



## Reflection for October 17

By Dan Dick



“Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?’ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, ‘Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.’ And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, ‘Whose head is this, and whose title?’ They answered, ‘The emperor’s.’ Then he said to them, ‘Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.” (Matthew 22:15-22)

Will Rogers is quoted to say, “In politics practically everything you hear is a scandal, and besides, the funny thing is that the things they are whispering

ain't half as bad as the things they have been saying right out loud." With only a few weeks until the election, politics – and the scandalous charges – are inescapable. As I watch political ads on TV, I sometimes think, "If all these people are really so horrible, why elect any of them?"

For me, all the political rhetoric is an urgent call back to the sanity and sanctity of my Christian faith. I need gospel support to get me through governmental static. Don't get me wrong; I strongly hope everyone will vote – then be accepting of what they get! It is time again to render unto Caesar, but to remember whose we are – we belong to God.

It feels like our political landscape is designed to make us unhappy, fearful, and angry. It is difficult to engage in civil conversation with someone who is a political opposite. Misinformation and disrespect overwhelm polite and dignified discourse. This may be the norm for our political world, but should never leak into our spiritual realm. The world is defined by disunity; God's blessed realm is built on oneness, singleness of purpose, and a commitment to maintain unity. Even when the rest of the world extends hostility, contempt, and arrogance – especially when this is our worldly reality – Christians should respond with patience, compassion, empathy, and love. Impossible? Maybe for you and me, but all things are possible with God.

I don't ever tell anyone who they should vote for, but I am always suggesting that our gospels guide our voting. Be Christian first, then a Republican or Democrat, a conservative or a liberal, a traditionalist or a progressive, or the label of your choice. Let the Holy Spirit of God work in your heart and mind to help you vote your conscience. Then engage in your world in such a way that all that you say, all that you do, and all that you

support helps fulfill our Lord's prayer that God's "kingdom/kin\*dom come, God's will be done on earth, as in heaven."

*Gracious God, we do the best we can with what we have, but sometimes this is discouraging. We know you want so much more – you desire our best be given to you and to our neighbors. Often politics don't help us to be better, they can often get in the way and cause us to be less than you want us to be. We grow in our divisions and disagreements, forgetting your call to unity, grace, love, and acceptance. As we render to the earthly emperors all they demand, remind us that our true Lord, Savior, and Leader is Jesus the Christ. Amen.*

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*May this devotion provide you with a moment of faithful reflection and care. You are involved in ministries of justice and witness, in ministries of standing up and standing with people working to create better systems and communities, in ministries of learning and searching and researching to become more aware and awakened, more technologically savvy and proficient, more virtually and personally present in your churches and communities and world. Each of us who serve as members of your Wisconsin Cabinet write these devotions in grateful prayer for you – for sustenance and buoyancy, for strength and courage, for safety and just actions, and for faith and love to be full and fulfilled in your daily lives. God's grace and blessings, God's challenge and healthy discomfort, God's Spirit and energy be with you, in the hope Christ offers us all.*

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