



# CONNECT GROUP NOTES

## Sunday 29.10.2023

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“Bearing His image”

### **Preacher**

Ps. Adam Dodds

### **Scripture**

“Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

17 Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

And they were amazed at him.”

Mark 12:13-17

### **Thought**

Jesus was God in the flesh, so when we see Him asking questions, we must ask ourselves why He is asking the question. Clearly it’s not to acquire knowledge.



In this passage of scripture, we find the religious leaders trying to trap Jesus with a question. In fact, it was one of the most divisive questions of the day - whether to acknowledge the Roman occupation over the Jews. The leaders knew that no matter which answer Jesus gave to this question, it would lead to trouble.

This was a divisive issue, yet in our modern lives we also encounter divisive questions. Sometimes the wisest thing we can do is to take a step back rather than falling prey to an answer that divides.

Our culture is a funny thing. It seems to be the case that an issue is thrust before us and we must have an opinion on it immediately. In another six months it will be another issue. These issues matter, but we must be wise and avoid falling into an "us and them" mindset. Our culture presses us into divides. Into good and evil. Into factions and tribes. Yet Jesus saw through this.

Anytime we feel pressure to form a strong view, let us consider Jesus' words; "Why are you trying to trap me?". In our current cultural moment, we have a beautiful opportunity to focus on what we are for, and what unites us, and where there is difference of opinion, to show that we can disagree well, to show respect and honour and love even with differing views.

The issues do matter, but how we disagree matters more. Issues come and go, but our relationships remain. Are we finding ourselves only spending time with those who agree with us? Do we form communities based on tribal opinions? Or are we willing to commune with those who have different views and to learn the art of exemplifying love in the midst of differing opinions.

Better still, Jesus not only avoids giving a divisive answer, but he turns our focus to something else entirely. The denarius bore the image of Caesar. This gave ownership of the currency to Caesar and the Roman empire. Yet the more striking point is that we are made in God's image. Mankind bears His image, and God and His kingdom has proprietary rights over every single person.



God, who doesn't misuse authority, whose most frequent command is to "fear not", whose first commandment was to "be fruitful", and who commands his followers to "love" - this same God reminds us that we are made in His image. Our response when challenged with divisive questions is to remind ourselves that we, and those we disagree with, bear His image.

And so, Christ calls us higher. Not to build ivory towers of opposition, but to serve each other, to lay down our lives, as He did, as a ransom for many. To be a servant of all. Could it be that as we give ourselves to God, we forget that which divides us?

### **Discussion Points**

1. Do you prefer to have firm opinions on topics? why/why not?
2. Can you think of other examples where Jesus was pressured into giving an answer that may have divided? How did he respond?
3. What does it mean to consider that others are made in the image of God, even those I disagree with? How does that impact how I live and how I relate to others?

### **Personal application + Prayer**

Dear Jesus,

You always manage to see me through loving eyes, regardless of my thoughts, actions or opinions. Thank You that I am indeed stamped with Your image - the image of a loving God, a faithful friend, a perfect Father. Help me to see others in the same way, to always focus on You when I'm tempted to get caught up in debate, and to always reflect Your heart, a heart of love, for the 'whosoever'. May I remember You today, in every interaction and every thought.

Amen.