

The Beloved Son and His Authority, Part 2

Luke 20:19-40

Intro: There is a counseling book with the title *When People are Big and God is Small* by Ed Welch. That title captures the theme for this second message of the beloved Son and his authority. I'd tweak one word though - when people are big and *Christ* is small.

That's the major thread that runs through this section. The religious leaders think they are really big. They are also really fearful of the people (fear of man)—and they have a diminished view of Christ.

This problem is timeless today. Even in evangelical, conservative, Bible-believing circles—people can become really big. We can get our eyes too focused on people, and Christ can become very small.

The themes that are covered in our text today can show us symptoms in our own hearts to see if people are big and Christ is small. Here we have a diagnostic tool to see where our heart is at. There are at least two symptoms, and one, and only one, cure.

Symptom 1: When people are big and Christ is small

1. Money and politics dominate (19-26)

- As the saying goes, there are two things that are certain, death and taxes. Even Jews living under Roman occupation would say that's right.
- Now remember the context. It's like a courtroom drama. Israel's religious leaders are confronting Jesus.
- First, they do it *falsely* (v20). This group appears to be "righteous" (NASB/CSB)—that is, motivated with pure intent—but their real motive is to get enough info to have Jesus arrested.
- Second, they come with *flattery* (v21).

I heard someone once describe flattery as reverse gossip. Gossip is saying behind someone's back what you can't say to their face. Flattery is saying to someone's face what you wouldn't say behind their back.

The flattery is ironically 100 percent accurate:

—Jesus teaches with complete accuracy—literally, straight.

—Jesus teaches courageously. He has no fear of man; he can be disagreeable when there is error.

—Christ's teaching is the way of God. His Words show us the way to God, the way to please God, glorify him with our entire lives.

- The question (v22). It is lawful to pay tribute (tax) to Caesar? They weren't asking if it's lawful by Roman law, but lawful according to scripture/torah.
- Are God's people exempt from paying because of what the tax *represents*. Is it a sin to support a sovereign state that is thoroughly pagan?

The tribute tax was not just to supply the Roman government with income to build roads. It was a tax that went directly to the Emperor. It had a symbolic function. Paying the tax was meant to symbolize submission and dependence on Rome.

It was hugely unpopular with rank and file Israelite citizens because they saw the tax as pagan oppression.

The coin used to the tax had the image of Caesar on one side, and on the other was "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus."

- Jews with a sensitive conscience would have trouble handling this; it was using money that potentially violates the 2nd commandment.

Here is the dilemma:

If Jesus spoke against paying taxes to Rome, he could stand trial for revolting against Rome, but affirming the tax will cause the crowd to see Jesus as a political coward.

- The question puts Jesus between a rock and hard place.
- Jesus' reaction is perfect: Show me the money. Who's picture do you see?

As they looked down they would see an image of the Pagan Emperor with the Latin Words *Tiberius Caesar, son of the Divine Augustus*.

- (v24) Give to Caesar what is his (money); and to God what is his (your faith, love, full obedience, praise, devotion).
- There is a play on the word “image”.
- Jesus is saying, “give back to Caesar what has his image on it—money. But give to God what has his image on it...yourselves, your heart, obedience, worship.”

Give your money back to the government, *give yourself to God!*

—Romans 13 gives us more insight.

Paul instructed the Roman Christians to live with this same principle—even under pagan oppression (Rom 13:1-7).

Essentially:

—The secular state (Rome, US) exists under God’s sovereignty. You need to play by its rules and pay taxes.

And still:

Christians historically have known when to respond with Acts 5:29.

“We must obey God rather than men.” ***That actually summarizes a good bit of church history and what God is doing in the world.*

—If the state enforces a law where Christians have to violate a command, like “stop preaching, it’s hate speech.”

***Think also of the humility of the Lord Jesus.*

He created Tiberius Caesar. **He** was truly the Son of the divine Lord.

But he pays his taxes, knowing they are not supporting the worship of God; he submits to Rome’s death sentence as well. He is our model and example.

- I find it interesting that Jesus spends only limited time with a single terse answer. He does not get into a running debate over this; it does not *consume* him.

