



“Whose likeness and inscription is this?”

A. WARM-UP: *The Coins We Carry*

B. MAIN THOUGHT: *WHAT WE CARRY REVEALS WHO CARRIES US.*

C. Context of Jesus' Question: Following his pointed, prophetic parable about the murderous vineyard tenants, Jesus' accusers withdraw and later send a small contingent of verbal assassins back to the Temple courtyard to spring another trap. They attempt to trick Jesus into publicly supporting or maligning Roman taxes, to either wither the adoring crowds or to attract dangerous attention from the nearby military guards. Jesus deftly sideslips the snare by revealing what it means to value God alone in a materialistic, ego-driven world.

D. Lessons from Mark 12:13-17 (ESV)

1. To whom do we turn when our lives are taxed?

¹³ And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. ¹⁴ And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?”

2. Prepare to render to the gods of this world all of our “spiritual loose change.”

Matthew 10:39 (NLT) “If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.”

¹⁵ But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” ¹⁶ And they brought one. And he said to them, **“Whose likeness and inscription is this?”** They said to him, “Caesar’s.” ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at him.

“There is one important step we can take that helps us begin the process of living more simply. That step involves distinguishing between our wants and our needs.”

- John Michael Talbot in *The Lessons of St. Francis*

“Because they had nothing, they feared in no way to lose anything.” - **Thomas of Celano**

C. Study Questions for Small Groups or Personal Study

1. Describe a time when you were in a heated debate. How did you feel?
2. Hypocrisy is inconsistency between words and actions or beliefs and values. Where do you see hypocrisy in your own life? Why does hypocrisy have a hold on you?
3. How are you valuing temporal, material things over eternal, spiritual things? Ask the Lord for His strength to keep your life and values aligned with His Word and Spirit.
4. What steps will you take this week to stop clinging to your life and to give up your life for Jesus? (Matthew 10:39 above)
5. What spiritual pressures or attacks are coming against you recently? Read **Ephesians 6:10-18** below and insert your name where it is appropriate.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.