

YOU NEED TO SERVE SOMEBODY

I recently read about a song by Bob Dylan called, "Gotta Serve Somebody." Here are the words:

You're maybe an ambassador to England or France.

You maybe like to gamble, you might like to dance.

You may be the heavy weight champion of the world.

You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls.

But you're going to have to serve somebody, yes, indeed.

You're gonna have to serve somebody.

It may be the devil or it may be the Lord,

But you're gonna have to serve somebody.

Gotta Serve Somebody was the lead song on Dylan's 1979 album, "Slow Train Coming." It won the Grammy Award for best male rock vocal for 1979.

Martin Luther taught in the meaning to the first commandment in the Large Catechism, there is no such thing as life without gods. To have a god is whatever you place your trust in and to whomever you go to in times of trouble.

I think Luther would join Bob Dylan in saying, "You gotta serve somebody." Everybody, it seems, is out to get Jesus.

In our Gospel lesson from Matthew, the Pharisees and the Herodians try to entrap Jesus with a question. They start by saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality."

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Then comes the question. What do you think? “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?”

The Pharisees and Herodians were an unlikely match. The Herodians who were followers of Herod favored the tax. The Pharisees resented the tax as well as the image of Caesar that was stuck into the face of the coins required to pay it.

Here is the deal. If Jesus supports the tax, the Pharisees can accuse him of disloyalty to God. If he opposes the tax, the Herodians can charge him with inciting people to rebel against their lawful governing authorities.

So what can Jesus do? He asks about the coin. What he suggests is that God’s values are not the same as the world’s values.

Jesus said, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

What he says ends the debate.

We are left with the question, will we worship the one whose image is stamped on a coin or will we worship the one who is the very image of God with-us---Jesus.

The fact is we need to serve someone.

But as Jesus would say, we don’t worship the emperor or the coins with the emperor’s picture on it. We worship God.

In our second lesson today from Thessalonians, we read,

“For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction...in

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every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God.”

As one theologian has said, “The thessalonians’ faith was known such that there was no need to speak about it because they lived it out with consistency and integrity. In other words, they didn’t shout about having turned from idols; they LIVED in a way that proclaimed God’s lordship in their lives.”

That is exactly what we were created to do. That is to live in a way that proclaims God’s lordship in our lives.

Jesus escapes the trap set by the Pharisees and the Herodians. He simply says pay your taxes, give to the emperor the things that are the emperors and give to God the things that are God’s.

It makes me wonder, why is it that, going way back in biblical history, God is always being put to the test. God’s coming to us in Jesus seems to even cause more questioning and testing.

What does it take for everyone, including us, to take God’s Word seriously. Just look at Jesus. Everything he did whether miracles, and preaching and breaking down the walls that separated people, always ended with some people going against him.

In the end, it got so severe that it put Jesus on a cross.

Taking up our crosses and following Jesus is always going to do the same thing. Some people don’t want to hear that Jesus suffered and died for ALL PEOPLE.

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Some people don't want to take seriously that we are to take care of the creation we live in. Some people don't want to hear that we have a job to do to take care of all those in need.

Some don't want to hear that we need to serve someone besides ourselves. Even the fact we are made for that.

As one theologian puts it, in the end, we need to see,

"We belong, body and soul, to the living God, and we are to render to God what is God's."

We support our Government and pay our taxes, but our worship is to God who owns everything.

"when they heard what Jesus said, they were amazed and they left him and went away"

We need to serve someone, and it's only God who deserves it.