

March 1, 2026 What Makes for Peace: The Mindset for Peace Sermon Questions

Pastor Chris Winans

Sermon text: Matthew 22:15-22

1. Fill in the blanks below from Isa 26:3 and Matt 22:15-22:

Isa 26:3 You keep him in perfect _____ whose mind is _____ on you, because he _____ in you.

Matt 22:17-21 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the _____, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, "Whose _____ and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore _____ to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

2. **TRUE or FALSE** The tax question posed to Jesus was politically harmless.

3. The coin shown to Jesus was a

- a. Shekel
- b. Drachma
- c. Denarius
- d. Talent

4. Genesis 1 teaches that humanity is made in the _____ of God.

5. **TRUE or FALSE** Trusting in political outcomes is presented as the foundation for lasting peace.

6. When Jesus asks, "Whose image is this?" the word "image" recalls which Old Testament passage?

- a. Exodus 20
- b. Psalm 23
- c. Genesis 1
- d. Isaiah 53

7. According to Romans 8:18, present sufferings are:

- a. Meaningless
- b. Proof of God's absence
- c. Not worth comparing to future glory
- d. Permanent

8. The mindset that leads to peace fixes its trust on _____ alone.

9. According to 1 Chronicles 29:11–14, what belongs to the Lord? _____

Sermon text: Matthew 22:15-22

1. To prepare to answer this series of questions you can review this section of the message in this link to the video:

[Today's message](#) (Timestamp start to 12:57)

- What does it mean practically to have a mind “stayed” on the Lord?
- How would you explain to an unbeliever the relationship between of one who trusts in God?

2. Discuss the following questions in this link to the video:

[The Coin](#) (Timestamp 12:58 to 20:05)

- Why was the tax question such a dangerous trap for Jesus?
- What message did the denarius communicate about Caesar?
- What things might we be tempted to trust in other than God? Do these things promise peace but fail to deliver?

3. To prepare to answer this series of questions you can review this section of the message in this link:

[The Comeback](#) (Timestamp 20:06 to 30:42)

- Why is the word “image” so important in Jesus’ reply?
- What does Jesus’ words “render to God what is God’s” entail for our lives?
- The Pharisees tried to change the flow of the conversation with Jesus :“You are not swayed by appearances” by flattery. But Jesus brings the discussion back to heart issues. Discuss how our conversations can move from the earthly to the eternal.... How do you bring the eternal perspective (love of Christ, hope in eternal life) into your everyday conversations?

4. To prepare to answer this series of questions you can review this section of the message in this link:

[If we're honest](#) (Timestamp 30:43 to end)

- Why is anchoring peace in political outcomes fragile? What does it look like to engage responsibly as citizens while keeping peace anchored in God?
- What is the central principle Jesus models in this passage
- Where, specifically, do you need to “render to God” what belongs to Him? Discuss what changes you need to make to render to God what is His?
- Pray for each other in your groups for what changes you ask God to make in your hearts.

March 1, 2026 What Makes for Peace: The Mindset for Peace Sermon Guide

Pastor Chris Winans

Sermon text: Matthew 22:15-22

[Today's message](#) (Timestamp start to 12:57) is titled “The Mindset for Peace.” How should we approach life? How do we face the circumstances and contexts we find ourselves in so that they produce peace rather than anxiety? To answer that, we'll be looking through the lens of the prophet Isaiah—specifically Isaiah 26:3.

Isaiah 26:3 – ³You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

As we consider the mindset that leads to peace, we're reminded that true peace flows from a mind fixed on the Lord—a settled trust in God alone. To explore this, we turn to Tuesday of Passion Week. Jesus is in the temple teaching when religious leaders repeatedly confront Him, attempting to trap Him in His words. We'll focus on the most well-known exchange: whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar.

To see why this question was so explosive, we must step into the historical setting. When Jesus was born, Herod—called “King of the Jews”—ruled Judea as a Roman-backed client king. Though supported by Rome, he exercised real authority. After Herod's death, his kingdom was divided among his sons: Philip, Antipas, and Archelaus. Archelaus proved especially cruel. Matthew tells us that when Joseph and Mary prepared to return from Egypt, they were warned in a dream not to go back to Judea because Archelaus was reigning there. And the text tells us...

Matthew 2:21-22 – ²¹And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.

Instead of returning to Judea, Joseph withdrew to Galilee, ruled by Herod Antipas. He avoided Judea because Archelaus was notoriously cruel, and the people deeply resented his tyranny. Complaints eventually reached Rome, and Caesar Augustus summoned Archelaus, removed him from power, and ended his rule.

