

Study notes – ‘Whose money is it anyway?’ (Graeme Clark)

Matthew 17:24-27 NIV

After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" (25) "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes--from their own children or from others?" (26) "From others," Peter answered. "Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him. (27) "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

1. What do you do when you visit a museum or gallery where there is a suggested voluntary minimum donation for entry? What if it is a church? Does this make a difference to your response? Would you be more, or less inclined to make a donation, if the demands were not so overt?
2. The Pharisees were always trying to catch Jesus out. When they asked Peter if Jesus paid the two drachma temple tax – Peter springs to Jesus defence – ‘of course He does.’ From Jesus’ question to Peter, we get the impression that Peter had opened his big mouth too soon. Are there times when we jump to Jesus’ defence without thinking, and defend Him unnecessarily or even unhelpfully?
3. Consider Jesus’ conversation with Peter – who, is it that Jesus is arguing is technically exempt from the tax? How does this compare with our invitation to visitors not to feel obliged to contribute to the offering?
4. Why then did Jesus pay the tax? Can you think of times when not causing offence trumps an absolute principle? i.e. when we are not obliged to do something but we do it voluntarily to keep the peace?
5. Graeme distinguished between slaves and children. Slaves give because they must, children give because they love. How do you respond to this?
6. You cannot serve God and money. Everybody’s gotta serve somebody all of the time (Dylan) – we are either slaves to sin or children of God. What are some of the signs of slavery to sinful nature?
7. See John 1:12 and Galatians 5:1. What are some of the implications of being a child of God?
8. Graeme finished with the question: ‘Whose everything is it?’ It either belongs to Satan, and if you chase it you become his slave OR it belongs to God and you can be free, released into your inheritance.

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