



Matthew 17: Pay to honor

Matthew 17:27 “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.””

I like this section for several reasons. First is that it’s only three verses. Jesus does not go on a long rant about paying our due. He leaves that for other parables. This section could be taken many different ways. Is Jesus saying God’s children should not pay worldly tax? Why is Jesus not wanting to offend the tax collectors or Caesar? I am sure there is even more to decipher. Yet, I am a big believer in the intent.

First of all, the religious rulers were trying to get a reason to arrest Jesus. Not paying the local tax was one. Secondly, we have Jesus paying the tax. Jesus had no problem giving tax to the local village. Thirdly, I want to point out the separation Jesus makes. There is giving to God and giving to the world. Jesus never says we should only give to God. I believe Jesus is also saying we honor the world by participating in things like tax and giving. Is that a stretch? All Jesus did was go to the places the church would not. He made friends with undesirables. He entered areas a religious person would not dare. He also honored those that were against the kingdom.

Why? All this in three verses. Half the time people are looking to avoid tithing or paying tax biblically. Jesus has none of it. The intent by Jesus is to honor those God has placed in power. To help

the needy and world around him. Did Jesus turn around and say he did not recognize this roman government or it's laws? No, he did what they asked so as to not offend them. That does not mean he believed in Rome. What it means is that he was a Jewish citizen in Rome. That means we should follow the laws and pay our share.

Lastly, but most importantly. God provides. Jesus said we could have faith to move a mountain. It's not the mountain that we should focus on (yet, we usually do). It's the faith. Jesus does not pray, meditate or think twice. He asks Peter to go get a fish. In the fish was the tax money. God provided. Yes, Jesus is God so his faith is strong. Yet, Peter had to fish. He had to go work for it. I know it's a stretch but is it? The tax did not magically appear. Even to feed 5 thousand Jesus asked them to use what they had. He asked them to serve.

Far too often we think we should just wait. Other times we believe that we have rights to abstain. One pastor in know believes we don't have an obligation to tithe. It's an Old Testament command to Jews. Jesus says give with the heart. So, our hearts say don't give generously? Don't give to the world? Does that mean we don't need to give a tithe? These three verses show us that Jesus pays. God provides. Jesus honors and God gives us a way to give back.

Mark 12:44

"They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."