

Matthew 17:24–27

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[0 : 0 0] Matthew 17, verses 22 to 27. As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.

And they were greatly distressed. When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, Does your teacher not pay the tax?

He said, Yes. And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax?

From their sons or from others? And when he said, From others, Jesus said to him, Then the sons are free. However, not to give offense to them, Go to the sea and cast a hook, And take the first fish that comes up.

And when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[1 : 1 3] You may be seated. Let me add my warmest of welcomes to you this morning if you're finding your way here to Christ Church Chicago for the first time.

I know there are many students who are excited to be back for another quarter. We are equally excited that you're back.

Let me pray for us and then we will turn to the Bible together. Father, as the deer pants for the water, We long that our souls would pant after you.

And so would you create a longing, A hunger, A thirst That is only quenched by the word of the living God.

Go with us in these next moments we pray. We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we are continuing our 15-week mini-series within Matthew's Gospel.

[2 : 2 4] We've titled it, Following Jesus as King. 15 lessons along the way. Well, let me just conduct a short review session.

Lesson one, Get in line and follow. It is followed by lesson two, Which was listen to him, Jesus. Lesson three was have faith. These are distinctives of the Christian disciple. What makes a follower of Jesus? We are those who get in line and follow him.

We are those whose ears are heavenward and listen to him. We are those who look to the unseen and have faith in him.

This morning we come to the fourth lesson. And it's this. Do not be an obstruction to him.

[3 : 3 1] Do not be an obstruction to him. Do not obstruct others from seeing Jesus. The lesson that is given this morning is a sobering one.

It's lifted from verse 27 in particular. Which reads, However, not to give offense to them.

The word there is skandalon. Translated as to cause or to give an offense. To cause to stumble. To cause to sin. In other words, The lesson is that as Christians, We are not to be an obstruction To those who may come to believe.

It's sobering because this text shows us That the way we live, The way we act, The way we speak, The way we behave Can actually repel belief In those around us.

Your life, My life, Our life, Can be an obstacle To others Coming to know Christ.

[4 : 4 9] We can cause unbelief In those around us. It's a vivid lesson I learned early in high school.

I was one with multiple reputations, None of them that great. But I had one of being a Christian. I was situated in a public high school, And I sought to be a good witness As well as I could have.

And I remember a conversation Within earshot of me. It was taking place between my friend And a classmate that I didn't know that well. His name is Ethan. My friend was asserting That Bing was a Christian.

No, no, no, Ethan. You need to know Bing is a Christian. And I heard. Not far away in the other side of the room, Ethan responded, He cannot be a Christian.

He does not live like one. It's a sobering lesson. It continues to be indelibly impressed upon me Well over 25 years later.

[6 : 10] Rather than living as a clear and faithful witness to Jesus, I was an obstruction. I was a stumbling block. I was a feeble representation.

I was a cause of offense. I was the source, Or one of the sources, Of unbelief In a non-Christian. And in our time, I want to make clear That we are not To be an obstruction To Jesus.

I want you to imagine with me That we are on this lookout point Standing afar And gazing over these verses This particular text. And this text, There are actually two reversals Or two undoings In the text.

It was the American statesman Benjamin Franklin Who famously wrote in a letter That there are two certainties in the world. Death And taxes.

[7 : 16] Incidentally, In this morning's text, There will be two radical reversals Of both death And taxes. What is seemingly A permanent pair Will be undone.

And as Jesus establishes His kingdom, There are two certainties That we must Grab hold of. There is a certainty Of life After death.

And there is a certainty Of, well, Let's put it this way, Freedom From Taxation. We will see A death reversed And a duty Undone.

A death reversed. This is the second Passion prediction From Jesus. It's concerning himself In verses 22 to 23. He will be delivered Into the hands of men And they will kill him And he will be raised On the third day.

And in this section of Matthew, In these four and a half chapters Where our series Is situated, This will be A recurring reminder From Jesus To his disciples.

[8 : 24] No lesson Will be repeated Three times. No other priority Will be asserted Three times. No other statement Will be recorded For us Three times.

Because this Is The heart Of Discipleship. If discipleship Is about following Jesus Which is Is Then the central lesson Is Jesus Christ Would Be Crucified.

For Jesus There would be A slow death march Beginning here In Galilee Descending Southward Toward Jerusalem. And the kingdom He was establishing Is one Where a crucified King Would reign.

And though This king Is omnipotent And though This king Is commander In chief Of all of heaven's Angels And though This king Is ruler Of all nature And heaven's Only beloved Son This king Would subject Himself To the hands Of men.

