



New Beginnings, Volume 22, 2008
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Luke 20:25

“Well then”, Jesus said, “give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God.”

I don't know of very many people who are happy about paying their taxes. It doesn't matter whether its federal income taxes, state income taxes, local property taxes or the myriad of fees and charges for licenses and the like. As much as we appreciate the good roads, public schools, and social security retirement benefits, it seems that fewer and fewer people feel like they “get their money's worth” for the dollars they give out. And as they have often said, “there are only two things for sure and that's death and taxes.”

Jesus understood the need that governments have for money. Jesus came not to be a political activist who preached anarchy. When asked if people should pay their taxes he said, “yes”, but he also admonished the people to fulfill their other obligations as well. Specifically he encouraged them to give to God what God deserved. With these words, he reopened the great question of what constitutes good stewardship. There are many passages in the Bible about stewardship. In the Old Testament we are told to tithe. The tithe was a gift of both trust and thanksgiving. It was considered to be the minimum gift that a family would make to support the priests and the work of God. The tithe was equal to 10% of a person's earnings.

Why was it considered both a gift of trust and thanksgiving might be asked? The answer is two-fold. It was a gift of thanksgiving because it was understood that all things come

from God. This concept was better understood in the agrarian economy of early times. People believed that it was God that caused the sun to shine, the rain to fall, and the seeds to sprout. Because all things created and alive came from God it made sense to thank God for His blessings. Thanks came by way of worship, praise, and tithe of thanksgiving.

The tithe was also a sign of trust because it was expected that the tithe came from the “first fruits”. In other words the first part of the crop or production of the animals was given to God trusting that the rest of the production would also be as good as the first part. The 10% given back to God was a small way of thanking God for all He had done to nurture and provide for His people.

In the world we live in today most people don't see what they earn as coming from God. More likely they think, “I earned it – it's mine.” Most church goers give 2% or less to support the ministry of their church and Christ in the world. They see the church's needs as last on their list of priorities and sadly they neither trust God to provide or thank God when He does. It's a small wonder the churches are struggling to survive and serve God.

Good stewardship that includes tithing will bless the givers. Why not begin anew a life that really trusts God and is thankful for all we have.