

Because People Need this Truth, Not Politics!

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[0:00] Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Matthew's Gospel, Matthew chapter 17. If you're visiting with us, you may pull that black Bible out in the chair in front of you and go to the back of that and find page 14.

As you find page 14, you'll also find Matthew chapter 17. Matthew 17, starting in verse 22, 22 to 27 today. 22 to 27, Matthew chapter 17.

My family, three are down with the stomach virus. I'm better now. I got it Wednesday, so I'm, no more symptoms.

I probably won't shake your hand, though, on the way out. Just won't touch you, especially after this. But I'm not contagious anymore, but you can pray for my family. So, as they're not well, and we just decided to keep them all home, just to kind of quarantine everybody.

This is not fun. It was horrible. But hey, life goes on, right? Matthew chapter 17, starting in verse 22. And gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he'll be raised on the third day.

[1:29] And they were sorely grieved. And coming into Capernaum, those who collected the two drachma came to Peter and said, Does your teacher not pay the two drachma?

He said, Yes. And coming into the house, Jesus spoke first to him, saying, What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll tax?

From their sons or from strangers? And upon his saying, From strangers, Jesus said to him, Thus the sons are free. But in order that we may not entrap them, go to the sea, and throw in a fish hook, and taking the first fish that comes, opening its mouth, you'll find a stater.

Taking that, give it to them for me, and for you. The impeachment inquiry hearings against President Donald Trump began Wednesday and continued on Friday.

As I was writing this for today's message, I read a statement from an article. This is, this part of this article stood out to me.

[2:54] I'll read it to you. Quote, Americans are deeply entrenched in two camps over impeachment, resulting in a mounting political battle that will further test the nation in one of the most polarizing eras of modern times.

Okay, I guess that's his opinion, or her opinion. So today, you may be in favor of these hearings, or you may think the whole thing is a partisan sham.

Honestly, I don't know where you personally would stand. But wherever you land on this, really anything else, in reference to politics, this is a very crucial time for us as Christians.

because it behooves us to stand for truth. And when I say truth, I don't mean the truth about these hearings.

I mean gospel truth. The theme for Matthew's gospel is bow down and worship Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

[4:12] And another reason we're going to see today why you should respond that way is because people need this truth, not politics.

People need the gospel. People need Christ. We need the gospel. We need Christ.

We need Jesus to reign supreme in our lives. And so does everybody else.

A statement for you, because we need this truth, not politics. We must not allow anything that we're free to say politically to jeopardize the furtherance of the gospel in God's kingdom.

No matter how upset you get, no matter how angry you get, believe me, believe you me, I can get really angry at some of the things I see. We get angry, upset, disgusted with these political issues.

[5:32] We must remember our mission as a church. It's to lift up Christ. There's a reason why we sang that song, May the peoples praise you.

It's about trusting Christ, the gospel. And we have to be mindful and not allow anything that we are free to say as Americans.

We can say things. And yet we must not allow these things that we can say politically to jeopardize the furtherance of the gospel to offend unnecessarily.

We just can't do that, friends. This truth, bow down and worship Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, King of Israel, is what the world needs, not our own political persuasion.

In short, people need Christ, not Trump. or any other political person you want to put in there. It's not about us converting them to socialism.

[6:42] It's not about us converting them to conservatism. Now Rush Limbaugh wants to convert people and his goal is for people to become conservatives. That's his goal. He stated that.

And others have their own goals as well. Friends, this is our goal. Christ Jesus and him crucified. That's the mission of the church. That's our mission.

Here we see Jesus gives a second passion prediction. First one was in Matthew 16. He's gonna do another one in chapter 20 verse 18, another one in chapter 26.

This is the second one. And include a betrayal of some kind. And then this issue about paying taxes. And this part, 24 to 27, it's only found in Matthew's gospel.

It's not found anywhere else. Not in Luke, not in Mark, certainly not in John. And then about this tax, and we'll get more into it later, Jesus was not, excuse me, Jesus was not obligated to pay this tax, but he did it anyway so as not to give offense.

[7:55] Now Jesus had a reputation with these religious leaders and how they could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days.

Remember John chapter 2? Jesus says this to them. Destroy this temple and rebuild it and I'll build it up in three days. They're like, what? You're crazy. He was talking about his body. So Jesus had a reputation.

And it makes sense why these collectors, maybe, would ask Jesus, really Peter, about paying this temple tax. We'll talk about more what this is, this temple tax.

But it's just striking. Jesus was free to not do this. But he did it anyways. So first, first point, first is first.