He is so unlike us, where political conversation tends to dominate.

E.g.: According to the Washington Post, during the last election cycle in 2016, 6.5 billion dollars was spent for campaign financing—including congressional and presidential.

Add to that the toxic nature. I had several church members say they had to stop using social media because of how *Christians were acting*.

Here's my point: in the world, money and politics, especially politics, dominate. Except for Canada maybe.

Some of you are politically minded, some are not at all. It's ok to be politically minded, active, even opinionated. Yet, when Christ is small, one of the symptoms is that *money and politics begins to dominate*.

During the last election cycle, I had a friend who's newly married daughter was attending my church. The husband and wife were really, really into politics. The husband would wear t-shirts with provocative political sayings just to get a rise and start conversations. It was a hobby and passion. Their church attendance was spotty and I had a talk with the dad. I remember one thing he said, "I wish they were as passionate about God as they are politics".

Does that describe anyone? When people are big and Christ is small, politics tends to take center stage. Let's search our hearts and make sure Christ has center stage.

Symptom 2: When people are big and Christ is small

2. The reality of God and eternity deteriorates (27-39)

- This time the question comes from the Sadducees. They were more of the social higher-ups. They were the aristocrats of the 1st century. They denied resurrection, life after death, angels/demons, providence and only held to first 5 s of OT. They were very philosophically rationalists and materialists before those terms came to use.

The question was meant to show inconsistency.

- The Sadducee's question has Dt. 25:5 behind it (also Ruth 4). It's the Levirate Marriage Law. If a man dies without a son, his brother is to take his wife and hopefully bear a child.
- What if there is no children, and all 7 husbands die.
- What Jesus says in 34-38 puts everything in perspective—the people, purpose, and power.

1. The people (those who are worthy, v35)—Jesus is not a universalist. Not everyone enters the age to come.

**You have to be made worthy by Christ—faith and repentance. If you not sure, that is the most important question to ask today. Who cares about money, politics, and marriage; knowing Jesus's salvation tops them all.

2. The purpose (resurrection, like the angels...never die).

- First, it's pretty clear that Jesus states that marriage is not a permanent state that carries into eternity.
- Even if you've found your soul mate, they are not yours for eternity...they are God's and you are God's.
- There is a difference in how culture views marriage:

—Western view—romantic love based. You find that one special person to spend the rest of your life with.

—Eastern/Biblical view—marriage is family based. The purpose is to start a new family unit.

- That's exactly Jesus's point. There is no need for marriage in the age to come (eternal state); since there is *no death*, there will be no need to repopulate the eternal state.

In the eternal state, we will all be one family unit. One family joined to one Father (36b)

Also, the age to come is not primarily about reconnecting with loved ones. John Piper wrote in *God is the Gospel* that if the first person we want to see in heaven is our spouse (or mom/dad) ...we are not ready for heaven. It's idolatry. The first person we should want to see is our glorious King and Redeemer...and worship him!

Do we truly long for the age to come because the glory of Christ is at the center?

The purpose of the resurrection is God's glory in Christ and our unhindered worship.

3. The power (all living to him). Luke leaves this saying out. Both Matt. & Mark catch it. (Mt .22:29) “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.” (Exodus 3:6)

Resurrection is a reminder of God’s power. Power of death. Power of sin. Power of the future.

Summary:

There is something else that ties this section up. As we come to the end and as the drama increases, every major leadership group challenged Jesus ... *and failed*. Pharisees, scribes, chief priests, elders, and Sadducees.

**This would have probably struck a chord with a man called Theophilus, who first read this. If you want to go along with the social and religious elite, remember this... *Jesus will always have the final word. His wisdom and knowledge are never restricted.*

(Col 2:3) “...In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”.

Jesus always has everything under control and has the final word!

Conclusion:

When people are big, Christ is small. The more man-centered we are, the less we see, worship, adore, trust and obey Christ and the more the smaller things dominate...like money, politics, and marriage. Two symptoms, one cure. One cure. It’s in the word of the praise song, *Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus....*

And the things of the world,

Grow strangely dim,

In the light of his glory and grace.