In A.D. 6, Rome abolished client-king governance in Judea and made it a direct Roman province. A Roman governor was installed, Roman troops enforced Roman law, and Roman taxation followed.

The people resented the visible presence of soldiers and the burden of taxes, both constant reminders of foreign occupation. In A.D. 6–7, a revolt erupted under Judas the Galilean and a Pharisee named Zadok—figures often linked to the early Zealot movement, which fiercely opposed paying taxes to Caesar.

Rome responded decisively. The rebellion was crushed, and many were publicly crucified outside Jerusalem as a warning. The trauma of that suppression lingered for years and is later recalled in Acts, when Jewish leaders reference earlier revolts while debating how to deal with the followers of Jesus.

Acts 5:37 – ³⁷Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered.

The argument in Acts was simple: if a movement is from God, it cannot be stopped; if it is not, it will collapse—just as Judas the Galilean's revolt did. That reference shows how deeply the tax issue was embedded in public memory. People had died over whether it was lawful to pay Rome. It was no minor controversy.

So in Matthew 22, when Jesus is teaching in the temple, two unlikely allies—the Pharisees and the Herodians—approach Him with a carefully crafted question.

If Jesus said, “Do not pay the tax,” He could be accused of rebellion. Judas had already led a revolt over this very issue, and Rome had crushed it. Such a statement could quickly bring Roman charges.

But if He said, “Pay the tax,” He risked alienating the people. Roman taxation symbolized oppression, and the Pharisees could portray Him as siding with Caesar over Israel.

Either way, He appeared trapped. This was no casual inquiry—it was a political and theological snare, expertly set.

We'll look at how Jesus responds. First, we'll examine the coin itself—the denarius—which reveals what was truly at stake. Then we'll consider His remarkable reply/comeback before drawing the connection to our own lives and what it means to cultivate a mindset anchored in peace.

[The Coin](#) (Timestamp 12:58 to 20:05)

Before offering His brilliant and concise response, Jesus first asks to be shown a coin—often referred to as the tribute coin—which was a denarius.

Matthew 22:19-21 – ¹⁹“Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” ²¹They said, “Caesar’s.”

To understand what is happening in this moment, we need to appreciate the history of Roman coinage—because the denarius itself tells a story.

If we go back to the days of the Roman Republic—before the age of the Caesars, when the Senate governed rather than an emperor, the Senate oversaw the minting of coins. Gold, silver, and bronze coins were produced with inscriptions and simple designs, primarily for commerce and exchange. They were functional, not overtly political.

But everything shifted with the rise of imperial Rome. Beginning with Julius Caesar, and especially under Caesar Augustus, control of the gold and silver coinage moved into the emperor’s hands. The Senate retained authority over bronze coins, but the emperor determined what appeared on the gold and silver. That detail matters. The one who controls the mint controls the message.

Under the empire, coins became instruments of propaganda. The emperor’s image would appear on them. So would inscriptions highlighting his titles, his accomplishments, or the greatness of the empire under his rule. These coins circulated throughout the entire empire—not just in Rome itself. Imagine living in a distant province and being reminded every time you handled money who ruled you and what he claimed about himself.

In Jesus’ day, the denarius was a small silver coin, the size of a modern penny. On one side was the image of Tiberius Caesar, surrounded by an inscription. On the other side was a seated woman holding a staff, also encircled by writing.

The inscription around Tiberius’ image read: “Tiberius Caesar / Son of the Divine Augustus.” Augustus, Tiberius’ predecessor and adoptive father, had begun to receive divine honors in parts of the empire during his lifetime. After his death, he was officially declared a god and worshiped throughout the empire. So if Augustus was divine—and Tiberius was his son—then Tiberius bore the title “son of god.” That claim is stamped right onto the coin.

On the reverse side, the inscription read “Pontifex Maximus,” meaning “High Priest.” So the emperor is presented as the son of a god and the empire’s high priest.

And the seated woman? She represented Pax, the Roman goddess of peace.

Consider the message embedded in every transaction: Tiberius Caesar—son of god, high priest, bringer of peace.

Now remember Isaiah 26:3. The contrast could not be sharper.

*Isaiah 26:3 – ³You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, **because he trusts in you.***

Every time someone picked up a Roman denarius, they were holding more than currency—they were holding a message. The coin itself was a quiet but constant call to place trust in something earthly: in Rome, in its power, in Caesar. Caesar was presented as the son of god, the high priest, the bringer of peace—even hailed in his day as a savior of the world. The empire was telling its people, *This is where your security lies. This is who guarantees your peace.*

That raises a searching question for us: are we tempted to do the same and place our trust in something—or someone—other than God alone? Whenever we give in to that temptation, we step away from the mindset that leads to true peace.

