

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I think it's safe to say that we live in a very anti-tax, anti-government age. But, of course, that is the American way. If I remember correctly something of our history as a nation, didn't we come into being as a nation because our forebears hated paying taxes to the British king? Didn't taxes have something to do with what we refer to as the "Boston Tea Party", which sparked the American Revolution?

Taxes! Government! It is a long-standing American tradition to make fun of them. John Adams, one of our founding fathers once said, "In my many years I have come to the conclusion that one useless man is a shame, two useless men is a law firm, and three or more is a congress".

Mark Twain quipped, "Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But then I repeat myself."

According to the late President Ronald Reagan, "Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it."

Finally, from the late humorist, Will Rogers, we heard, "I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts."

However, there is something ironic about a billboard telling us to PAY NO TAXES, along a federally-funded interstate highway. It's like that fellow out West whose cattle graze on federal lands, who refuses to pay any taxes. Talk about a free lunch!

Though we may grumble, most of us understand the need to pay our taxes. Not so long ago, I had a friend with six children complaining that he and his wife had to pay more than \$50,000.00 in taxes. Now, I'm no mathematical genius and have some idea of exemptions, so I had to conclude that my friend made an awesome amount of money. So, I couldn't help but say to him, "Man, you ought to be down on your knees thanking God that you had to pay those taxes. Don't you realize that most families in this country don't even make \$50,000.00 a year." As much as we complain about paying taxes and the ineptitude of government, we are blessed to live (and freely complain) in this great nation that we call the United States of America.

So, it's a given. In every age, in every nation, in every system of government, we have to, as Jesus says, "render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar..." Giving to Caesar is required by the state; giving to God is voluntary. That puts God and His Church at a distinct disadvantage.

I find it very interesting, even kind of funny, that many of the same people who condemn those who rob the government and are delighted to see them prosecuted as “tax cheats” and “welfare cheats”, have no problem robbing God. They are the same ones who God addresses in Chapter 3, Verses 7 to 10 in the Book of Malachi: “Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. Yet you say, “How must we return?”

“Dare a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me! And you say, “How do we rob you?” In tithes and offerings! Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. That there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the Lord of hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure.”

Please be mindful that I didn’t start this discussion, Jesus did. in responding to those who were trying to entrap him: “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

As we so poignantly heard in the magnificent, faith-filled testimonies given last week: everything we have, all that we are, belongs to God. Yet, all that is asked in return, as we have just heard in His Word, is a mere 10%. I dare say, unless your name is Warren Buffett or Bill Gates, you’re repaying a whole lot more than 10% to Caesar, and God’s promise of what you’ll receive in return is a lot more trustworthy than whatever Caesar promises you.