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Jesus and Taxes; Matt 17:24-27
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Introduction – I'm sure you've heard the saying "There are only 2 sure things in life; death and taxes." You can't escape death and if you would rather live in a society of people rather than isolated and in 24/7 survival mode, you can't escape taxes either. So with these two things being such a commonality of life, we would expect to find them addressed in Scripture. You may not have known or given much thought but Jesus does take a position on paying taxes.

This particular tax was called the temple tax. This payment was collected in order to maintain the service of the temple. But there's more going on here than a monetary transaction to "keep the lights on" at the temple. Jesus, as He so often does, is using a common, everyday experience to teach greater lessons. He takes an earthly obligation, a tax, to teach a heavenly reality. Tolls and taxes provide structure to society, pave roads, support education, maintain order, and supply goods and services. All of those things are good and helpful for this life when kept in proper perspective and balance. But they are all utilized for this life. Daily living in this world. Jesus, the Master Teacher, uses this occasion of the temporary to point us to the eternal.

There's a lesson there for us. May we follow Jesus' example here and be on the lookout for ways we can turn everyday conversations and everyday experiences to spiritual truths. There are spiritual lessons and illustrations all around us if we will simply look for them.

- I. An Illustration of Salvation
 - a. This whole conversation between Jesus and Peter occurs because Jesus is aware of Peter's conversation with the tax collectors. If you recall from last week's study on Jesus foretelling His suffering, death, and resurrection, one of the main points of Jesus foretelling these events with such accuracy is that He must be the Sovereign, all-knowing God. Jesus knew.
 - b. He also knows what just happened even though He wasn't bodily present. That tells us at least two things: Jesus is the Sovereign, all-

knowing, all-present God and Jesus then also knows our conversations.

- i. Uh-oh! Yeah, that's right. Jesus hears every one of our private and personal conversations. There are some things we will say at home or say in private or say at work or school that we would not dare say at church. There are some jokes we will tell and memes we will share with our friends that we wouldn't dare share in SS. As if God only hears us when we walk on to the campus of Grassy Pond Baptist Church. Jesus is God. He hears everything we say.
- c. Read vv25-26. "Then the sons are free."
 - i. The sons of the king are not taxed. They are free from the burden, obligation, and duty of taxation because of who their father is. It's not so much that in their own person they are exempt; it's more to do with who they are related to. If the king is your father, you enjoy some benefits that others do not enjoy.
- d. The point here is that Jesus is teaching Peter that He and Peter are not really under obligation to pay a temple tax. Jesus is King of kings, as He just demonstrated by His knowledge of Peter's conversation. Peter, by His faith in Jesus, is now a son of the King. The King and his sons don't pay tax for the house built for the worship of the King.
- e. We know that's the point Jesus is making because He goes on to say, "However, not to give offense." You are a son. You are free! In other words, those collectors don't realize I'm the King. They don't understand what it means to be a son of God. They won't get it, so we'll go ahead and pay. We won't be the cause of unnecessary unrest and trouble.
- f. Jesus just wants to make sure Peter understands he is now a son, and sons are free.
- g. The same is true for you today. If you are in Christ, you too are a son or daughter of God. You are free!
 - i. You are free from the burden of the law. The law of God is written in the Word and is written on our conscience. We can't escape it just like we can't escape taxes. Even if you've never read the 10 Commandments and even if you don't believe there is a God, you are created with a moral fiber. And even if

that moral fiber has been corrupted and broken, still there are things that you would deem morally wrong. No matter how sinful or rebellious against God you can become. There still remains within your chest the heartbeat and remnants of right and wrong. If someone kidnaps the child of an unbeliever, he would still say that is wrong. And when that unbeliever sins against God, his gut tells him he has committed a wrong. Down deep he knows then that there is a God to whom he must one day give an account for all his sins.

ii. We have all, believer and unbeliever, broken the law of God. The law only goes far enough to condemn us before God, to declare us guilty. The law cannot save us because as sinners we can't keep it.

h. But – if you are in Christ – you are free! Romans 8:1-4

i. If in Christ you are free from the law, that is, free from the penalty and power of sin, then live like who you are. Live like the sons and daughters of the King! Live free from sin. Live in the Spirit.

II. An Example of Provision

a. Read v27. Jesus miraculously provides the tax for He and Peter. That tells us two things at least.

b. First, once again Jesus demonstrates that He is the all-knowing God who is sovereignly in control over all of His creation.

i. Capernaum sits by the Sea of Galilee. Somewhere in that vast sea, there's a fish swimming around with a shekel stuck in his mouth. Who knows how it got there, other than God. Maybe some fishermen were playing heads or tails and suddenly a wave pushed against their boat and down went the shekel. A fish caught the glimmer of a twirling coin, mistook it for food, and tried to swallow it. There you go.

ii. The point is this. Peter goes somewhere along the shore, casts a hook, and the first fish he catches is the fish Jesus said he would catch. That means Jesus not only knew but sovereignly made it so.

iii. Listen carefully, as believers our hearts should be full of faith and confidence in the Lord from this fish! No matter where you are, what you encounter, or what you face, you can rest

assured as a son or daughter of God that your God, your King, is in absolute sovereign control of every molecule of creation surrounding you! Imagine Peter up in heaven telling Jonah about this fish and Jonah replies, “Boy, have I got a story for you!”

- iv. God is in control of your surroundings – never fret and never fear.
- c. Second, Jesus, the King, provides for His sons and daughters. Peter left his job and his home to follow Christ. How is he going to pay a tax? God provides when His children obey and follow Him in faith.
 - i. Peter is not going to get that coin unless he goes fishing like Jesus told him to. But if he will just believe Jesus and obey and go fishing – God will provide.
 - ii. God will provide for us too if we will only trust and obey and follow. Live for Him. Live free. Take risks when He calls you to go and step up and speak out. Be bold and courageous.
 - iii. We never know what we might catch if we’ll just faithfully cast the net. The King provides for His children.

III. A Lesson on Governing Authorities

- a. I say governing authorities because it is in relation to tax but the principle would apply to all authorities wouldn’t it? Jesus and Peter were free from this tax. He is the Son of God. If anyone is exempt; it’s Him. If anyone has a right to refuse; it’s Him. But He said, “However, not to give offense to them..” Christ and His followers are peace makers, even to the extent of foregoing at times their own rights and preferences and wishes.
- b. This would apply to parental authority, governing authority, spiritual authority, every authority that God has placed in our lives. Imagine how much difficulty and conflict and turmoil could be avoided if we would live by these words – However, not to give offense to them.
- c. In fact, the only time the Bible allows us to refuse to submit to authority is when what is required is in opposition to the will of God. Otherwise, according to Jesus, is better not to offend than to get our way.
- d. The only way you can be content while foregoing your own rights or preferences is by knowing the God you serve is in sovereign control

of everything around you. Ultimately you are submitting to God's will, not another's.

Conclusion – An illustration of salvation, an example of provision, and a lesson on authority. Who knew that paying taxes could teach us so much!