

Give Back to God What is God's

October 18, 2026 | Sermon by the Rev. Rob Petkau

St. Peter's Anglican Church, Calgary | [Text: Matthew 22:15-22](#)



Render unto **Caesar** the **things** which are **Caesar's**; and unto **God** the things that are **God's**.

That's how this **verse** appears in the old **King James Version** of the **Bible**, and it's how a **lot** of us are used to **hearing** it.

It's a **famous quotation**, and a **famous story**. The **religious leaders** try to **trip Jesus up** by asking him a **question** about **money** and **religion**. Apparently **money** and **religion** were a pretty **touchy topic** in the **first century**. Not like **today**, right?

I'm **kidding**, of course. The more things **change**, the more they **stay** the **same**. **Money** and **religion** **continue** to be a **touchy topic** in the **21st century**, too. And **here** we are in the **middle** of our annual **Stewardship Campaign**, **Plenty Good Room**.

And in case you're **wondering**, we didn't **engineer things** so this **reading** would **appear** in our **service** this week, and give us an **excuse** to **sock it to** you in a **hard-hitting** sermon about **money**, to tie in with our **Stewardship Campaign**.

Believe it or **not**, this is the **regular** Gospel reading that comes up **every three years** on the **third Sunday of October**. But **yes**, I'm going to take this **opportunity** to talk to you **today** about **money**.

And if you're with us for the **first time**, let me **assure** you that we're not **always** talking about **money**, here at St. Peter's. In fact, I've been here for **2½ years now**, and I think this is the **first** time I've ever preached about **money**.

And if you **are** with us for the **first time**, let me say **out loud** that this message isn't **primarily** for **you**.

Especially if you're **new** to **faith**, or if you're just **exploring** – maybe you're just **curious** about **Jesus**. Maybe you're **critical**. **Wherever** you are in your **spiritual journey** – whether you're **curious, critical or committed** – you **belong** here at **St. Peter's**.

But the **message today** is **mainly** for the **ears** of those who've **already** made a **decision** to call Jesus "my **Lord**," and St. Peter's "my **church**." If that's not **you** – just **yet** – you get to **listen in** and watch the regulars **squirm a little**.

Now, like I said, **money** and **religion** continue to be a **touchy topic** today, but not in the **same** way as we see in our **Gospel reading**. No one today is asking Jesus if we should pay **taxes**. Taxes are a **given**.

The question on our hearts **today** is "Should we give **money** to the **church**? And if **so**, how **much**?"

Those **questions** are part of what we're **encouraged** to **explore** through our **Stewardship Campaign** – **letters** and **pledge cards** arriving in our **mailboxes** this month, inviting us to give some **thought** and **prayer** to how we support our parish **financially**, make some **decisions** and put them down on **paper**.

But **where** should we **start**? What's the **right number**, Jesus?

And his answer to us is **kinda** the same as what he said to the **religious leaders**: Whether you **like** it or **not**, you already **render** unto **Caesar** the **things** that are **Caesar's**. Now **give back** to **God** what is **God's**.

Give **back** to God what is **God's**. That **reminds** me of a **joke** – or maybe it's a **parable**. It goes like **this**:

There was a **scientist** one time, and he went to talk to **God** and he says, "**God**, we can **clone humans**, make **life**, and take **care** of **ourselves** and we don't **need** you **anymore**."

God chuckled and said: "You **think**? OK, **show** me what you **mean**." So the scientist reached down, grabbed a full hand of **soil** to start making his **human**, and God **stopped** him. He said, "Whoa, not so **fast**. You get your **own** dirt."

Give **back** to **God** what is **God's**? But it's **all** God's. **Can't** you give us a **number**, Jesus?

Well, the Bible **doesn't** give us a **number**, it gives us a **percentage**. In the books of **Leviticus** and **Deuteronomy**, it uses a word that means '**tenth**,' and we translate it into the word '**tithe**.' And **tithe** itself is an **old English word** that **also** means **tenth**. So in the first couple **books** of the **Bible**, God calls us to **set aside** the **first 10%** of our **harvest**, or our **income**, for the **Lord**.

And this word is used **many more times**, in both **Greek** and **Hebrew**, in both the **Old** and **New Testaments**. It's never **amended** or **contradicted**. It **stands**: 10% is what we're **called** to give **back**.

The Bible is **inconveniently clear** on this point. **Ten percent**.

Now, let's give that some **thought**. As our proverbial **scientist** was just reminded, it's **all God's**. And that means he could demand **all** of it from us if he **wanted** to. But he **doesn't**. He **allows** us to keep **90%**. That's pretty **generous**, don't you **think**?

Now, the **economists** in the **room** will tell you that a **flat percentage tax** is what they call **regressive**. It hits **poor people** harder than **rich people**. That's why we pay **income tax** in **brackets**. That's why **lower-income households** get **GST rebate cheques**.

But there's a **crucial difference** between **tithes** and **taxes**. **Taxes** are **subject** to the **economics** of the **world** – the **economics** of **Caesar**, you could **say** – but **tithes** are subject to the **economics** of **God**. The **tithe** is **God's turf**. And what does **God** say about the **economics** of his **Kingdom**?

Through the Prophet **Malachi** he said **this**:

Bring the **full tithe** into the **storehouse**, so that there may be **food** in my **house**, and thus **put me** to the **test**, says the Lord of hosts; **see** if I will **not open** the **windows** of **heaven** for you and **pour down** for you an **overflowing blessing**.

Bring the **full tithe**, and **put** me to the **test**. **Remember** that **elsewhere** in **Scripture**, there's a commandment **not** to put God to the **test** – Jesus **quotes** that verse during his **temptation** in the **wilderness**.

