



Reflection by Tessa Amies

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity
Matt 22:15-22
22nd October 2023



Once again the Jewish leaders are trying to 'trap' Jesus. They've tried before without success, will they succeed this time ?

They pick a time when Jesus and his disciples are surrounded by people. They want Jesus' answer to be heard by many people. They need to have witnesses. After a bit of flattery, they ask *'is it lawful to pay taxes to the Emperor or not'*? What would Jesus say. What would be his answer? Surely he must denounce himself to either the Emperor or the State?

The question is not quite as straightforward as it sounds at first. At the time - Jewish lands were governed by the Romans. The Emperor Tiberius ruled from Rome. Israel was an occupied territory. There were several currencies in circulation, including Roman, Jewish and special temple coins. Taxes had to be paid in Roman coinage. The Jews resented this. The Emperor's head was shown on one side of the coins and Jews perceived this to be a form of idolatry, a 'graven image' (10 Commandments – no.4). Also, all the taxes collected went off to Rome and the Jews received little benefit.

Jesus' answer is superb and to the point;
'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesars, and to God the things that are God's'

Fast forward 2,000 years and we to-day are in a similar situation. There are things in our lives that belong to God and things that belong to the state, the world. Both God and the World demand our allegiance. It's balancing the two that require our attention. It is worth sparing a few minutes to think where our allegiance lies. How much time and energy do we give to God and how much time and energy do we give to our secular life, worldly matters.? Time to reflect !!

ROMAN COINS in the first century AD.

Coins have two sides. On one side – the obverse – there is usually a profile head of an Emperor or governor or his wife/daughter. e.g. The Emperor Tiberius at the top. On the back or reverse of a coin the designer could have a little more fun! Often showing something of significance done by the Emperor/governor/wife. E.g. a victory or new building.

The wonderful crocodile tied to a tree, was minted in around 60BC. Buildings included the Temples of Jupiter and Janus. Others might show a horse and chariot here on the back of a coin for Domitillia the daughter of Vespasian (60AD)

Most coins were very small, about the size of our £1 coin.
COULD JESUS HAVE HANDLED ONE OF THESE ?

