

29th Sunday OT (A)
October 22, 2017

Transform the World

Have you ever been surrounded by a group of people upset with you because you have been telling them things they don't want to hear... that they don't agree with... but that they need to hear. People who want to trip you up because they think you are an annoying irritant.... and that group could be in a meeting at work, or maybe around the family dinner table... or the in the classroom and sanctuary.

If you have that experience... you share something with Jesus in today's Gospel.

Jesus is a burr under the saddle of society... so must have thought the Pharisees. So much of an irritant was he... that the Pharisees joined forces with their enemies... the followers of Herod... to lay a trap for him... about paying taxes. They presented what they think is an either / or question so if he sides with one group he alienates the other... and the repercussions follow... but Jesus knows they are setting him up and his answer leaves them speechless...

Over the past several week in our Gospel readings we have heard Jesus teaching in parables to the Scribes and Pharisees about the kingdom of heaven and in his teachings... he has ruffled feathers and upset the powerful.... because what he has been saying is not what the religious

leaders and politicians of his day have been selling and it certainly is not what has been the practice in society.

He's told his followers... that rather than what they have experienced and been lead to believe... the things of greatest value are... repeated forgiveness of offenses.... forgiving not seven times but 70 X 7 times... He's spoken of unimaginable generosity... with late in the day workers getting a full day's wage... and he's taught inclusion of the outcasts...as all are invited to the banquet... and he's made it clear that living this way... here and now...not following what they see and hear their religious and civil leaders doing and saying... is the key to living in the kingdom of God.

With his persistent call for fundamental changes in the way that the world works... Jesus is amassing powerful enemies who wish he would keep his mouth shut... move on.... give up and give in... Or suffer the consequences.

Seems as though we have not progressed much in the world as those things that Jesus spoke out against can still be found in society. But the truly important question of the day for us ... seems more along the lines.... Have we taken up the message of Jesus and proclaim it in such a way that the world wishes that we would keep our mouths shut.... Move on... Give up and give in... Are we the burr under the saddle of society that persistently points out a better way... Or do we neglect the message... such that it has no voice in the world?

Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and give to God the things that belong to God... isn't simply a punch line in a story about paying taxes... it's here to help put our responsibilities in balance.

There seems to be a tension between this world and the next...but we must live and work... here... in this world until we enter the next...and as such...we do not have the luxury of checking-out and abandoning our responsibilities to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. We must work...each in our own way... to make this world a better place... and the message of Jesus Christ needs a voice... it needs your voice.

We have the responsibility to be the voice of the Catholic perspective in the public arena and to place our Catholic beliefs in the forefront of public discourse... even when the world does not want to hear what we have to say.

We must not give into the world but rather...we must work to transform the world... the world must become a better place because you are in it. Give to God what belongs to God... you belong to God.

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