Gospel truth is first. Verse 22 and 23. Gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, the Son of Man is going to be betrayed, literally, into the hands of men.

[9:07] They'll kill him. Be raised. Notice that Jesus took the initiative to teach his disciples once again about his mission. He came to die for sinners and be raised.

And friends, this is our mission. This is our mission, church. We call sinners to trust Jesus Christ. This is our mission. And he used his favorite designation about himself, Son of Man, as a way to declare himself to be the Messiah.

He'd be delivered or betrayed Judas. But they would be raised. Killed and raised.

An action done to him, it's passive. And we know on this side of things, because we know the end of the story, right? It was the Father who raised him from the dead.

But look at the disciples' response here in verse 23. And they were terribly unbelievably grieved, horribly grieved, as a way to put that adverb.

[10:19] Because they began to understand what Jesus was saying to them. And it deeply grieved them. They were finally beginning to accept this truth and they stopped trying to dissuade, oh no, that's not going to happen to you.

That's what Peter did. You know where that led to. Well, I don't want to be called Satan. I'm not saying anything to Jesus about that. But they'd be beginning to understand.

Stopped trying to dissuade him from talking this way. But they still didn't hear what he said about the resurrection. I'm going to be raised. You guys get that? You know, it's striking the placement of this prediction.

Because you had last week, you know, the child had epilepsy and was demonized. And the call to trust him, depend on him, we looked at that last week.

And then if he's going to pay this temple tax in here, sandwiched right between these two events, he unfolds his mission. It's not by accident.

[11:33] This is the essence of our trust. The essence of our trust is in his person and his work, his identity and his mission. I mean, he brings it up in chapter 17, verses 12 and 13 as well.

Guys, I'm going to die. This is my mission. Jesus' identity and mission must be the heart of all that we do as Christians.

It must be first and foremost because when we least expect it, we'll run into something like this in verses 24 to 27.

someone will start talking to us about some political issue. And they'll catch you off guard.

Notice they pulled Peter aside. Peter pay the two drachma. there in verse 24. They come into Capernaum.

[12 : 38] Those who collected the two drachma came to Peter. So, gospel truth is first, which leads us to our next point. Don't cause offense. In this peculiar, strange way, the narrative switches.

And this is a true, real historical event that takes place. Some commentators actually think that this was actually made up. This was like some figurative story. That's ridiculous. That's absurd.

This really happened. And notice Jesus, he showed both his power, but also great humility. He showed his identity, but also his humility.

The two drachma people, collectors two drachma, they came to Peter. Does your teacher not pay the two drachma? This temple tax collectors, they came to Peter, and it was an annual temple tax. Every Jewish male had to pay it. And notice Peter answered, there in verse 25, he said, yes. He answered in the affirmative, not really knowing if Jesus paid it or not.

[13 : 57] I hope so. I don't know. I just told him, yes. Two drachmas, Ezekiel to a denarius, about a day's wage for a laborer.

So you pay it once a year, every Jewish male. The priests were probably exempt from this tax, and others who were in God's service, they were probably exempt from this tax too.

So any objections to this, they were collectors, but any objections, it would be deferred to the authority in Jerusalem. You'd be in trouble with those guys in Jerusalem.

Now for us, this would translate into political or government issues, which is, and Jesus kind of goes in that direction with Peter, which you'll see in a moment, because the fact of the matter is government extracts taxes from people.

But it leads us to this question, how do we as Christians handle sensitive political issues in our day? How do we deal with this?

[15 : 13] How do we deal with this in a biblical way? So he says, yes, verse 25, and coming into the house, Jesus spoke to Simon first, showing his supernatural knowledge, spoke first to Peter, asking him this question, so what do you think, Simon?

From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll tax? He uses these two words, customs tax and regular tax, as a way to sum up all kinds of taxes. who do they extract it from? From their sons or from strangers or foreigners or their subjects? Who pays them? Peter answered correctly.

Notice, verse 26, and upon his saying, from strangers or from foreigners or from subjects. So in other words, kings don't tax their own children, but their subjects.

Now, Jesus is not talking about a democratic republic as in the case of the U.S. where the law calls for all to pay taxes no matter who you are. Donald J. Trump Jr.

[16 : 29] has to pay taxes, just, and everyone else has to pay taxes. Donald Trump has to pay taxes. Everyone pays taxes. But Jesus' focus was on a monarchy.

And in a monarchy, the king doesn't tax his sons. He doesn't tax his children. I mean, that's ridiculous. He taxes everyone else in the kingdom, even at times his own counselors.