He would be Delivered Into the plots And the ploys Of a depraved Humanity. He would be Unjustly sentenced To death Brutally beaten Mocked Spit upon Abused Raised And ridiculed Upon a cross.

[9 : 42] Humiliated And crucified By the world He created. It would be A brutal journey. A pain filled Path. It's a route A route Of immense Hardship.

But it would be The road That he would Blaze For all Who follow Him. Listen.

The path You and I Take If we Yield To lesson One To get In line And follow Is a Cruciform Path.

It's a Cross Shaped Path. We are To those Who play Follow Not only Play But give Ourselves To following The leader.

It's a Sobering Reminder Of how We may Pass Through This Life For some Of us This life Will be a Heavily Afflicted Life For some Of us The burdens And the Buffetings Of life Will continue Over And over And over For some This life Will be Filled With unspeakable Suffering And yet We are Called To walk Close Behind Him In his Sufferings Dietrich Bonhoeffer The German Theologian Reminded us That when Christ calls A man Or a woman He bids Him to Come And die The cross Is laid He writes On every Christian The first Christ Suffering Which every Person Must experience Is the call To abandon The attachments Of this World And as Jesus

[11 : 32] Proceeds To the cross He is Calling us To follow He is Going to Die He is Calling us To die Die To self Die To our Privileges Die To our Preferences Die To our Selfish Ambitions Die To our Self Centered Dreams Die To our Proud Prerogatives Die To our Inherent Perceived Rights We are To die To sin We are To die Die And die We are To lose Our life For Jesus Sake In order To find It We are To forfeit This world In order To gain Our Soul And we Are those Who expend This earthly Life To be

Repaid In heavenly Reward Jesus Though in The very Form of God Did not Count Equality With God Something To be Grasped But he Emptied Himself By taking The form Of a Servant Being Humbling Himself Becoming Obedient To the Point of Death To death On the Cross And though He possessed Every right And though He possessed All the Might He would Give himself Over To be Delivered Into the Hands of Men This is The great Irony Of Christ's Accomplishment His victory Would be Secured By becoming History's Most memorable Victim His victory Is found In verse 23 He will be Raised On the Third day And though The Lamb Of God Would be Slain By the World He would Be raised On the Third day Back to

Life And this Would be The testimony Of our New Testament All its Writers Contribute That contribute To this Sacred writing Know that Jesus Lives And in The final Battle Death Would be Subjected To the Son In the Crucifixion The Son Was subject To death But in The resurrection You and I Need to know That death Will be Subjected To the Son And as Jesus Was suspended Between heaven And earth Upon a Tree He appeared Destroyed By death But it Would be A short While after That his Body Would be Suspended Again Not on A tree But in The sky And his Victory Would secure His kingdom That victory Would purchase For himself A people That victory Our victory

That in All In Adam All die But in Christ All shall Be made Alive You see Death's Reversal Is bound Up In the Our fate As a Disciple Is bound Up in the Fate Of the One in Whom we Follow You see The destiny Of us As a Disciple Is tied With the Outcome Of the Son And in Jesus' Resurrection Death Was reversed And in Jesus' Return Your death My death Our death Will be Reversed And in The earthly Kingdom What we Experience on Earth Life will Give way To death But you Need to Know in Christ's Kingdom Death Will give Way To life In the Temporal All will Die In the Eternal All will Live In

Christ Well It Ends That sentence Ends That section Ends Verse 23 Ends And they Were greatly Distressed The disciples Are now Greatly Distressed And I Don't know If they're Distressed By death Or the Death Of the Oncoming Death Of Jesus Or the Distress That Jesus Would be Killed Because no One likes To hear The fate The troubling Fate For a Friend Yet as I Read this More and More I wonder If the Disciples Are starting To get It I wonder If the Disciples Are not Distressed Because Jesus Is going To die I wonder If they're Beginning to Distress Because they Know what Discipleship Entails The road Ahead Would be Arduous John the Baptist's

[16 : 33] Head Lay on A platter Jesus' Body Would be Laid In a Tomb And the Disciples I suspect Are wondering What would Be the Outcome Of me Following Him Well Death Reversed Secondly I only Have two Points But I'm Really excited About this One A duty Undone Verses 24 To the End Of the Chapter A duty Undone Now they Come to Capernaum Which is a Northern Part of the Sea of Galilee It was The Base Of Jesus' Many Recorded Miracles And here We would Read of Another It's a Bizarre Miracle For several Reasons First It doesn't Appear to Be a Miracle That's Helping Anyone Jesus Usually

