

## ADVENT DEVOTION: NOVEMBER 30, 2022

### LUKE 20:19-26

### MOTIVATION

There has been some excellent exegetical work done by New Testament scholars highlighting the finer points of this story and just how clever Jesus is here. For instance, the fact that Jesus has his questioners present a Roman coin with Caesar's face on it, implicates them of possessing a graven image of a false God. Besides that, the answer Jesus gives would also remind them that in reality the world and all that is in it belongs to God, not the Roman Empire.

But I want to focus on another facet of this story– the motivation to confront Jesus with this question in the first place. The whole point of these spies approaching Jesus publicly is out of the spite and the pride of the scribes and chief priests. They previously had been trying to publicly bring Jesus down a notch, and every single time he always got the best of them. So this time they sent others to try and bring Jesus down with a trapping question that would either get him in trouble with the crowd or with Rome.

It's so striking to me what we will do out of spite and pride... and how it typically backfires on us. Compare this story to the story told in John 3 about Nicodemus, also a Pharisee and Jewish leader, but who comes to Jesus earnestly wanting to talk further and learn from him. When I think about my own social location in this life, as a straight, cis, fully-abled, white male living in America (not to mention an ordained pastor), I find myself having a lot more in common with the scribes, priests, and Pharisees than I do with the poor rural Galileans that Jesus proclaimed were blessed. As such, Jesus has some clear words of caution and critique for people like me. I can choose to let my pride dictate my reactions, or I can choose to come to Jesus earnestly and try to learn and grow. When Christ enters in, and tells us something that is hard to hear, how will we respond?

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. When was the last time you acted out of a motivation of pride or spite? How did that go? What might have happened if you had acted out of a different motivation?
2. What are some texts from the gospels that you, in your social location, find hard to hear? How might you approach Jesus for further conversation, like Nicodemus did?