

Sermon ~ Sunday, October 16, 2022, by Pastor Dwight Benoit

Text: Matthew 17: 24-27

Title: "Citizen or Stranger?"

I **PRAISE GOD** this morning as I reflect on the words of Milton Brunson who *sang...*

I'm free, *Praise The LORD*, I'm free.

No longer bound, no more chains holding me.

My soul is resting, and its another blessing, *Praise The LORD*, Hallelujah, I'm free!

I'm free, *Praise The LORD*, I'm free.

I've been *saved* and *sanctified*, filled with **HIS HOLY GHOST**.

I'm resting, it's another blessing, *Praise The LORD*, Hallelujah, I'm free!

A '*citizen*,' is a native, a resident, a taxpayer, a registered voter.

A '*stranger*,' is a foreigner, a visitor, an intruder, a non-registered voter with a voice but cannot vote.

"Citizen or Stranger?"

In the *context* of our *text*, **JESUS** carries **HIS disciples** through intense training, zeroing in on, **HIS purpose** of coming and their *purpose* of "being *disciples*," and "*discipling*."

(Matthew 4: 19, "And **HE** saith unto them, **Follow ME, and I will make you fishers of men.**")

HOW?

Through **HIS (JESUS' death on The CROSS of Calvary—paying the penalty of the believers *sin* of unbelief; **JESUS' burial**, in the grave, 3 days and 3 nights, as Jonah was in the belly of the whale—to *free* the believer from the *condemnation* and power of *sin*; and be raised from the *dead* by **GOD HIMSELF** and **HIS love** for the believer, on the **CHRISTian's** Sunday morning, so, the *repentant* believer shall live forever in the presence of **The Risen LORD and SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST!** (Notice this in Matthew 16: 21-28; 17: 1-13 and 17: 22-23)**

In the *text* **JESUS** proves **HIS MESSIAHSHIP, HIS SONSHIP, The CHURCH, The Victory over The Cross and grave;** and the *difference between 'good citizenship' and 'strangers.'*

Our **LORD** and **HIS disciples** made their way down from Galilee to Capernaum. This is Peter's hometown and they (**JESUS** and the other *disciples*, including Matthew who was a tax-collector) were staying in Peter's house. While here in Capernaum, Peter is approached by the collectors, who were employed by the Roman government to collect the Temple Taxes: once a year every adult male was commanded to pay a tax to support the Temple upkeep. The *upkeep* of the Temple was very expensive... for like everything, *time* deteriorates furnishings, even the stone and mortar, and all must be replaced. In addition, there was the *upkeep* of the Priests, their shelter, food, and clothing. There was the *provision* of the *animals*, the *incense*, the *wine*, *flour*, and *oil* for the lamps that burned day and night and for the use in *sacrifices* which was daily offered.

It was a *small tax* (one half-shekel, the amount of 2 day's wage) from every male, annually; *nevertheless*, it had to be paid.

JESUS demonstrates *good citizenship*—**HE** paid **HIS taxes**. It may seem *patriotic* but showed, what the Temple meant to **JESUS**. It was **HIS practice** and Peter knew this (Peter got this lesson) for he was able to answer the question, 'Doth not your **MASTER** pay tribute?' (v. 24)

“He saith, YES! (v. 25a) [Note this contextual point... like most, it was then as it is now, ‘I,’ ‘we,’ don’t go to church because the church has too many *hypocrites* in it. Matthew 21: 13, read, “And said unto them, **It is written, MY house shall be called The House of Prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.**” (The same is said in Mark 11: 17)

Yea, the Temple, or the *Church-house* was and maybe “a den of thieves” and much of the *worship* is hypocritical and corrupt, yet **CHRIST** supported it. **WHY? 1.** It’s still

The House of GOD and The House of Prayer. 2. Even **CHRIST** benefited from The Temple. When **HE** entered the Temple, **HIS SPIRIT** was right with **GOD**, so **HE** was able to *worship* and minister (*within*) and when **HE** left to *serve without*. **3.** The Temple was where **GOD’S people** met and was *expected* to be. The world *expected GOD’S people* to be in the Temple on **The LORD’S Day!**

Question? How Pro-Temple are you?

