

Mark 12:13-17
What Belongs to God?

In light of our subject matter, generosity, I've given considerable thought to the question raised this morning. What belongs to God? Bearing in mind the human appetite for acquiring things it is a question worth considering. Maybe the better question is, "What doesn't belong to God?" I certainly see these questions being raised by our text and there are answers. So, turning our attention to our text this morning I want to make two moves only.

First move. It is important for us to understand what Jesus isn't saying. He isn't advocating for separation of church and state. That is, that governments are independent of God's rule and that the church is independent of the government's rule. He isn't saying that God has no concern for our monetary systems, governing structures or how we, disciples, attend to our financial affairs. In fact, he says the exact opposite, very clearly. **V17** "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." It is indeed right and necessary for the people of God to pay taxes to their government just as it is indeed right and necessary for God's people to give to God what belongs to God. As it concerns the questions raised, even the governments of this world belong to and are subject to God. There is nothing that exist independent of the rule of God. **Everything and everyone are under the sovereign rule of God.**

Romans 13:1-4 "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to

bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

1 Peter 2:13-17 "¹³Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

John 19:10-11 "¹⁰So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" ¹¹Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

Second move. I could prove to you by a number of scriptures that everything we possess or think we possess belongs to the Lord. But it will suffice that I turn our attention to one text to answer both questions. **Psalm 24:1**, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." Because I cannot better explain the implications of this text I will draw from *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* and I quote, "*The whole world belongs to God. He is the Creator of the earth, and therefore, its Proprietor; or, in other words, "the property vests in him." It belongs to Him in a sense somewhat similar to our right of property in anything that is the production of our hands, or of our labor or skill. We claim that as our*

own. We feel that we have a right to use it, or to dispose of it, as we choose. No other person has a right to take it from us, or to dictate to us how we shall employ it. Thus, God, in the highest possible sense, has a right to the earth, and to all which it produces, as being all of it the creation of His hands, and the fruit of His culture and skill. He has a right to dispose of it as He pleases; by fire, or flood, or tempest; and He has an equal right to direct man in what way He shall employ that portion of the productions of the earth which may be entrusted to Him. All the right which any person has to any portion of the earth's surface, or to what is treasured up in the earth, or to what it is made to produce, is subordinate to the claims of God, and all should be yielded up at His bidding, whether He comes and claims it to be employed in His service, or whether He comes and sweeps it away by fire or flood; by the locust, or by the palmer-worm.....All belong to God, and He has a right to claim them for His service, and to dispose of them as He pleases.....God has a claim on people - upon their services, upon their talents, upon all that they can acquire by labor and skill; He has a right to all that fly in the air, or that walk the earth, or that swim in the sea."

End quote. Bottom line, we and all that we possess belong to God. We are nothing more than stewards and hopefully, good and faithful stewards.

Psalm 127:3 "Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him." **NLT**

Psalm 50:10-12 "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. ¹² "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine."

Eze 18:4 "Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die."

Haggai 2:7-8 “⁷ And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. ⁸ The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts.”

1 Tim 6:17-19 “¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

Luke 12:16-21 “¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Considering scripture is resolute on the fact that all things belong to God how could the disciple of Christ hold anything back? How can we not be generous towards Christ’s church? What belongs to God? Everything! What doesn’t belong to God? Nothing! In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.