And yet, **here** in **Malachi**, God **sets** that commandment **aside**, and he **invites** us to **put him** to the **test**. He **challenges** us. He **double-dog-dares** us to put him to the **test**.

Bring the **full tithe**, and see if he will not open the **floodgates** of heaven and pour down an **overflowing blessing**.

According to the **economics** of **Caesar**, the **tithe would** be a **regressive tax**. But in the **economics** of **God**, things work **differently**. Just **try** it and **see**!

Bring the tithe, get the blessing.

Now, maybe you're thinking: "A **financial** blessing?" If I give back a **little** money, will God give me a **lot**? Maybe. Or maybe this blessing will be **better** than **money**. **Money** can't buy **healing**, or a great **marriage**. Money **can't** buy you **purpose**.

What if the **blessing** God wants to **give** you is **one** (or **more**) of **these** things? Wouldn't **that** be worth **10%** of your **stuff**? I don't know about **you**, but I'd rather have **90%** of my **money** and the **blessing** of **God** than **100%** of it and have to go it **alone**.

In **Matthew 6:21**, Jesus **tells** us, 'Where your **treasure** is, your **heart** will be **also**' – so when we put our **treasure** where it **belongs**, our **heart** will **follow**. Surrendering our **finances** to **God**, through the **tithe**, can be the **beginning** of a more **fully surrendered** life.

Just **imagine** what God can do **with, in, through** and **for** you, when you're **all-in** with Him. **Doesn't** that sound **better** than **anything** you can **buy** with **10%** of your **money**?

Now, some of you might be saying, '**OK**, but **10%** of **what** – **gross** or **net**?' And 'can I **count** the **money** I give to **charity** as part of my **tithe**, or does it **have** to be to the **church**?'

Those are **good questions**, and they're worth **thinking about**. But if you're not there yet, **any way you slice it**, I'd encourage you to **start** with the **broadest definition possible**. Choose to give **10%** of your **net income** back to **God**, through **church** and **charities**, and **see** what God **does** with **that**.

And if **10%** feels like **too big** a **leap** to make in **one go**, then maybe make a **plan** to get there in **five years** or **two years**.

Probably **some** of us need to **start** by choosing to give a **percentage**, rather than an **amount**. Even **that shift** is a **step** toward **obedience**.

And if you're already **there** – if you're already **bringing** the **10% tithe** – consider **progressing** from **tithes** to **offerings**. **One** way to think about an **offering** is that it's **money** we give **back** to **God**, **over** and **above** our **tithe**. **Thank offerings** are a **beautiful way** to **bless God**, and to **double-dog-dare him** to open the windows of heaven a little **wider**.

Now I've talked a **lot** about **money**, but I want to make it **clear** that **stewardship** is about a **whole lot more** than our **money**. **Biblical stewardship** is about **recognizing** that the whole **world** we inhabit **belongs** to **God**, and in the **very first book** of the Bible, on the **sixth day** in the **creation story**, right after he created **humanity**, he gave us a **job**. He **assigned us** to be **stewards** of his **creation**.

We're called to **manage** the **world** on his **behalf**, the **way** he would have it **managed**. **Stewardship principles** are meant to shape where we **live**, the kind of **car** we **drive**, where we go on **vacation**, the amount of **effort** we put into **recycling** and **composting**, where we **work**, the types of **companies** we **invest** in and so much **more**.

That's why our **Stewardship Campaign** talks about our **time** and our **talent** as well as our **treasures**. What is God calling **you** to **do**, and **me** to **do**, with our **time** and our **talent**? So **many** of you **answered** that call and **brought** your **time**, **talent** and **treasures** to the **Fall Fair** that happened **yesterday** – and well **done**!

Here at **St. Peter's**, we're getting **really good** at being a **come-to-us church** again. Is God calling us to **grow** in the area of being a **go-to-them church** in the **months ahead**?

Is God **calling us** to lend **our time**, **talents** and **treasures beyond** the **walls** of **this church** – maybe through **Alongside Hope**, which we heard about **last week**? Maybe through **Hope Mission**, which we heard about in **September**?

What does **God** want **stewardship** to **look like** for **you**, for **me**, for **us**, in **2027** and **beyond**? It's worth some **thought** and some **prayer**.

And let's **remember** that **following** God's **stewardship principles** isn't just something we do to **avoid punishment**, or get God **off our back**. When we **use** our **resources** to **serve God's Kingdom** – here in **church** and **elsewhere** in the **world** – it's an act of **worship**. We're bringing God **glory** when we use God's **resources** for God's **purposes**.

And to be clear, God's **most precious resource** is **you**. The **coin** Jesus held up bears the **image** of **Caesar**, but **you**? **You** bear the **image** of **God**.

Back on the **sixth day** of **creation**, right **before** God **assigned** us to be his **stewards**, he **created us** in his **image** and **likeness**. It uses those words **multiple times** in that paragraph. All **creation** is **beautiful** and **wondrous**, but **you** are God's **masterpiece**, his **crowning achievement**, and you **bear** his **image**.

That's why Jesus **came**, and **lived** and **taught** and **healed** and **argued** with the **religious leaders**, and **allowed** them to kill **him**. He did it all to **save** and reclaim his

beloved children, made in his **image**. Jesus gave **100%** of **himself** for **you** and for **me**. What **percentage** will **we** give **back** to **him**?

Like we **sang** last week, What shall I **render** to **Jehovah**? For **he** has done so very **much** for **me**!

Thanks be to God ... amen.