

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit worship
Sunday 18th October 2026

“A Taxing Question.” - Led by Dr Julian Tawn

This service can be found on my YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/d7QOvwHsHbQ>

Hello again, everyone! It's Julian Tawn here welcoming you to worship on Sunday 18th October 2026.

I am the Lord, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:5).
Come, let us worship the creator God
who made each one of us and calls us by name.

Let us pray.

God of integrity,
may your word sink deep into our hearts today and move us.
May it leave its mark on our minds and inspire us.
May it imprint your desires into our actions and guide us.
May it instil in us a sense of belonging to that which is true and beautiful,
so that we draw others closer to you and they too feel a sense of belonging.
In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

So, let us begin our worship as we sing a hymn of praise, “O for a thousand tongues to sing”, which is number **364** in Singing the Faith. There is an organ track on the video, and a YouTube link for those who wish to use it:

https://youtu.be/CFJvBwgmK_c?si=aC-ogIfGIQw0d3_I

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honors of Thy name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.

Let us pray:

Living God,
you are the one we look to,
you are the one we would follow,
you are the one we adore.
Help us, we pray, to become more like your Son,
to display more clearly the marks of your love,
to give more generously wherever we can,
and to imprint on our world the message of your salvation.

Amen.

Faithful God,
forgive us when we mar your image and others don't see your compassion mirrored in our lives.
Forgive us when the mark we leave on the lives of those we encounter is a negative one.
Forgive us when we seek only to identify with the powerful and not the vulnerable.
Forgive us when we give our allegiance to that which is not healthy.
Forgive us when we are reluctant to identify as your disciples.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Dear God,
we thank you for your gift of forgiveness, and that you remain loyal to us, even when our loyalties drift elsewhere; that, in spite of our mistakes, your grace ensures your imprint on our lives isn't fully erased; that, because of your love we can be confident in belonging, and begin again with your blessing.
In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Creator God,
for the living word of your love, we praise you.
For the cross where Christ took on our sin, we praise you.
For the empty tomb where he rose and overcame death, we praise you.
For your Holy Spirit that emboldened your first disciples, we praise you.
And for giving us the privilege of bearing your mark of belonging, we praise you – today, tomorrow and always.

Amen.

Our Bible reading is from **Matthew 22:15-22 – Paying the poll-tax to Caesar**

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not?'

¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, 'You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax.' They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, 'Whose image is this? And whose inscription?'

²¹ 'Caesar's,' they replied.

Then he said to them, ‘So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.’

²² *When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.*

Our second hymn is a hymn of thanks, “Now thank we all our God”, which is number **81** in Singing the Faith. There is an organ accompaniment on the video and also a YouTube link:

<https://youtu.be/iLiJJBfIXR0?si=VpUlxLiX6g-xl3WV>

Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in Whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills, in this world and the next!

All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given;
The Son and Him Who reigns with Them in highest Heaven;
The one eternal God, whom earth and Heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

Reflection

A TAXING QUESTION!

In today's gospel lesson from Matthew, we hear some very familiar words from Jesus. “*So, give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.*” These words raise the issue of church and state, and of the Christian’s relationship to the state in connection to his or her relationship with God.

In context, Jesus has been teaching in the Temple following his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The chief priests and elders, rankled by his popularity with the people, have interrupted his discourse and demand that he give one good reason why he has the right to open his mouth on their turf (Matthew 21:23). In response to their churlishness, Jesus tells the Jewish leaders that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them and given to a people producing its fruits (Matthew 21:43).

In response, the Pharisees are now aiming to entangle Jesus in a trap. They are trying to catch him out by hanging him on the horns of a dilemma. They start by using flattery, hoping to lull him into a false sense of security.

‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are.

Of course, they don't really care what Jesus thinks, they just mean to trip him up. Jesus recognises what they are doing.

‘Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not?’

We are told that there are two groups of people present, the Pharisees and the Herodians. This makes it a politically supercharged situation. The Pharisees have a high-powered allegiance to their scriptures, our Old Testament, and to the people of Israel. The Herodians are, by name, supporters of King Herod. Herod is a lackey governor of the Roman Empire, the occupiers of Israel, and, therefore, not popular among the Jews. Their question to Jesus is a setup.

They think that this question will hang Jesus either way, because if he says, ‘Yes, pay them,’ then he is a traitor to the Jewish cause. He would be answering in favour of the Roman overlords, which would infuriate the Jews. On the other hand, if he says, ‘No don't pay,’ then he becomes a revolutionary against Roman rule. He is in trouble either way, and that is just what they want. They want to ruin this man's reputation once and for all.

What will Jesus do? Well, Jesus says, *‘Show me the coin for the tax.’* When they hand over a coin, he says, *‘Whose likeness and inscription is this?’*

‘Caesar’s,’ they reply. And Jesus says, *‘So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s...’* Now, if he had left it there, that would have communicated, ‘Pay.’ And then he would have been out of sorts with the Jews. So, they were initially excited that he had hung himself on one of the horns of this dilemma. But then he continues and says, *‘And give back to God what is God’s.’* Matthew tells us that they were amazed and walked away.

What just happened? Many people might say, ‘Well he just cleverly dodged a bullet. It was a politically shrewd thing to do to just escape from the dilemma.’ Well, although this is true, I think that there is more to it. Jesus didn't give us the answer about the relationship between Caesar and God on a plate. He did not define the scope of things that belonged to Caesar and he didn't define the scope of things that belonged to God. He left it open. He only says, *‘Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and give to God the things that are God’s.’*

Jesus is saying to us, ‘Think about what I am saying. Am I really dodging the issue here? Aren't I really giving you the answer that you need?’

We have to ask ourselves, ‘What belongs to God?’

Everything belongs to God. Caesar belongs to God. All the things that belong to Caesar belong to God. All the rights that Caesar has belong to God. Everything belongs to God and Caesar is a part of everything.

The first implication is that everything Caesar has and all the authority that he rightfully claims derives from what God has and what God claims. Remember Pilate and Jesus? When Jesus is on trial for his life, he looks at Pilate, not saying anything, and Pilate says to him, *‘Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?’* (John 19:10). Jesus replied, *‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above.’* (John 19:11). Caesar and all his lackeys – the entire state of every nation on the planet – has the authority it has only under the sovereignty of God.

The second implication is that Caesar’s sphere of authority is limited. In Acts 5:28, the apostles are told to quit teaching in Jerusalem about the resurrection of Jesus. They say, ‘Look you may think it is right to obey man rather than God. We must obey God rather than men.’ (Acts 5:29). We don't care what authority you have our God has superior authority. Yours is limited. We follow God. There is a limitation put on human authority and state authority because if any human authority tells us to do anything that contradicts what God tells us to do, we say, ‘No’. There is a limitation.

The last implication is that all our submission to Caesar is shaped by the fact that God owns everything. We still do give Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Romans 13 is all about submitting to government. But our submission to any government is shaped by the fact that God owns everything. We submit for the Lord's sake. That little phrase, *'for the Lord's sake,'* is a banner flying over all submission to human authority.

As Christians, we should be a humble, submissive people. We should keep to the speed limit, we should obey the laws of the land, we should submit to our church leaders. If we are employees, we should get to work on time and leave on time. We are a people who submit.

But we do not submit because any human authority claims us. It doesn't. We do it for the Lord's sake. Therefore, if I give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and I am asked, 'Why are you doing this?', I will never say it's because you have final authority in my life. I will always say I give my allegiance to you because I submit to a higher authority. Our submission to Caesar is seditious only if Caesar claims to be God. We don't ever go beyond the rightful claims of Caesar under God.

Yes, Christians are law abiding people. We do pay our taxes. We do drive the speed limit(?). We do obey the rightful laws of the land. Our disposition is to comply.

But we never give to any authority under God absolute allegiance. We never give unlimited, unconditional obedience. We never say, 'I submit to you because you are my final authority.' We always do it for Christ's sake, which turns our obedience to human authorities into worship to God. **Amen**

And now we come to our...

Prayers of intercession

Gracious God,
you are our kind God and we entrust to you those on our hearts.
Those we know and who we share our lives with. And those whose stories we glimpse on our screens and in our papers.
We pray especially for our world, its leaders and all in power.
We pray for our government as they seek to implement policies that support those they serve...
and as they seek to work with the leaders of other nations amidst threats of violence, aggression and economic turmoil...

Lord, may they know your presence with them, **and may our hearts be as your heart that we might support them prayerfully and practically.**

We pray for the people of France and Spain amidst protests and disruption, for all seeking change, for all entrusted with keeping order and for good conversations not violent confrontations...
We pray against brutal regimes who silence the voices of those who challenge them. We remember especially the people of Iran, those in prison and those awaiting execution... for their families and for all who live in fear of arrest...
We pray too for the people of Afghanistan; for all places where there is little or no democracy and where the suffering of so many goes unseen and unreported.

Lord, may they know your presence with them, **and may our hearts be as your heart that we might support them prayerfully and practically.**

We pray for those who continue to be impacted by extreme weather conditions.

Those still trying to recover from devastating fires and floods... Those still searching in the mud for friends and family...

Those whose homes will never be rebuilt and those whose lives will never be the same...

Those whose livelihoods are gone and for all the wildlife in areas of land scorched and destroyed...

Lord, may they know your presence with them, **and may our hearts be as your heart that we might support them prayerfully and practically.**

We pray for those who are worried about the rising costs of food and fuel especially as winter approaches...

For all who lack basic resources, and for those who are never invited to feast at anyone's table...

Those whose homelessness robs them of a sense of self worth, those whose situations rob them of opportunities, those whose displacement robs them of dignity and for all who feel forgotten and unloved...

Lord, may they know your presence with them, **and may our hearts be as your heart that we might support them prayerfully and practically.**

We pray for our churches and faith communities. That we would be places of welcome and beacons of light and healing in a world so darkened by despair and sadness...

We pray for those who have lost their faith in a loving God in a world of so much suffering...

We pray for one another that we would reflect Gospel hope, and lead others to Jesus' love and The Holy Spirit's comfort.

Lord, may they know your presence with them, **and may our hearts be as your heart that we might support them prayerfully and practically.**

And we pray for those who are ill. Those awaiting operations. Those debilitated by long-term conditions and those who know they are in their last days. We pray for those who journey with them, for all carers, doctors, nurses and health care assistants. We pray for those in our families and communities who are going through challenging times.

Lord, may they know your presence with them, **and may our hearts be as your heart that we might support them prayerfully and practically.**

Today and everyday,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.

Our final hymn today is, “May the mind of Christ my Saviour”, which is number **504** in Singing the Faith. As usual there is an organ accompaniment on the video, or a YouTube link for those who prefer it:

<https://youtu.be/gE5fOXSymBc?si=qNGPweXiwFligObY>

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.

May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.

A sending out prayer

May God, who is never-ending, put his hope around us.
May Jesus, the hope of the world, be known as he goes with us.
May the Holy Spirit, our great enabler, empower us to bring
hope to others.

Amen.

Thank you all again for choosing to spend some time with me in this act of worship. I wish you all well for the week ahead and may you feel and reflect God’s presence with you, each and every day.

*May the Lord bless us and keep us;
may the Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us;
may the Lord turn his face toward us and grant us his peace.*

Amen

Julian Tawn

12th October 2026