOLOGICAL CONNECTION

4. Pastor Nick named four expressions of allegiance to God: love, the Spirit's fruit, generosity, and perseverance under pressure. Which feels most underdeveloped in your life right now?

5. Just as an interest grows into a passion through time and attention, so does love for God, through practices like prayer, Scripture, and community. What practice would most grow your love for God?

LIVING IT OUT

HEART CHECK

Allegiance isn't just a belief you hold; it's a loyalty lived out with your time, money, affections, and endurance. What would your calendar and bank statement say about your greatest allegiance?

ACTION STEPS

— Pick one concrete way to render to God what's his: a gift, unhurried time in prayer or Scripture, or perseverance where cultural pressure pulls you elsewhere.

— Follow through on it today rather than waiting for a more convenient moment.

"SO WHAT?" CHALLENGE

> ***Your calendar and bank statement are already preaching a sermon about your allegiance. Make sure it confesses that Jesus is Lord.***

REFLECTION & PRAYER

KEY VERSE — TO MEMORIZE

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

— Mark 12:17

PRAYER PROMPT

Thank God that his image is stamped on you, and ask him to help you order every other loyalty, country, money, comfort, underneath your allegiance to him.

YOUR PRAYER