

## In Power and Out of Power

Notes

(and Questions for Small Groups)

David A. Renwick, National Presbyterian Church

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Mark 12:12-17, Jeremiah 29:1-14, Micah 6:8, Daniel 6, Psalm 46:1-7

### I. INTRODUCTION

“What Jesus said” -- covers a range of topics: forgiveness, human weakness, sin, community, marriage, listening, generosity, his own person, prayer, greatness, *politics* and thankfulness (see Mark 2:5, 9; 2:17; 3:33; 4:9, 10:6, 11:17, 6:31, 4:24, 8:31, 12:17 ,10:44!).

1. Does it help to reflect on the fact that we listen to Jesus’ words for different reasons:

(1) *as God’s authoritative Words*: requiring us to trust and obey?

*as words as “wisdom”*: requiring us to think, reflect, pray?

Can you share times and occasions when (1) the Christian choice is black and white, and (2) when the Christian choice might depends on various factors that need to be thought about?

2. Jesus speaks on Politics – “*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and render to God the things that are God’s*”

What questions does Jesus statement raise initially?

### II. CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO ALLEGIANCES

Jesus clearly believes that we live in (at least) two realms of appropriate allegiance:

1. What other combinations of allegiances and roles in life (apart from politics) can make life complicated? *E.g. Does my role as a family member or church member ever conflict with my role as an employee? Does my role as an adult child ever conflict with my role as a spouse?*

2. In what ways is it helpful/not helpful, does it create stress/relieve stress, to think that until we get to heaven there will never be a complete resolution between the conflicting obligations of our different roles/allegiances?

### III. WHAT WE OWE GOD

1. What does it mean to own God our ultimate allegiance? -- to have God as our first priority (see *commandments one and two in the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:1-17*)
2. What practical steps do we need to take on a regular basis to ensure that we make this commitment, and keep it? this commitment?
3. When has this ultimate commitment been hardest for you? -- in your private life, your relationships, your corporate or national life?
4. Have you ever been in a “Daniel 6” situation? (read Daniel 6)
5. Read Psalm 46: 1-7 – What difference does it make to know that God’s power and our allegiance to God is the most important thing, no matter who is in or out of political power?

### IV. WHAT WE OWE CAESAR/THE EMPEROR

(= *the Governor/Government*)

Two large sections of Scripture deal with God’s people

- When they are IN power, or coming into power, building a nation (e.g., Moses, King David, the Prophets, etc.)
- And When they are OUT of power (e.g., Slavery, Exile, the early Christian Church)

#### A. IN Power

The following are major themes when God’s people are in/or coming into Power: (see Exodus, Deuteronomy, Psalms of David, Esther, etc.)

- Establishing God’s Passion for Human Liberty (Exodus 1-15)
  - Establishing Laws (the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:1-17), and the Just Rule of Law for all
  - Constant admonitions
    - i) To administer justice fairly (Micah 6:8)
    - ii) To protect people from injustice and vengeance -- so
      - Nobody gets judged by circumstantial evidence – two witnesses (Deut. 17:6, 19:15, etc.)
      - Everybody gets time for a fair trial – cities of refuge (Deuteronomy 19-21)
    - iii) To care for the weak, on the underside of society: widows, orphans, strangers, aliens (immigrants, people of other races) (see sample texts below)
1. Are these principles important to you?
  2. Do you pursue these principles? In what ways or areas of life?

3. Do these principles apply just to our political life, or to the life of the church? Explain
4. In the political world, do we see these concerns as principles that do/should/can/cannot transcend or belong to particular political parties and philosophies?
5. Is it possible to develop political policies that differ radically, but that honor these principles?

SCRIPTURES ON widows, orphans, strangers, aliens (foreigners, immigrants), the poor.

Deuteronomy 10.17-18

The Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the **orphan** and the **widow**, and who loves the **strangers (immigrants! People of other races)**, providing them food and clothing.

Deuteronomy 24.19:

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the **alien (immigrants, people of other races)**, the **orphan**, and the **widow**, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings.

Deuteronomy 27.19:

“Cursed be anyone who deprives the **alien**, the **orphan**, and the **widow** of justice.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

Psalm 68.5: God is called --

“**Father of orphans** and **protector of widows**” is God in his holy habitation.

Psalm 146.9:

The Lord watches over the **strangers (immigrants, foreigners)**; he upholds the **orphan** and the **widow**, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

Psalm 41.1

Happy are those who consider **the poor**; the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble.

The Psalms and the Prophets (Nathan, Isaiah, Amos, Micah, etc.) speak of the God-expected responsibility of the ruler in power):

Psalm 72.2, 4

May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

## B. OUT of Power

### i. Violent Revolution – (*Exodus 1-15*)

1. When, if ever, is revolution and the use of force the right Christian thing to pursue?
2. As Christians – would we have fought for the revolutionary side in our nation? On what biblical principles?

### ii. Non-Violent Resistance (e.g., *Daniel 6, Nehemiah 1*)

1. Describe a time (if ever) when you have been compelled by your government, or employer, etc., to do something that challenges your ultimate allegiance to God?

### iii. Bearing With, and Bearing Witness in an Imperfect World

(*even when persecuted! See, e.g., Joseph (Genesis 40-50); Jeremiah 29; Jesus, Paul (Acts 24; Romans 13), and John (Revelation 1:9)*)

1. What practical steps can we take to implement the following scriptures, by “rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” -- whether we are in power or out of power?  
*e.g., Seeking the common-welfare? Praying? Honoring? Exhibiting God’s concern for everyone?*

#### 1. Jeremiah 29:1-14.

7But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

#### 2. Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus said: “You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world”

#### 1 Peter 2:16-17

As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

#### Romans 13:7

Pay to all what is due them— taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

#### 1 Timothy 2

I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. 3This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

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What’s the most important thing you can do as soon as possible to

1. Render to Caesar the Things that are Caesar’s?
2. Render to God the things that are God’s?

## IN POWER OUT OF POWER SCRIPTURES.

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### Mark 12

13Then they sent to Jesus some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. 14And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? 15Should we pay them, or should we not?” But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.” 16And they brought one. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s. (Caesar’s)” 17**Jesus said to them, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were utterly amazed at him.**

### Jeremiah 29

29These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem. 3The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It said: 4Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7**But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.**

8For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, 9for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord. 10For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon’s seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. 11For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. 12Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, 14I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather

you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

### Daniel 6

6It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred twenty satraps, stationed throughout the whole kingdom, 2and over them three presidents, including Daniel; to these the satraps gave account, so that the king might suffer no loss. 3Soon Daniel distinguished himself above all the other presidents and satraps because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king planned to appoint him over the whole kingdom. 4So the presidents and the satraps tried to find grounds for complaint against Daniel in connection with the kingdom. But they could find no grounds for complaint or any corruption, because he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption could be found in him. 5The men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

6So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever! 7All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions.

8Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.” 9Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

10Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously.

### Psalm 46:1-7

1God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

3though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

4There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

6The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

### Philippians 4:6-7

6Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.