

FROM THE PASTOR'S PRINTER

GREAT CAESAR'S GHOST

It is interesting how in a few words Jesus can give a teaching that can challenge men and woman to struggle with its meaning, and how to live it out to this very day. Jesus's response to the Pharisees and company to the trap they set, "Repay to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what belongs to God." – Mt 20: 25) is a case in point. It has formed our understanding of our relationship to one's country since the Church began. As with all teachings of the Lord, to understand it properly, we must look at its context and how it stands in relationship to the rest of the teachings of the Lord in the Scriptures.

The first thing Scripture teaches is that we do not live first and foremost for a worldly nation, without realizing that we live for the kingdom of God which will last forever. This is made clear over and over again in the history of Israel and Judah, where king after king chose to rule by the values of the world instead of by the will of God. Time and time again, both nations suffered for not being true to the ultimate Ruler of their nation. We also read in Philippians 3:20 "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." It is in this context that we live as citizens of our worldly nations, that is, applying the will of God to our life as Americans, so that we may be good citizens of this nation. We have seen time and again that nations that do not live in accord with the will of God are headed towards destruction. The criteria for determining if our nation is faithful to God is not that we are the best, the wealthiest, and most powerful, but rather by looking at our laws and practices as a nation and comparing them to divine principles of justice and righteousness. (We need only to remember that at one time Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan were the strongest nations, and they certainly were not faithful to God's principles.) This applies not only in the area of respect for human life, which is of utmost importance, but also to the care of the poor and vulnerable, a just distribution of goods and education,

relationships with other nations and working towards a just and lasting peace. We must realize that saying we are one nation under God does not simply mean we have been blessed, but also, as always with Christ, we are to use our abundance so that others may be blessed by God. This is not the culture of America for many people. For them, they see receiving the blessings (or the false notion that they have made all they have by their own energy) means the buck stops there. For others, the "climb to the top" disregards the right treatment of people because it is "all about me."

To live in a democratic nation in which we have the power to speak out and vote, gives us a greater responsibility than if we lived in an autocratic nation. It means we are obliged to exercise our right (and moral obligation) to nurture a nation in the true values of God, so that true freedom and justice may prevail and this nation continue as a light to the world. Our advocacy by voting, persuading our government officials through letters, email, and phone calls, and speaking the truth to fellow citizens is meant to be a priority in our lives. Paying our taxes, obeying the law (unless it is immoral to do so), and praying for our nation are not niceties for when we have time, but are responsibilities that we have. With the gifts we have received comes responsibility. May we measure up to it.

WINDOW THEFT OR PROGRESS?

In case you missed the announcement last Sunday, the windows in the loft of church have been taken, but for good reason. The stained-glass restorers have taken them so that they can give the frame makers accurate dimensions. The rest of the windows will be removed in late spring through early summer. This is a sign of progress in building our church!

THANKS BE TO GOD!