Thus, the children are free from paying these taxes. By the way, this is something that should be maintained by free voluntary, free will offerings.

They shouldn't have even been asking for a temple tax. That was ridiculous in and of itself. But then Jesus does something here. Look at his statement here in verse 26.

Jesus said to him, so, or consequently, the sons are exempt, literally, free. So, get what Jesus is saying here.

[17 : 40] Jesus, the unique, one and only, begotten son of God is greater than the temple. So he, of course, is exempt from this temple tax.

It's his father's house. Why should he have to pay it? That's stupid. And not just him, but also his disciples. Those who are children of God, they don't have to pay it?

It's ridiculous. Come on. Come on. Yet, verse 27, but in order that we may, he says, lest we give them offense.

Even though Jesus and his disciples, they're rightly free from this tax, Jesus decided to pay it anyways. And notice, he says, so as not to cause them to stumble. And I translate this for you, to entrap them, or tempt them to sin, to be tripped up, to be entrapped, led to sin.

[18:52] Or, one writer put it like this, quote, hurt their consciences, violate their conscience, to offend unnecessarily.

Jesus did not decline to pay it, yet he also does not command that it be paid.

He proved he was exempt, but he still paid it. Friends, that's grace. That's showing grace. That's showing mercy to people.

And this puts Jesus kind of in a tough spot. contempt. Because if Jesus paid it, then he put himself in the same category as others. But then if he didn't pay it, then it could be seen as him rejecting the temple.

Well, they didn't want to do that. And then put the collectors in an awkward position. I mean, what would they do? How would they take action against Jesus? He proclaimed himself the Son of God.

[19:54] They didn't care. They didn't give a rip about that. We just want our money. And then they would say, oh, he rejects the temple and all for which it stands. That's what they would do.

So Jesus was in a tough spot. But he says to pay it anyways, so as not to offend. So he opted to pay it.

So as not to give offense, so as not to violate their consciences. And then he, in a kind of bizarre, and yet in a cool way, notice the next part of verse 27.

I go to the sea, throw a fish hook, literally, and taking the first fish that comes, and open its mouth, you'll find a stator. Stator was four drachmas.

Taking that, give it to them for me and for you. Kind of bizarre, and yet kind of cool. He throws in a hook, and that first fish, whoa, there's a stator.

[21:01] I thought about the person who might have lost that stator. What about that guy? I'm just kidding. I was like, oh man, you know, you'd be the guy like, oh no, there goes my stator, right?

You're like, in the middle of the sea, and you dropped anyways. But in actuality, this shows, one writer puts it like this, God's sovereign freedom, he takes where he will and gives to whom he will.

Okay, that's true.

collectors, but he did not take the money from their money box, which is given to him by his supporters who support his ministry, it was through other means. Kind of crazy way he did this.

Shows his power. But notice what takes place here. Jesus knew the truth of his identity and his mission, but he chose not to bring these to stumble over this tiny issue of paying this ridiculous tax. It wasn't legit. But Jesus paid it anyways because the issue was not paying some tax, the issue was believing him. That's the issue.

[22:15] The issue is not politics, the issue is the gospel. It's striking how Jesus did not want to cause you to stumble or entrap them to sin.

He's very forthright with the religious leaders and their hypocrisy. Interesting. Jesus is the example for us. Jesus is the example of foregoing liberties in order not to cause offense and deter furthering God's kingdom.

Another great lesson to teach Jesus' disciples about trusting him and the main purpose of the church. Remember, they're the foundational authority of the church.

These guys are going to be the foundational authority of us. It's the church. Upon what should they focus? I mean, is it really about people, causing people to sin over ridiculous, silly issues?

Now, I know what you're thinking. At least maybe you're thinking this. What, you're saying our government is silly and ridiculous?

[23:45] You're saying that things in politics are silly and ridiculous? Jim, you're saying you're being very unpatriotic, I know. I might hear it as you're going out or something like that.

You might say, why are you being like that? I'm prepared. Hear me out. The principle of the temple's upkeep is not ridiculous in and of itself.

Of course not. But, government is important. Yes. And as a matter of fact, for us as Americans, we have a responsibility to be involved in our government.

That's assumed in the Constitution. It assumes that on us as citizens of this country. things within our government is not silly and not ridiculous.

We should be involved. And we can have those political discussions. Just like two, three, four weeks ago, a guy and Jerome friend of mine, we had a discussion.
[25 : 03] We're on two different spectrums, him and I. But even he was like, this is so good to have just a civil discussion.

