

Most everyone here has some sort of relationship to an accountant, there are many people here today who ARE accountants. We pay a lot of careful attention to our money and where it comes from and where it goes and we are especially careful about taxes.

We, or our accountants, figure out with great precision just how much we owe and we pay it. We don't want to get in trouble with the Internal Revenue Service. If we don't pay enough, or decide not to pay at all, the IRS can take everything: Our house, our stuff, our car.

We pay a lot of taxes; license tax, sales tax, income tax, gasoline tax etc. and we pay them all because the government has made clear that the consequence of not paying will be very uncomfortable.

The Pharisees and the Herodians were working hard trying to catch Jesus up, and when one of them came up with this question "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" they came rushing over in a pack because they thought they had the perfect trap. If he said "no" the authorities could arrest him, and if he said "yes" he would lose a lot of his followers who were in strong opposition to any cooperation with the Roman occupation. The Pharisees and the Herodians thought it was a win-win proposition for them.

But Jesus fooled them. He answered neither yes nor no. He simply asked to see the coin: if it has Caesar's image on it, it must belong to him so give it to him. Give Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and give to God the things that are God's."

What are the things we are to give to God? What is it that has God's image on it that we are to give to God?

We are made in the image of God. We are asked to give ourselves to God. All that we have, and all that we are is a gift from God and we turn over our life and its abundance to God in thanksgiving and gratitude for what we have been given.

God is not like the tax man. There is no punishment for failing to give back. There is no registered letter or knock on the door announcing your penalty. God simply waits quietly for you.

This is Stewardship season when we ask you to share your abundance with us. We ask for your time, your talent, and your treasure. St. Stephen's offers its gifts freely; Gifts of worship, and music, and care, and education for children-teens-and adults, and reaching out to seniors, and the poor, and the homeless....and we need you to offer your time and your talent and your money generously.

I especially ask that you offer your money generously because the Associate Rector is the first to go when things aren't working out.....

Fill out your pledge card and remember that St. Stephen's is a place where we work very hard to bring the refreshment of God's spirit to all who hunger and thirst.