

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In the Temptation of the Lord in the wilderness, in a vain effort to cause the Lord Christ to sin, the devil quoted the Scriptures to Him, using them wrongly. It was not a new trick. He had done it in the garden and it worked. But the New and Better Adam didn't fall for that ancient trick. Although the devil tried to entangle the Lord in His Own Words, Truth Incarnate prevailed.

But the devil wasn't finished. His foot soldiers, the Pharisees, mimic their captain's strategy. They begin with flattery, which the devil knows works well on the flesh. "Teacher", they feigned, "we know that you are true, and teach the way of God in truth." What they said was true, but they didn't believe it. If they did, they would have learned from Him. But they did not desire to learn. They desired to trick, to deceive, to lie, to murder, for their captain was a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

Their deception did not end there: "nor do you care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men." It was not true that He does not care about anyone. He would die even for their sin of trying to deceive Him. That is truly to care for others. It was true that the station of a man did not affect His teaching or His Way, for He taught only the Truth. He spoke the Truth to helpless beggars as well as to powerful rulers.

The Pharisees must have been quite impressed with themselves. They thought that their intellect surpasses His. But the limits of their intellect and knowledge of Scripture weren't limiting to the Promised Messiah. The Scriptures are His Words. So He answers them first by publicly identifying them as hypocrites. He hears their words, but He also sees their hearts. And there He sees the clear discord. They flatter with their mouths, but plot to kill Him with their hearts.

Imagine their hubris – to try to deceive One that they themselves identify as true, One who teaches the Way of God in truth. And that by the twisting of words, trying to entangle Him in His own Words. But you must admit that every time you have tried to justify your sin, every time you have tried to explain away your transgressions or blame them on someone else, you have done the same. You have tried to twist what God has said to fit your desires.

And if you're honest, you'll confess that you have often spoken of others in flattering ways when in your heart you felt quite differently about them. But don't run to the Eighth Commandment for cover. Don't claim that you were simply trying to protect their reputation, or trying to put the best construction on it. The difference between hypocrisy and keeping the Commandment is honesty.

To keep the Command you must sincerely desire the best for them in your heart. For God knows your heart, just as He knew the hearts of the Pharisees. All fallen men are hypocrites. Repent. For as the Apostle teaches, "the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith." Against love there is no Law.

The Lord is Truth. He speaks only Truth. And He answers the Pharisees. He teaches them of the difference between two kingdoms – the Kingdom of the Left, the worldly government, and the Kingdom of the Right, the Kingdom of God. God is God of both kingdoms, whether the

world believes it or not. So the Proverb teaches “By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth.”

But we do not seek grace, forgiveness, true justice, redemption or salvation from the Kingdom of the Left. That God brings only in the Kingdom of Heaven, for He alone is True. So the Apostle writes “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

It is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. The coin bears his image and inscription. He minted it. It is to be rendered unto him. It is lawful to pay taxes to Duggan, to Whitmer, and to Trump. To them tribute is due. They have the authority to tax, we have the obligation to pay. And if we don't pay, they have the power of the sword. And that God ordains or allows, according to His good order. But the currency of the Kingdom of the Left avails nothing in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Although you were taken captive by the father of lies, although your words and heart have been at odds, in love it has pleased God to buy you back. It cost the perfect sufferings and death of His Son, whom the Lord possessed at the beginning of His Way. The currency of the Kingdom of Heaven is the Blood of Christ. For with that He has purchased and won you – not with gold or silver, but with His Holy Precious Blood and His innocent suffering and death, that you may be His own, and live under Him in His Kingdom.

For it is here, in His Kingdom, that your sins are forgiven. It is here that you are baptized, marked with the Divine Name of the Triune God. And here you emerge from the water a new man, filled with faith in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, beginning the restoration of the image of God lost in the fall.

You bear God's image and inscription. He looks at you in Christ, and sees you as His own. You bear the seal of the Living God. So you are rightly rendered unto Him, which is to say you are set apart from the fallen world, and made a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. And when this earthly life is over, you are rendered to the God who made you, the God who redeemed you, the God who sanctified you, for you are rightly His.

So you who love Him, you who believe in Him, inherit the treasures of heaven, the fruit that is better than gold. And this day He bids you join yourself to Him in Holy Communion, the Banquet of the Kingdom of God on earth. Your Lord gives you His Body, the Body He took on to save you, to eat. He makes the Blood by which He bought you your drink. By His Salvific Sacrament He unites you to Himself, and to His Holy Church, His Kingdom on earth.

The Savior you eagerly await comes to you in Paten and Chalice. He fills you with the enduring riches and righteousness that He Promises. And soon He will transform your lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, as you render unto God what is God's – and you go to dwell with your King forever.

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