We live in a world filled with leaders, systems, and structures that subtly (and sometimes boldly) present themselves as saviors—promising stability, prosperity, and peace. Governments do this. Cultural movements do this. Influential figures do this. And people are drawn in, placing their confidence in earthly power.

We are not called to anchor our trust in earthly systems. Our hope, confidence, and faith are to be fixed on God alone.

This doesn’t apply only to governments or political power—it extends to money as well. Jesus Himself said you cannot serve both God and money. Why? Because money can function like a savior. It whispers promises of security: *If I just have enough, I’ll be safe. I’ll be at peace. I’ll be untouchable.* But that is the language of salvation. That is the pursuit of peace apart from God. The mindset that leads to peace sets its gaze on the Lord alone. It refuses to hand over ultimate trust to earthly substitutes. It anchors hope where it truly belongs.

So when Jesus says, “Show me the coin,” He is not asking for spare change—He is exposing the deeper issue of trust.

[The Comeback \(Timestamp 20:06 to 30:42\)](#)

Jesus’ response is not limited to the coin itself. His reply—His brilliant comeback—goes even deeper. There is much that could be explored, but I want to highlight just two key things He does. First, He subtly shifts the language. He does not simply repeat the wording of His opponents; instead, He changes it. With careful precision, He turns the tables through His choice of words. When they approach Him, their question is...

*Matthew 22:17 – ¹⁷Is it lawful **to pay** taxes to Caesar, or not?*

What I want to draw your attention to is the word translated “pay.” It’s a common Greek term meaning simply to pay or give. But when Jesus responds, He does not use that ordinary word. He could have easily said, “Therefore, pay to Caesar what is

Caesar's and pay to God what is God's." But He doesn't. Instead, He chooses a less common Greek word. That's why many English translations don't use the word *pay*—they use the word *render* instead.

*Matthew 22:21 – ²¹"Therefore **render** to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

What does this word *render* actually mean? It can be translated in ways that help us see the distinction more clearly. It carries the sense of repaying—of giving back what is owed.

*Matthew 22:21 – ²¹"Therefore **repay/give back** to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

Jesus chooses this wording because under imperial Rome, Caesar controlled the minting of the denarius from his own treasury. These coins quite literally belonged to him. His image was stamped on them—they bore his likeness and his inscription. In that sense, they were his property. So when Jesus says to "render" to Caesar what is Caesar's, He is essentially saying, *Give it back. It's his coin. His image is on it.*

But then He adds something far more profound: "Render to God what is God's." Give Caesar back his coins—but give to God what belongs to God.

And here's the second thing Jesus does. When they approach Him, they begin by flattering Him. They say...

*Matthew 22:16 – ¹⁶Teacher, we know that...you do not care about anyone's opinion, **for you are not swayed by appearances.***

If you were to translate this phrase very literally from the Greek, it would read, "You do not look at the faces of men." That sounds awkward in English, which is why most translations smooth it out to say something like, "You are not swayed by appearances." But strictly speaking, the Greek says...

*Matthew 22:16 – ¹⁶Teacher, we know that...you do not care about anyone's opinion, **for you do not look at people's faces.***

This detail becomes significant when Jesus answers their question about paying taxes to Caesar. He says, "Show me the coin." You might expect Him then to ask, "Whose face is on it?" That would seem natural—especially since they had just said He is not swayed by faces. But that's not what He asks. Once again, He shifts the wording and in our English translations, it reads...

*Matthew 22:19-20 – ¹⁹Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And Jesus said to them, **"Whose likeness...is this?"***

But in the Greek text, it's not the ordinary word for "likeness." While that translation works, Matthew uses a specific term here—a word that appears nowhere else in his entire Gospel. That seems intentional. What Jesus literally asks is...

*Matthew 22:19-20 – ¹⁹Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And Jesus said to them, **"Whose image...is this?"***

It's the word *image*. And the moment you hear that word—especially as a first-century Jew—your mind is drawn somewhere very specific: *Genesis 1*— "Let us make man in our image."

So when Jesus asks, "Whose image is this?" the question goes deeper than the coin in their hand. It naturally leads to another, more searching question: *Whose image are you?*

Give Caesar back his coin—his image is stamped on it. But give to God what belongs to God. If you bear His image, then you owe Him not just a coin, but your very self.

The brilliance of this word swap lies in the fact that before you can return something to someone, you first need to know to whom it belongs...Thus, by switching verbs, Jesus revealed that the answer to their text question lies in answering an even deeper set of questions, namely, **what belongs to Caesar? And what belongs to God?** – Jason Porterfield *Fight Like Jesus*
What belongs to Caesar? His coins. They come from his treasury. His image is stamped on them. Truly, they are his—so give them back.

