“I do” Matthew 22:1-14 Trinity 23 2026

Someone has said, “Flattery is like perfume. The idea is to smell it, not swallow it.” Another suggested, “Flattery is like counterfeit money which, but for vanity, would have no circulation.” Most of us would rather be hurt by flattery than helped by criticism. It could be said, “Flattery is not communication; it is manipulation.”. The Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus. Notice how they used “flattery” hoping to “manipulate” Jesus. Even, “Leave it to Beaver” character Eddie Haskel would have been proud of their technique.

They tried to trap Jesus but ended up being trapped themselves. Jesus saw right through their scheme and plainly called them what they were---“hypocrites” which incidentally is the Greek word which means “actor”.

We have to love Jesus’s answer: “Whose likeness and inscription is this?" “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:20-1). Since we are made in God’s image all of who we are belongs to God! How well and how often do we take that timeless advice---giving to God what belongs to Him? How is our devotion to God ? Is it where it ought to be?

How is it possible to have a devotion to God that falls short? One way is when we bring bargains into our devotion: Jesus sees our potential to become the disciples that He is calling us all to be. There are times when we might approach our spiritual lives the same way we do our bargain shopping. Although the notion of thrifty devotion is not mentioned directly in this passage of scripture, it seems to be implied. Second, complete devotion: Anything that is not whole-hearted devotion is nothing more than mediocre at best. God calls us to love Him with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Luke 10:27). Since we are made in God’s image, we must completely give ourselves to God!

Are there are times when our bargain shopping echoes our devotion in our spiritual lives? Who does not like to buy nice things at nice prices? But there are two extremes of how we spend money. Either we stockpile it (hoarding) because we are thrifty, or perhaps we might be extravagant because we might be a little careless in spending more than we should have. In 1626, Peter Minuit, the director-general of Dutch West India Company's settlement in North America, made what he thought was a very good deal. He bought Manhattan Island from

native Indian chiefs for $24. Unfortunately for him, company headquarters didn't think it was such a bargain and charged him a fine for his "extravagance.” Mr. Minuit's extravagance would not purchase a square inch of Manhattan Island today. What we see as extravagant today may someday be seen as cheap.

Does God think of us as cheap? Of course not! God does not think of us as cheap, because Jesus bought us with a price! Just as God does not think we are cheap, God does not want us to be thrifty in our potential for serving Him. We are made in His image. Do we want a salvation army store where we can get what we want from God? There are no salvation army store or clearance rack solutions concerning what we want and what we need that only God can provide---His grace! God’s grace is not cheap! God’s grace is not something that we can buy or it would not be grace. God’s grace is a gift that makes us right with God! God’s grace is free to us but it was extremely costly to Jesus Christ who paid the price that we could not have paid.

I was in a store shopping for a winter jacket. The cost needed to be minimal, so I went to the clearance rack to start looking. As I flipped through the jackets, one caught my eye. It was the right color and the right size, and best of all, the price tag was marked $8.00. Without much more thought, I made my purchase. At home I slipped on the jacket. Its texture was like wonderful, it was nice and heavy and warm. I had made my purchase so quickly that I hadn't noticed how high quality the jacket was. Then I saw the original price tag: $425.00! I gasped. I had never owned any clothing of that value. I had come home with what I thought was a "cheap buy," but the original price was quite high. I had been oblivious to its value.

Just as with my jacket, I have often treated the power of Jesus' blood like a "cheap purchase." His grace, though free to me, carried a high price tag—the life of his very own Son. I say again God does not think of us as cheap, because Jesus bought us with a price---the priceless price of His blood!

What is odd about the group that asked Jesus this question? The group that was asking Jesus this question was not a likely group. Why do you think that they were not a likely group? Those on the Pharisee side of the fence did not usually hang out with those on the Herodian side of the fence. In fact, they would usually repel each other because of their difference in views. The Herodians would have

been in favor of taxes whereas the Pharisees opposed taxation. The Herodians were worldly (secular) unlike the Pharisees who were religious. The Pharisees dislike Roman oppression but would play the game so long as the Romans did not interfere in their religion. So then why do you think these two unlikely groups came together? The only reason that these two opposites sides came together was so that they could oppose Jesus. They had hoped to trick Jesus with a question that would be incriminating (condemning) no matter how He answered it.

How do you think you might have answered the question that they asked Jesus? They had hoped to trick Jesus by getting Him to pick a side! If Jesus had answered in favor of the Herodian-tax-favoring side of the fence, then the Pharisees would have succeeded in destroying some of His credibility. On the other hand, if Jesus had answered in favor of the Pharisees and their disapproval of being taxed by a foreign and oppressing government, Jesus could have gotten in trouble with the Roman officials.

Jesus asked for a Roman coin, then held it up and defused the trap with His answer: “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God.” Neither side could challenge the wisdom of His response.

Does Jesus’s answer apply only to stewardship of money? Of course not! God also wants us to give our best in stewardship of money, in stewardship of fellowship, in stewardship in sharing the Gospel, in stewardship of family, in stewardship of God’s creation. John 3:16 illustrates God’s extravagant love and mercy for us!

Jesus was talking about putting things in their proper place. Obviously, Jesus was and is talking about keeping money in its place. Jesus was and is talking about giving God the place that He needs to have in our lives as well. We are made in God’s image and should wholly devote ourselves to Him. Money has value and can buy things but a relationship with the Lord is priceless! It is possible for us to hoard money and be stingy with it, but when we die money is not something that we can take with us. Remember what happened to the rich fool that Jesus spoke of in a parable? He bought bigger barns to store his crops rather than being generous with those in need. He had stored up things for himself in this world yet he was spiritually bankrupt for eternity (Luke 12:13-

20). The rich man who ignored Lazarus had the same kind of fate (Luke 16:19-31).

What would happen to our success if we did not give to God what is His? How well would we succeed without God? Or we even succeed at all? What does Jesus say about success and being connected with God? Apart from God, we lose our place and our purpose. Consider what Jesus said in John 15:4 – 5: 4 “Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can`t bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:4 – 5 is one of the places that Jesus reminds us that he gives us our place and our purpose. Money can give us things but it cannot give us our place in eternity.

If a stranger were to us and ask us about what a Christian’s duty is in the world, how would we answer that questions? What would Jesus say the answer is? If you were to make a list of adjectives of what some of those qualities would be, what would your list look like? Probably all of us would mention a list something like these just to name a few…. humility, honesty, compassion, loving, reconciling, forgiveness, prayer, diligence, welcoming, evangelizing, self-denial, using our talents. Doesn’t our duty as Christians help us to understand our purpose in the world? Doesn’t our duty as Christians help us understand who we are and why we are here?

Jesus wants us to be like Him in denying ourselves and taking up our crosses as we follow Him. Jesus wants us to give to Him our best because He gave to us His best. Jesus wants us to give to God what is God’s by giving our best in all that we do. Consider how that point is made in the following story.

The world expects believers to look like Christ, not a cheap imitation. People outside of the church see too many professing Christians who look more like "chump change" than the real thing. Live in such a way that others will easily recognize a significant difference. God wants us to look and live like Christians! Are we giving all that is His? Do we remember that we were made in God’s image? Are we giving God our best in all that we do? I pray that we can, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen.