

14 November 2012
Pentecost 24 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

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“Christ: The Wisdom of God”

Text: Matthew 22:15-22; Proverbs 8:11-22; Ephesians 3:17-21

They thought they were smarter than Jesus, the Pharisees. That’s why they kept thinking up questions for Him. Questions to test His knowledge of the Scriptures. Riddles to test His wisdom. What they thought were perfect knots in God’s Holy Word that Jesus would not be able to untie. Not because they wanted to know the answers - they thought they already knew those. But because they wanted to prove that Jesus was not who He said He was. That He was not the Son of God. That He was not the Messiah. That He was not the promised prophet greater than Moses.

And so it was with the question about taxes that we heard tonight. It’s not really about taxes - it was just the latest and greatest trick question they came up with when they put their heads together. A perfect storm, they thought. If He says not to pay taxes, the Romans will get Him for sedition and rebellion. If He says to pay the taxes to the hated Romans, the Jewish people will turn away from Him. Either way, Jesus loses. And *that* was the point.

But these kinds of questions are no problem for Jesus. For He is the very wisdom of God. For He is the One who, in wisdom, created all things, the universes, and everything in them. He is the One who, in Wisdom, put the planets, suns, and stars in their places. He separated the lands and the seas, created all the walking, flying, swimming, and creeping things to live and work together harmoniously in a perfect order. In wisdom He provided plants for food, and then as the crown of His creation He created man. And to this one, this man and woman created in His image, He gave wisdom also. That we might know our Creator and honor and love Him.

And so a question about taxes . . . *really?* That’s like asking Einstein what’s one plus one!

So why did they do it? Well, sin. Sin that causes us to take the wisdom God has given us and use it against Him. Sin that causes us to think more highly of ourselves and our wisdom and belittle God and His wisdom. To think that we know what’s going on and God really doesn’t. That’s what the Pharisees were doing, and that’s what we do. *Yes, you and me.* For everytime we sin, is that not challenging God and thinking we are wiser than Him? You see, God, I know what you said . . . but I *need* to do these things. I can’t let that person get away with that. It’s really not

hurting anybody. It's *legal*. It's really okay. . . . *My way is better than your way. What I think is wiser than what you have said.*

And then also like the Pharisees, how often do we think there are situations in our world that even stump God? We can't see a solution; we can't see how this can possibly work out, and think either the situation is hopeless, or I have to take matters into my own hands. *Really?* The God who created all this can't handle the problems in our lives? The problems which seem so big to us, but to Him aren't even as difficult as one plus one?

Repent. And hear again these words from St. Paul: ***But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.***

Think about those words. ***You are citizens of heaven.*** There are no illegal immigrants in the kingdom of God! There's no sneaking in. You have been baptized into Christ and made citizens of heaven. You bear the image of God and His name is the inscription placed on you. And so we live like it. Our currency is not gold or silver, but love and forgiveness. Our hope is not what we do, but what Jesus has done for us. Our future is not what we make it, but what our Lord has promised. So should we pay taxes to Caesar? *Yeah, give 'im what's his,* Jesus says. No big deal. You have much more and much greater than that.

Next, Paul says, ***And from [heaven] we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.*** Soon, many will be waiting for Christmas to come and eagerly awaiting its arrival because it will be a day of great joy. In the same way, Paul says, we are waiting for the coming of Jesus - His second coming, because it will be a day of great joy. Why? Because on that day, ***He will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body.*** On that day, He will reverse what is the biggest, baddest, most unsolvable problem we have: **death**. On that day He will raise and transform us, so that *our bodies will be like his glorious body* - perfect and free from sin and fit for eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.

And He will do that, Paul says in his finishing words, ***by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.*** And that power is the power of His death and resurrection. His death and resurrection which conquered sin, conquered death, and conquered the devil, so that there is now nothing that can hold us, nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God our Father (Romans 8). In Christ, your sins are forgiven, your grave is open, and your enemy like the gum that sticks to the bottom of your shoe! (*All things under Jesus' feet!*)

To know that, to believe that, to await that, to live in the assurance that is who we

truly are - that's wisdom. And that puts everything in its right place. In the order created in the beginning in wisdom, restored through the cross in wisdom, and promised in the end in wisdom. So let us be like the Pharisees in this regard: that when we hear this Word of the Lord, let us *marvel*. And also rejoice. That He has done all this for you and me.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.