Because we did. And I threw some things at him that he was kind of, whoa, really? I didn't know that. Threw him off, which is good. We could have a civil discussion together. Those are good things. But what has happened is that evangelicals, and I put it like that, you see the rotation on my hands, evangelicals, and I say it like that because on the news media, they classify evangelicals, they might define them differently than how we would. But be that as it may, evangelicals, and Christians in general, we could be under the delusion that our goal is to somehow use our government as the means to propagate our way of thinking. And when you really think about it, in comparison to the gospel, political bias is ridiculous and silly. it is.

[26 : 34] We must keep the main thing the main thing because if we don't, we may end up tearing down our corporate witness in this community if or when it becomes about pushing hard our own political persuasion.

First, first, you are a follower of Jesus, not a Republican and not a Democrat. And if you think otherwise, you're wrong.

You're wrong. Now, when it comes to being pro-life, that's different. Pro-life, pro-choice, anti-abortion, that's different.

Why? Because I believe it's the woman who has rights, the woman who's here, and the woman who's in here. She has rights too because she's a human, right?

Of course. She has rights and she has rights. They both have rights. And him too is a boy. First, we're followers of Jesus and then we are dot, dot, dot.

[27 : 46] Friends, if it means we must give up that liberty so as to further the gospel and God's kingdom then we must act like our Savior.

Jesus did it and all graciousness do I ask you this. What's your problem? If Jesus did this, if Jesus, he, it is completely ridiculous that Jesus paid this tax.

that was his house. The spirit of Christ that was inside of him, the Holy Spirit, was there in his house and yet he paid a temple tax because our focus should be people responding to the gospel, to Christ in the gospel, not on being political conservatives.

Friends, it's not about being patriotic. It's about laying down our lives for our king. It's not about flying the American flag in our meeting place, which we will not do.

but it's raising the pure white flag that we surrender to Jesus. A white flag where we surrender to ourselves to Jesus, even our political persuasions or views, so as not to entrap others to sin and deter away from the furtherance of God's kingdom.

[29 : 31] Because I'll tell you what, if you make it about Trump and nothing else about Trump, you will never plant a church into Rome. Never. It has to be about Christ.

It has to be about Jesus. It has to be about his kingdom. It has to be. I mean, Jesus called us to pray this, right?

Matthew chapter 6. Pray this way. Our Father who art in heaven, let your name be hallowed. your kingdom come. Not democratic republic.

We are a democratic republic. This is our American system. But be mindful of the fact that there will not be a democratic republic in the eternal state.

There will be a monarchy. And Jesus will reign as king. He will be our king. Amen. Your kingdom come, your will be done.

[30 : 38] This truth, bow down and worship Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, King of Israel, is what the world needs, not our own political persuasion. In short, people need Christ, not Donald Trump.

that needs to be our motto. Or some other person. You can put another person if you want. It's not about converting the socialism or be political conservatives.

It's about Christ and him crucified. We must, we must not allow anything that we're free to say politically or do politically to jeopardize the furtherance of the gospel in God's kingdom.

And I'll tell you, it's hard. It's a tightrope. And sometimes that tightrope ain't very thick. It's like thin. Like as thin as a thread. And you're trying to walk that bad boy and it's hard.

And sometimes we blow it. Praise God for forgiveness. Praise God we can say, I probably should have said, I'm sorry, I apologize. Because it's not about this. It's about Jesus.

[31:46] And you say that, that throws people off. They don't know what to do with that. People need this truth. Gospel truth, not politics.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for the example that Jesus has set for us. So as to not to offend.

Help us to have that same mindset. And we thank you that you're so gracious to us. You're so patient with us.

There's so many times where we make other things more important than the gospel. You know I've done that too. So help us as a church. Remind us as a church, what is our mission as a church?

To further your kingdom by proclaiming Jesus Christ. By proclaiming the gospel. And seeing people respond to him, submitting themselves to Jesus.

[32:59] Not to our American system. or any government for that matter. But to you Jesus, you are the king.

And one day you will rule. You will rule and reign this earth. And all the nations will come and bring tribute to you. And we will reign with you.

We will rule over this whole world. Help us to keep an eternal perspective. I encourage you at this time to let your mind think, ponder, dwell upon what we've seen in God's word.

Just for a few moments. Then we'll do our time of giving. We'll wait for you to worship in your giving. Worship in singing.

We'll worship praying together. And having conversations afterwards. But at this time, as Paul says, let your mind think on these things.

[34:33] So do that. Take a few moments to do that, please. Do that. Do that. Take a few moments. I and ■nda on I and you do that.

And so do that. So do that, so do you and