Showing **HIS MESSIAHSHIP, HIS SONSHIP, The CHURCH, The Victory over The Cross** and the *difference between ‘good citizenship’ and ‘strangers.’* Upon entering his own house, **JESUS** prevented Peter of saying anything by asking him, “from whom do kings collect their taxes? From their own children or from the citizens? (v. 25) He obviously answered, “He collects taxes from the citizens not from his own children. Then **JESUS** declared, “then the children are free.” (v. 26)

[The tax was the Temple tax. The Temple was **GOD’S**, and **JESUS** was **The SON of GOD**. As **The SON of GOD**, **HE** was *free* from the tax. **HE** did not *owe* the tax. **JESUS** was of another **KINGdom—The KINGdom of Heaven**. **HE** was *free* of the *earthly kingdom—not* obligated to the *earth*... Point: when the believer *trusts CHRIST* as his personal **LORD and SAVIOR**, he or she *receives GOD’S Divine nature*. We become a *new creation* and *citizens of Heaven*; however, we are still here on *earth*. We have been *born again* (from Heaven above) but we are still in the *flesh—still of the earth—still obligated to not* only be *good citizens of Heaven* but also of the *earth*. **GOD** expects us to live for Heaven by living a pure life and to live for the *earth* by sharing **The GOD-News of JESUS CHRIST** (salvation) while here on *earth*.

So, **JESUS** sets a *standard for citizenship—to keep others from stumbling*. Note the word “*offend*,” in v. 27. Its “*skandalizo*,” verb, meaning *to put a snare or stumbling block* in someone’s way; to cause someone to *trip* or *fall*. It’s anything that *arouses prejudices within* others; anything that is a *roadblock* or a *hindrance* to others; anything that causes others to *fall* by the wayside. Point: *Freedom comes from responsibility*... “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.” (I Corinthians 6: 12) If I do it because Uncle Sam says it (I’ll provide food, drink, shelter for you, then we’ve missed the blessing of **The Gospel of JESUS CHRIST**). Because we are made *free* in **CHRIST JESUS**, does not *free* us from paying taxes. Don’t pay taxes, because you have too, but because **LOVE, GRACE, MERCY, and TRUTH** made you *free*. “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. (Romans 15: 1)

JESUS demonstrated **HIS Citizenship** and **MESSIAHSHIP** by paying **HIS taxes**. **HE** knew (knows) **OMNISCIENTLY** that a *coin*, which was in the mouth of a fish, waiting on Peter’s line to be cast. If we *know* that **JESUS is The SON of GOD**; that **HE is** of another **KINGdom** that is Superior to this *earth* and its seas; that **HE (we)** are *free* of the *earth* with its restrictions and obligations, “...all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6: 33)

The Temple tax was called “an Atonement for the soul” (Exodus 30: 15, “The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel, when *they* give an offering unto **The LORD**, to make atonement for your souls.”) Atonement means ‘a covering’ for a person’s *sins*, a *covering* that makes *reconciliation* between a person and **GOD** possible. The tax paid as an atonement for a person’s *sin*. It was to be paid in *an act of faith*, voluntarily, believing that one’s *sins* would be *covered* and *forgiven* and that one would be *reconciled* and accepted by **GOD** anew and fresh.

When **JESUS** *died on Calvary* (made *sin* for us, **WHO** did not *sin*) and shed **HIS blood**. **HE** atoned for our *sin(s)* *voluntarily*. **HIS Blood** washed away our *guilty stain* and made us *One* with **GOD** (*reconciled* us back to **GOD**); to fulfill all righteousness; so, we might *benefit* from being **HIS Temple** (What? Know ye not that ye are The Temple of **The HOLY GHOST**, *which is* in you, which ye have of **GOD** and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore, *glorify* **GOD** in your body, and in your spirit, which are **GOD’S**.” And uphold the government in high regard. “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s but to **GOD** what is **GOD!**”

I woke up this morning with my mind, stayed on **JESUS**... Can’t nobody know me like **JESUS**... **FATHER**, I stretch my hands to **THEE**...

Praise HIM, Praise HIM, Praise HIM in the morning, *Praise HIM* in the noontime. *Praise HIM, Praise HIM, Praise HIM* when the sun goes down. Love **HIM**, Trust **HIM**, Serve **HIM**... **JESUS, JESUS, JESUS** in the morning, **JESUS** in the noontime, **JESUS, JESUS, JESUS** when the sun goes down.

“Citizen or Stranger?”