Is Helping Someone Who Is Sick Demon Possessed Ill Blind Or Lame It doesn't Appear to Be helping Anyone Who is Ailing Like many Of his Other Miracles It's Also Bizarre Because It's I think The only Instance Where Fishing Occurs With a Hook Not a Net All the Fishing Scenes In the Bible Involve Larger Nets It's Also Bizarre Because None of The other Gospel Writers Record it It Actually Seems To be Quite Self Serving Jesus Is The Beneficiary Of His Miracle It's Absent From The Other Three Gospels Matthew Or Mark Luke And John Only Matthew Records It And Perhaps Only Matthew Records It Because Matthew Was A Former Tax Collector And He Has Unusual Interest In

This Matter The Question I'm Sure Matthew Was Asking Is Does Jesus Pay Taxes What do You Think About Taxes Jesus Well the Tax being Spoken of Is Unlikely The Roman Exploitive Tax It Was Not The Tax Collected By The Empire Because The Region Was Under Roman Occupancy The Roman Tax Was Often The Tax Spoken Of In Our Bibles It Would Be Later Addressed In Chapter 22 Of Matthew We'll Get There In Short While But If Your Bible Is Like Mine The The Editors Have Titled This Section The Temple Tax This Passage Is Concerned With A Jewish Temple Tax Instituted In Exodus Chapter 30 11 And Following You Could Turn There On Your Own The Instruction Was Given To Moses After They Had

Crossed The Red Sea And They Were Now Establishing The Nation Moses Was To Take A Census Of The People And After He Had Taken The Census He Was To Exact This Tax To All Men 20 Years Old And Up They Were To Give Half A Shekel As A Duty Or A Tax To The Lord As A Sign

For Their Ransomed Life What Was Its Purpose Well I'll Just Read A Sentence From Exodus 30 You Shall Take The Atonement Money Or This Tax From The People Of Israel And They Shall Give It For The Service Of The Tent Of Meeting Or The Tabernacle That It May Bring The People Of Israel To Remembrance Before The Lord So As To Make Atonement For Your Lives In Short It Was For The Upkeep Of The Temple Or The Church Building At The Time Later On Or It Was The Tabernacle At The Time Later On The

Temple It Was To Provide And Secure A Place Where Ongoing Sacrifice Could Continue To Serve As Atonement For The Life Of The Nation Therefore In The First Century This Was A Mandatory Tax For Any Jewish Citizen The Tax Upheld The Temple The Temple Upheld The Sacrificial System The Sacrificial System Secured Their Atonement For Salvation Before The Lord It Was The Duty Of All Men Therefore Owed By Both Peter And Jesus Apparently Jesus Had Yet To Pay The Tax Peter Is Approached By The Tax Collectors And They Asked Peter Does Jesus Pay The Tax And Peter Unsure He Just Commits Jesus To The Tax And When They Get Inside Jesus Asks Peter A Question From Whom Do The Kings Of The Earth Take

[21 : 34] Toll Or Tax From Their Sons Or From Others Well Peter Responds From Others Of Course Which Makes Sense If You Resided In A Monarchy And You Were The Son Or The Daughter Of The King And The Royal Or The Tax Collector Goes Around And Starts Collecting Money Would The Tax Collector Approach The Son Or The Daughter Of The King No They Are Exempt Actually Actually The Kings Tax To Fund The Royal Lifestyle Of The Sons And Daughters The Sons According To The Text Are Free The Sons Are Exempt The Assertion The Assertion That Jesus Was Making Was That They Were Free Namely Jesus And Peter From The Tax We're Exempt But But But How Could They Be Free The Temple Still

Stood The Obligation Still Remained The Duty Was Still Expected Was Jesus Merely Saying I'm Free Because I'm The Divine! Son Well No He's Actually Saying More Than That He's Saying The Sons Plural Are All Free Peter You're Actually Exempt As Well And Bing Too Peter Somehow Received Royal Status How Is This Happening Well When Jesus Comes On The Scene The Kingdom Of God Begins To Redraw Social Lines Lines Of Status And Position Peter The Disciple Was Also Peter The Son Of The King His Royal Status Would Actually Come From His Association With Jesus Peter Was Not A Son Inherently Of The King But He Would Become A Son Because Of His Relationship With Jesus He Would Be Adopted By God Through Faith In Christ Yet To All Who Received Him To Those Who Believed In His Name He Gave The Right To Become Children Of God The Sons And Daughters Are Free Their Status!

