**Slide 1: “Things Belong To God” 2017 10 22**

**Matthew 22:15-22 Pr. H. Adachi**

May the Lord’s grace and peace be poured into the hearts of the people gathered in this sanctuary!

**Slide 2:** The following is an example of a topic a youth minister discussed with children during a church’s Kid’s Talk. She places 10 apples on the altar. She asked for a volunteer and one child raised his hand. Then she put all 10 apples from the altar into a bag and gives it to him.

**Slide 3:** He was very pleased, but then she says, “Since there is nothing on the altar, should you give back some apples to God?” The kid put back 5 apples. Then she said, in the Bible, we are taught to tithe, which means to give back one out of ten. Then she gives four apples back to him and leaves one on the altar.

**Slide 4:** The kid says, while smiling brightly, “Are you sure, God wants only one and can I keep nine? Pastor, there’s something wrong... Are the nine apples really mine to keep?” She says, it is OK keep the nine apples. They are enough for you and to share with your friends or whomever wants one.

**Slide 5:** When discussing the gospel text today, I would like to talk about some background information. 2000 years ago, the regions of Israel was politically controlled by the Roman Empire which was very secular compared to religious Jews. Amidst a politically challenging situation, Jesus Christ appeared and saved many who were sick and otherwise afflicted.

**Slide 6:** Jesus’ compassionate actions were problematic for Jewish leaders, because they thought that people’s sicknesses or afflictions were the outcome of those people not observing the law. So Jewish leaders, the Pharisees, thought people deserved the difficulties they suffered and they would be well when they followed the law. Therefore, Jesus was an unwelcomed presence for the leaders of Judaism at that time, and they wanted to arrest, punish, and ultimately crucify him for what he said and did.

**Slide 7:** Then Jewish leaders together with Herodians, who are a part of Roman Empire, asked Jesus a question, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” Why was he asked this question? This was a trap, because, if Jesus answered, “you should not pay tax to the emperor,” this would put him in opposition to the Roman Empire and they may kill him. And, if Jesus answered, “You should pay taxes,” this is a problematic and inappropriate answer for Judaism and they may pursue arresting Jesus.

**Slide 8:** Jesus immediately figured out their ulterior motive. So before answering the question, Jesus said, “Show me the coin used for tax.” And they brought him a denarius. Then he asked the question, translated in English “Whose head is this, and whose title?”

**Slide 9:** Since there was the Emperor’s head and it was carved by the Roman Empire, they answered “It is the Emperor’s.” Then Jesus would finally answer to question. However, his answer was not welcomed by the people at that time and maybe even now. He answered, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s,” he continued his answer by saying, “Give back to God the things that are God’s.”

**Slide 10:** From Jesus’ reply, we learn several important things. I would like to touch on 3 matters. Firstly, Jesus tactfully evaded their plot to arrest him. He not only emphasized the importance of paying taxes using the Emperor’s coins, but also highlighted the importance of giving back to God the things that are God’s, both the Roman Empire and Jewish leaders could not pursue their plot based on what Jesus said.

**Slide 11:** Secondly, people may interpret that Jesus was teaching the importance of the separation between Church and State from what he said, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

**Slide 12:** However, separation between church and state is a relatively modern concept.

I believe there is an especially important message, which is a basic and ubiquitous principle that may even apply to the whole universe in the words “Give back to God the things that are God’s” that Jesus taught at the end of Gospel text today.

**Slide 13:** So, I would like to talk about the third matter. We, human beings, that are taught this concept, we need to ask questions, “What are the things that are God’s?” and “How we may give back to God?” Please think to yourself, “What are the things that are God’s?” We are enjoying fellowship and worship on this Sunday. To whom does this Sunday morning belong?

**Slide 14:** This wonderful morning could not be created by humanity’s efforts or works. Not only the morning, but think about time in general. Whatever we do, as time goes on, we walk through our lives. We are not able to create more time – there are 24 hours in a day.

**Slide 15:** Of course, parents or teachers may say, “Take more time to finish your homework!” However, we are not really making time, time is a thing God gave us, and within our given time, we try to do something. Again, we cannot create more time, but God created the whole universe and concepts of time and space.

**Slide 16:** Let’s, now, think about easier concepts. How about status, income, friends, family, or your life? You might say due to your efforts you earned or made your status, income, etc.

**Slide 17:** However, your efforts were aided by others, there were your parent’s or parents’ efforts, or your ancestors’ or your friends’ lives that were originally created by God. Your efforts were accomplished because God gave/made aspects such as, your unique body, genes, and traits, and a nurturing environment.

**Slide 18:** Nothing exists without God, in other words, everything belongs to God. To conclude this message, let me ask two questions how we may give back to God. These questions came from Bishop Andy Taylor: 1. In our busy world, what gifts of time is God asking you to give, in order to thank God for taking time for you? 2. In our multi-tasking world, what gifts of talents/treasurers does God ask you to give, in order to thank God for all God does for you?