

# Further up, Further in

## Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT  
MOUNTAIN  
Presbyterian Church

### “TRAPS AND TRUTH”

For individual study or group discussion

“Fair is foul and foul is fair” is a familiar Shakespearean line chanted by the witches in the opening scene of *Macbeth*. Their prophecy sets the stage for the whole play. Shakespeare signals to the readers that they can expect an inversion of morals, where good seems evil and evil seems good. In the opening scene of Luke 20:19–26, a similar event takes place. We see spies, hired by the Pharisees sent to flatter Jesus in order to catch him off guard and trap him with a divisive question. Seeming sincere, these spies cloak their evil intentions with fair speech and flattery.

#### The sinister trap: a political question (vv. 19–22)

Political rivals team up to trap Jesus (cf. Mark 12:13). Historical enemies, the Pharisees and Herodians unite for self-serving motivations. Jesus had entered Jerusalem with loud “Hosannas” echoing in the streets and the people are hanging on his every word. The religious leaders have had enough of Jesus’ parables and miracles. He has to go. For the Herodians, Jesus threatens their syncretistic politics. How can both groups turn the crowds against him? Get him to take a political stance on a divisive topic. It’s a guaranteed no-win scenario!

- Read Proverbs 29:5 and Psalm 55:21. What are the warnings? Discuss the difference between flattery and genuine praise. “*We must exercise a wise caution as we travel through life, and not play the part of the ‘simple man, who believes anything’ (Proverbs 14:15). We must not lightly put confidence in every new religious volunteer, nor hastily take it for granted that all people are good who talk like good men. Such caution at first sight may appear narrow-minded and uncharitable. But the longer we live, the more shall we find that it is needful. We shall discover by experience that all is not gold that glitters, and all are not true Christians who make a loud profession of Christianity. The language of Christianity is precisely that part of religion which a false Christian finds it most easy to attain. The walk of a man’s daily life, and not the talk of his lips, is the only safe test of his character.*” – J. C. Ryle
- Why would Jesus, if he is the Messiah, not rid the land of Roman rule? (cf. John 18:33–38)

#### The stunning truth: a Kingdom answer (vv. 23–26)

Perceiving their hypocrisy, Jesus asks for a denarius, which they give to him. The irony is that they had one of these coins in their pockets in the first place. According to R. Kent Hughes, “*For an upright Jew, the image of Caesar on a coin was an abomination. The inscription ‘divine Augustus’ was considered a transgression of the 2nd commandment against graven images (Exodus 20:4) and thus blasphemy.*”<sup>2</sup> Then Jesus asks a question, “Whose likeness and inscription does it have?” They reply, “Caesar’s.” Jesus then avoids the political “hot-button” issue of the day by pointing his opponents toward a deeper truth with a Kingdom answer, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (v. 25).

- Every human being is created in God’s image. If you are going to “render to God the things that are God’s” what are you rendering? (See also Genesis 1:27 and Psalm 89:11; 104:24–30.)
- Carl Trueman wrote, “*The secret to political integrity and discernment for Christians is a high view of God, his Word and his gospel. Only when this world is set in context of the next can we hope to avoid allowing the perceived demands of our political moment to overwhelm our fidelity to God and, by way of consequence, to those made in his image.*”<sup>3</sup> The corrective to political divisiveness is to have a higher view of God, so that when political unrest occurs, we are at rest in him. When the nations rage, we take refuge in him. Read Psalm 2. How can the knowledge of your heavenly citizenship influence your engagement with current social issues?

DATE: September 22, 2024

SPEAKER: Chad/Brian

SERIES: The Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 20:19–26

## RENEW: 31 Days of Prayer

**DAY 4: Pray that we would be a church that extends resources generously.**

#### PRAYER:

Lord of all creation and Giver of all good gifts, we adore your mighty rule and abundant kindness. We acknowledge that the chief reason that you have created us and bestowed gifts on us is to display your glory. For the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it. And yet, we confess that we wrongly believe that we control our lives and that our agenda and desires are the highest authority in decision-making. Please forgive us by the grace of Jesus Christ. Convince us that we are stewards – a position of honor to please and promote the owner’s purposes, but also a humble position in which we are not the ultimate source, goal, or guide for our lives. In every decision, with all of our resources, and in all our vocations, teach us to ask, “Lord and Owner of my life, what do you want?” Align our hearts with your ways that we might want what you want, and thus improve and advance all that you have entrusted to us for your honor. As parents, spouses, workers, and friends, convince us that we are stewards and not owners of our children, marriages, jobs, finances, and relationships. What we have, you own. So teach us to hold it with open hands and to handle it with biblical direction. Would you please make your flock at LMPC faithful with all of our resources in both big and small things, regardless of how much we have or lack? You tell us that it is “required in stewards, that they be found faithful.” Find us faithful. Make us generous. Help us depend on you alone to make us fruitful. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

**Widows Harvest Ministries,**  
*strategic partner ministry*

#### PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

**Sergey,** *supported national partner*

<sup>1</sup> Ryle, J.C. *Ryle’s Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*. <https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/120.htm>. September 17, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, R. Kent. *Preaching the Word: Luke, Volume 2*. 1998, Wheaton, IL. Crossway Books. 266.

<sup>3</sup> Trueman, Carl. *The Gateway Drug to Post-Christian Paganism*. April 18, 2024. First Things. <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2024/04/the-gateway-drug-to-post-christian-paganism>. September 17, 2024.