And It Certainly Begs The Question Are You Free Have You Found Your Way Into God's Family You Might Be Saying But I'm Still Paying My Taxes But This It's Not The Federal Income Tax That I Speak Of But Perhaps You're Working Within Yourself How Do I Pay An Atonement Tax Can I Actually Secure Enough Money To Buy And Purchase My Atonement And Ransom Can I Actually Achieve Or Acquire This I Will Pay This And That Tax That You Owe On Your Soul You're Trying To Come Up With Are

You Free From The Burden Of A Guilty Conscience That Works Out Of Duty And Not Delight You See Jesus Had Every Right To Refuse The Tax It Would Not Have Been Wrong For Jesus To Withhold The Tax He's The Son The Only Son The True Son Yet It's Essential That We Catch Why He Was Motivated To Voluntarily Pay It However Not To Give Offense To Them Jesus Sets An Example For Us That Our Exemption Does Not Give Us The Right Of Refusal Let Me Put It This Way Our Status As Sons And Daughters Is Not Permission It's Not A Permission Slip To Do Whatever We Want Rather Our

[26 : 01] Freedom Enables Us To Live In Such A Way That Serves And Promotes And Furthers The Kingdom Jesus Understood That If He Refused The Temple Tax Which He Had Every Right To Do It Would Have Created An Obstacle A Stumbling Block An Offense A Trigger Of Sin In Others And So He Lays Down His Right As A Son In Order That Others Might Also Become Sons And Daughters See The Exertion Of His Freedom Would By No Means Be An Obstacle For The Faith Of Others We'll Find This Later In Our Bibles That The Apostle Paul Will Write The Same Thing A Similar Principle I Think The Exact Principle He Would Surrender His Rights To Any Financial Compensation Because It Would Put An Obstacle In The Way Of The Gospel He Writes

In First Corinthians Nine For Though I Am Free From All I Have Made Myself A Servant To All That I Might Win More For The Gospel See The Tragic Reality In The Church Today Is We Have Lost This Missional Objective We Tout Our Freedom And We Hide Behind It Like It Is A Shelter Or It Is

An Excuse Of Serving And Loving Our Neighbor We Act As If We Are Free From All And Therefore We Are Excused We Have Excused Ourselves From Serving This World Oh Man I Got It We Have We We And In So Doing We Have Failed As Witnesses I'm Going To Tread On Some Dangerous Ground I'm Free I'm Free

I'm The Son Of The King I Live In A Nation That's Free I'm It's Protected By The First Amendment I Can Say Whatever I Want I Have Freedom Of Speech And Out Of Our Mouths Spew Gossip Degradation Slanting Slander Hate Speech Yes You're Free Yes I'm Free And In Our Freedom We Have Marred The Tenderness The Kindness The Gentleness The Love Of Jesus God I'm Free I'm Free I Have The Right To Carry Whatever Weapon I Want Whenever I Want To And Bear Those Arms And I Will Exercise That Freedom To The Fullest Of Its Capacities Regardless Of Its Implications

On God's World And God's People I'm Free And I Will Protest Everything That Opposes My Freedom I Will Picket And I Will Protest At The Top Of My Lungs In Order To Show The World That I Am Free And Yet As We Shout Our Freedoms We Silence Christ That Weeps Over The Bondage Of Our World You See The Church's Behavior Has Often Been Offense Been The Offense To The Watching World We Are So Assertive Of Our Rights It Has Come At The Expense Of Our Witness We Idolized Freedom And We Have Scandalized Christ We Worship Freedom And We Abandon Faith We Glory In Our Freedom At The Expense Of The Gospel And The World Wants Nothing To Do With A Church Because We Failed At This Lesson Of Discipleship Oh Man Well The Scene Concludes With A Miraculous Catch And It's Not The Size Of The Hall That Is Stressed It's Not Actually How Many Fish Are Caught But It Is What Is Caught It's A It's A Single Fish With A Single Coin With A Single Objective To Pay The Tax It Would Have Been Great To Hear I I Mean I Would Love To Ask Peter How This Unfolded Peter You're A Fisherman Can You Give Comment On This Miracle Well Jesus Said Go Take The Line And The Hook!