But what belongs to God? That is the deeper question. And the answer to what belongs to God is...

*1 Chronicles 29:11-14 – Everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all...**Everything comes from you, and we give you only what you first gave us!***

Jesus takes their loaded, antagonistic question and lifts it to an entirely different level. They are fixated on Caesar—on taxes, on politics, on power. In essence, He says, "If you're so concerned about Caesar, give him his coin." But then He presses deeper: *Whose image do you bear?* And give to God—repay to Him—what belongs to Him.

In responding to the question about taxes, Jesus is doing far more than resolving a political dispute. He speaks to the immediate issue, but He places it within a far greater reality. And as we reflect on our own lives and the mindset that produces peace, we begin to see that Jesus is not simply giving instruction about taxation—He is addressing it from a much higher and deeper aspect. An "aspect" is what you're paying attention to **when you consider something.**

You're focused on taxes—but you're missing the bigger issue. You're arguing about Caesar, but you're not considering God.

They were locked into a narrow, political concern. Jesus, however, lifts the entire conversation to the level of eternity and the Lord Himself. In effect, He says, "Forget Caesar for a moment—what is owed to God? Remember who your Creator is.

Remember the One who made heaven and earth."

By doing this, He diffuses the trap. Antagonism loses its force. They have no reply. All they can do is walk away—because He has pulled the discussion out from under their small, earthly perspective and set it within an eternal one. When you move from the temporal to the eternal, it changes everything. It produces the kind of mindset that leads to peace.

We live in a world that often feels like it's unraveling. It can seem as though peace is increasingly rare. The tone of our culture is harsh. Divisions feel deeper. Tensions flare easily.

It's understandable why that would unsettle people. But here's the question: should believers in Jesus Christ be swept up in that same spirit? Or are we called to something different? Are we meant to reflect the fire of the culture—or to bring peace into it?

There is One who truly brings peace—the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ. Shouldn't we all be peacemakers in contentious seasons? Rather than waiting for tensions to escalate, shouldn't we cultivate that mindset now?

Jesus shows us one crucial principle: when something feels antagonistic, lift it higher. Take it out of the immediate storm and place it in the context of eternity. Remind yourself who is truly in charge. Remember the God who reigns sovereignly over history—the One who declares that all our days are written in His book before one of them comes to pass.

Think of Daniel in chapter 2. He served under a king who had conquered his homeland, destroyed his city, and carried him into exile. Yet Daniel says...

*Daniel 2:20-21 – ²⁰Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ²¹**He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.***

Isn't that the kind of perspective that produces peace? A mindset that says, *No matter what unfolds, God still reigns.* The question is—can we have peace in the uncertainty?

If your peace rises and falls with whoever is elected, that's a fragile foundation. But if your trust rests in an eternal King—perfect, righteous, and unshaken—who is establishing a kingdom where there will be no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain, because the former things will pass away—then that is a different kind of peace altogether. That is the peace that surpasses understanding.

Does this mean we disengage as citizens? Not at all. We still think carefully. We still vote according to conscience and conviction before God. But we do not anchor our peace there. The mindset that leads to true peace is not rooted in earthly outcomes—it is rooted in the sovereign reign of God.

If we're honest (Timestamp 30:43 to end), the things that most often rob us are our personal circumstances. It's the strain in a marriage. It's tension within a family. It's a child who is struggling. It's financial pressure. It's uncertainty at work. It's illness. It's loss. It's grief.

So how do we find peace in the middle of those storms?

Perhaps an even more important question: should we expect to? Seeking Jesus doesn't erase hardship, and we never want to minimize real pain. But is it possible to pursue peace even in the middle of sorrow, confusion, and unanswered questions?

One way we do that is exactly what Jesus models for us: we lift our perspective. We take the painful, bewildering circumstances of our lives—where we see only dimly—and we raise our eyes toward heaven. We remind ourselves that over our bodies, over our families, over every detail of our story, there reigns a God who loves us. And not only that—He is at work bringing renewal.

He will make everything right. As the Apostle Paul says...

*Romans 8:18 – ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time **are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.***

Scripture reminds us: our lives are like a breath. They appear for a moment and then fade. All of us are like a passing shadow. And yet, there is an eternity coming that will never end.

When we weigh what we are walking through now—real pain, real suffering, the Apostle Paul says those sufferings, as heavy as they are, are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed. They are not dismissed, but they are placed in perspective.

The mindset that leads to peace remembers that one day God will declare, "It is done." Sin and death will be no more. He will reign openly and fully over all. And even now He calls us, "Trust in Me. Fix your mind on Me."

"He keeps him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him, because he trusts in the Lord."