KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material – *from Dave Gertzen*

Matthew 22:15-22

Week of Sunday 21st July 2024

Christian Citizenship

Leader Preparation

The paying of taxes is always a hot topic. Some words used in everyday speech…eg "Tax minimization, avoidance." In South Africa this topic can be especially relevant in areas where service delivery has broken down and people ask, "What are my taxes being used for?" It was also a hot topic under the Nationalist government in the 1980/90s with the debate being about supporting an unjust regime and wars.

A hot topic could also be to ask your group how they felt about paying e-tolls? There may be lots of comment. This passage will help us think through this issue from a biblical perspective. Be careful of people in your group not wishing to come under the authority of Scripture. Some members may have very strong opinions and talk at length.

You will need to lead and direct your members if this happens and also allow other group members the right to speak. One way of doing this is to ask other members directly what their views are or to go around the group and allow everyone to say 3-4 sentences.

Group Time:

We prayed as a church for peaceful elections. Spend a time giving thanks and praying for the currently newly elected Parliamentary members, and Executive. If you want the names of the ministers and deputy ministers go to https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa-appointment-members-national-executive-30-jun-2024

Ask people how they feel about paying taxes to a government they may not agree with?
Or
Have their views on this topic moved as they became more mature as a Christian or got older or paid more tax? SARS has a very efficient system now where many of our accounts in banks, investments and employer information is all linked electronically. Tax returns are generated automatically.
Or
What sense of outrage and injustice wells up inside them having to pay unjust taxes or when taxes are not used as they think they should be?

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 22:15-22

Content

This passage follows up after the three parables questioning Jesus' authority. It focuses on the first of three questions from the Pharisee trying to trap Jesus (v 15a). The key issue would be the adherence to the Romans' tax regime (v 17), which the Pharisees objected to paying as it was not based on the Torah. The Herodians were pro Rome as the Romans had installed Herod as a client king.

What key points did the group members find from the sermon? (Develop your own notes from the sermon but allow the group members to share) At the end add anything that is material that has not been raised already.

Delving deeper

V 16 The accusing group in the passage use flattering words. Ask your group members to describe a time when flattering words were used and have they ever had flattery used on them as a trap or a lose / lose situation? Whichever way they think Jesus will answer will result in him being condemned / accused of treason.

V 18 Jesus has a strong response here to the pharisees!! Hasn't he already answered a similar question before (Mt 17:24-27)? What's different here?

How does he respond? Hint: not opinion but facts and data "Bring me a coin used to pay the tax"

Note: The coin would have had the impression of the emperor Tiberius Caesar on it.

How often do we let our feelings, emotion or opinion get in the way of facts in an argument? What does Jesus say about peacemaking elsewhere in the Scriptures. Look up Mt 5:9, James 3:17-18, Heb 12:14

Vs 21 What on this earth belongs to God? If everything, then is Jesus's response wrong? Look up Mt 21:33-46, Rom 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17

This passage does indicate God's providence as he places governments in authority, even if we don't like or agree with them. There are limits on government authority as we see from the prophets challenging / condemning kings. See 2 Sam 12 :13, and the various OT prophets. Eg Amos.

Closing off

How do we practically give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's? Ask your members to comment on or write down one item they might feel convicted about because of the passage that they should do/change in their lives!

What happens when there is a conflict between Caesar and God? How do we respond? Read Acts 5: 29.