[30 : 47] Throw It In There And The First Fish I Catch The First One I Would Find A Coin In Its Mouth Not In Its Belly In Its Mouth Retrieve It Take The Exact Amount Needed And Go Pay The Tax For Him And For Myself And Peter That Day Learned The Difference Between What Is Obligatory And What Is Voluntary The Temple Tax Tax Was Originally An Obligation But Now It Was No Longer An Obligation But It Would Become An Act Of Joyful Generosity Grace And Glad Giving You See There Is A Huge Difference Between What Is Obligatory And What Is Voluntary As You Students Find This Week You Will Receive A Syllabus And On It You Will Find The Obligatory Readings That Is Totally Different

Than Voluntarily Picking Up A Book And Reading It On Your Own One You Do Out Of Duty The Other You Do Out Of Delight I Eat Cauliflower Out Of Duty I Eat Cookies Out Of Delight You See This Is The Distinctiveness Of The Freedom Of The Christian We Are Now Free To Act Out Of Delight Joy And Liberty It Is The Difference Between What I Have To Do With What I Want To Do I Have To Serve Others Is One Way To Say It I Want To Serve Others Is Another Way I Have To Go To Church Obligatory I Want To Go To Go To Church Voluntary And You See This Is The Mindset Of The

Genuine Disciple The Understanding Of Your Freedom That Results In The Service Of Others And The Display Of The Gospel What Does It Look Like I'll Just Use This Example And It's A Financial Example But It's Appropriate Because I guess We're Talking About Finances In Here In This Text Many Of You Are Unaware That A Few Years Back I Started A Fundraising Endeavor Now I'm Learning That Sometimes Pastors Are Part Fundraisers As Well It Wasn't A Class That I Took In Seminary But It Simply Happened And It Fell Under This Fundraising Endeavor Fell Under What I Called Friends Of Christ Church Chicago It Was A Fund That Was Dedicated To Our University Work Here Among Students We Have This Conviction To Strengthen The Student With The Hope That Their Faith May Flourish While They're Here And So What Did I Do I Started E-mailing Alumni And Each Summer

I Continue To Do The Same I Make This Ask Will You Support This Place Even Though You're Gone Will You Support This Place Even Though You Have No Obligation Though It Is Not Compulsory I Understand You Don't Have To But Do You Want To And My Heart As Even As I Look At This Fills With Joy Because They Show Up They Sign Up For Recurring Gifts They Stand Up And Bear Witness To The Transform Power Of The Local Church And They Under No Obligation In Their Freedom You Can Spend Your Money On Whatever You Want They

Are Going To Lay Up Treasure Here A New Work Was Beginning And I'll Close With This A New Funding Campaign Had Started A New Initiative In The Language Of The Bible A New Temple Was Being Constructed It Would Not Be Built By Human Hands No It Was A Heavenly Project Inaugurated By The Son His Very Body Would Be The New Temple It Would No Longer Be A Building That Required The Atonement Tax Of The People It Would Transcend Actually All Those It Would No Longer Have Geographical And Spatial Limitations It Would Transcend All Those Barriers God Would No Longer Meet With His People In A Place He Would Now Meet With His People In A Person Namely The Lord Jesus And Perhaps The Great Surprise In [35 : 48] This Text That Is Worth Mentioning Again Is That The Son Paid The Tax The New Temple Would Not Be Founded Or Established On The Funds Of The People No It Would Be Founded And Established On The Funds Of The Son And You And I Are Free Because Heaven's Son Secured The Sum Of The Construction Project At The Cost Of His Own Life And It Would Be Through His Precious Blood That Purchased Our Pardon And Established Us As The People Of Praise The Atonement Tax The Ransom Duty Had Been Undone Reversed By The Son And What's Interesting Is He Didn't Pay For Himself Just

Himself Give It To Them For Me And For You He Had No Obligation To Pay It But God Demonstrates His Love For Us In This That While We Were Yet Sinners Christ Died For Us And This Is The Message Of The Kingdom One Where Death Is Reversed Where Duty Is Undone Therefore May We Not Be Obstructions To This Glorious Message Through The Misuse Of Our Freedom Oh Father We Give You Thanks Free Free Free Indeed He Whom The Son Sets Free Is Free Indeed And Therefore As A Congregation May You Show Us Our Freedom May You Utilize Your Freedom Our Freedom To Not Be An Impediment To The World Not Be An Obstacle Or A Stumbling Block To The World But May We Use Our Freedom To Propel The Gospel To Display The Gospel To Proclaim The Gospel Make Us That Type Of People That We May Not Give Offense To Others We Ask These Things In Jesus Name Amen