

Whose Image Do We Bear?

Matthew 22:15–22 (NIV)

Rev. Cheryl Farr | October 18, 2026

Sermon Theme

We may carry Caesar's coins, but we bear God's image, and our whole lives belong to Him.

Big Idea

The world identifies us by our jobs, possessions, accomplishments, and loyalties. But our deepest identity comes from God. We are created in His image, and our faith should shape every part of our lives, including how we treat others, fulfill our responsibilities, and respond to His grace.

What the Passage Shows Us

Jesus is in Jerusalem during the final week before His crucifixion. The religious leaders are looking for a way to discredit Him.

- **The Pharisees and Herodians:** Two groups with different interests cooperate because they both oppose Jesus.
- **The Trap:** If Jesus approves paying Roman taxes, He may lose support among the Jewish people. If He opposes the tax, He risks accusations of rebellion.
- **The Coin:** Jesus asks for a denarius bearing Caesar's image and inscription.
- **The Answer:** Jesus tells them to give Caesar what belongs to Caesar and God what belongs to God.
- **The Greater Question:** If the coin bears Caesar's image, what does it mean that human beings bear God's image?

Jesus acknowledges legitimate earthly responsibilities while reminding His listeners that God's authority is greater than any human institution.

Created in God's Image

Genesis 1:26–27 teaches that every human being is created in God's image. Our worth does not come from money, achievements, social position, or the approval of others.

God's image belongs to everyone, including those whose beliefs, circumstances, and choices differ from our own.

Sin has damaged the way humanity reflects God's character, but it has not ended God's love. Through Jesus Christ, God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration.

Remember: We do not earn our value through good behavior. We have worth because God created us and loves us.

Reflecting God's Image in Others

If every person bears God's image, that truth should influence how we treat one another.

- We can disagree without being cruel.
- We can confront wrongdoing without denying someone's dignity.
- We can practice compassion toward people whose lives differ from ours.
- We can recognize God's love for those whom society often overlooks.

Jesus never confused love with agreeing about everything. He challenged hypocrisy and injustice while continuing to call people toward God's mercy.

The Challenge: When people encounter us, do our words and actions help them recognize something of God's character?

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Giving God Our Whole Lives

We sometimes divide life into separate areas: church, work, family, finances, and politics. We may willingly give God authority over some parts while trying to maintain control of others.

But Jesus does not ask for whatever remains after everyone else has received their portion.

Psalms 24:1 reminds us that the earth and everything in it belong to the Lord. Our time, abilities, relationships, possessions, and responsibilities are all part of the lives God has entrusted to us.

Giving ourselves to God means allowing His love and truth to guide how we live throughout the week, not simply how we worship on Sunday.

Faithful Citizenship, Greater Loyalty

Jesus does not dismiss our responsibilities toward government or society. Christians should be honest citizens, responsible neighbors, and people who contribute to the common good.

However, earthly authority has limits. No political party, leader, or nation can take the place that belongs to God.

Romans 13:1–7 reminds us to respect legitimate authority, while Acts 5:29 teaches that obedience to God must come first. Our relationship with Christ should influence both what we stand for and how we treat people while standing for it.

Wesleyan Emphasis: Grace Restores God's Image

John Wesley taught that holiness involves both our relationship with God and the way we treat others. Faith should become visible through mercy, justice, generosity, and service.

God's grace makes this transformation possible.

- **Prevenient Grace:** God's love reaches toward us before we recognize our need for Him.
- **Justifying Grace:** Through faith in Jesus Christ, we receive forgiveness and reconciliation with God.
- **Sanctifying Grace:** The Holy Spirit continues shaping our hearts and lives so that we reflect Christ more faithfully.
- **Social Holiness:** Our growing love for God becomes visible through our care for others.

We do not earn God's love through obedience. We learn to live differently because He has already loved us.

Key Truths

- Our deepest identity comes from God, not the world's expectations.
- Every human being bears God's image and deserves dignity.
- Earthly responsibilities matter, but God deserves our highest loyalty.
- Faith should influence every part of life.
- God's grace continues transforming us, even when we struggle.
- Our lives should help others recognize the love of Jesus.

Questions for Reflection

1. What things in your life compete for the loyalty that belongs to God?
2. How does recognizing God's image in others change the way you handle disagreements?
3. Are there areas of your life where you welcome God's guidance and others where you resist it?
4. How can you demonstrate responsible citizenship without allowing political identity to replace your identity in Christ?
5. What is one practical way you can reflect God's compassion and grace this week?

Takeaway

The world may identify us by our work, our opinions, our possessions, or our past. But God identifies us as people created in His image and loved through Jesus Christ.

We will not always reflect His character perfectly. Yet His grace continues working in us, inviting us to turn toward Him and begin again.

The coin may tell the world whose money we're holding, but our lives should tell the world whose image we bear.

Key Verse

"Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."