



SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER 2020

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

29th Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 22: 15-21

The man rang the doorbell four times before I'd managed hastily to finish a phone call. A cup of coffee later and some food for his kids gave me the space to get something of his painful story.

He was looking after a sick wife, had lost his job some time back and was struggling to make ends meet. He had little or no time for the Government. I wouldn't dare to match his colourful language even though I found myself sympathetic to his views.

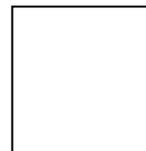
Governance is a complex and demanding business. Those who enter public life need thick skins because they'll be buffered by criticism, personal or general. But their skins need to be sensitive to receive heartfelt responses to the consequences of their decision making. Brilliant and person-centred help is model service. When personalities and careers interfere, when the poor are victimised, easily labelled or seemingly regarded as collateral damage, then trust has been lost - and trust is sacred.

Jesus stood up to injustice. He defended those with no clout and locked horns with those in power. He championed the poor, healed those without the wherewithal for medicine and liberated men, women and kids compromised by evil. His love was literally a godsend to many and a threat to others. So when the plotters came to trap him, he was ready for them.

Never one to collude with legalists eager to score points, he refused to play their power games. He sees through their weasel words and compliments. They know him to be unafraid of anyone and he proves it, stripping away their respectful façade and calling them hypocrites to their faces. Not paying Roman taxes could land you in court, but promoting payment let down further those downtrodden already. Their sinister trap expected a yes or no answer.

Being a good Jew, he answers their question with questions of his own. Whose face is on the coins they carry? Jesus is the Son, living the Kingdom of God, and he asserts that Kingdom over the movers and shakers of the world who subdue territories and plunder the proceeds. For the sake of the common good, give to Caesar - but God comes first, beyond any pecking order. Jesus didn't answer the question. It remains for us to talk about, argue over and hold others to account.

The barber once told me he never discussed politics or religion. We must do both. Human care is the coin they both deal in. My man at the door expected the Government and the Church to listen and help him. He's right.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

A reminder from Pope Francis

Reading the Scriptures makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of 'charity a la carte' or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience.

The Gospel is about the Kingdom of God (*cf. Luke 4:43*), it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society.

We are seeking God's kingdom, 'Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well' (*Mathew 6:33*). Jesus's mission is to inaugurate the kingdom of his Father, he commands his disciples to proclaim the good news that 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (*Mathew 10:7*)

The Joy of the Gospel paras 180