

AUTHORITY

THE LESSON: MATTHEW 17, 22

*To endue those set in authority with grace, wisdom, and understanding,
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

As Christians we know that this world is not our home. We belong to another King and another Kingdom. Our first allegiance is to God. When there is a contradiction between the commands of God and those of human authorities, then “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

But Christians are *not* anarchists. On the contrary, we are exhorted to honour those set in every kind of authority over us and to pray for them: even those we might be tempted to see as our enemies. Scripture commands us to be “subject” to human institutions (1 Peter 2:13), recognizing that authority is “instituted” by God (Romans 13:1) and has a role to play in maintaining order in society. We are also called to be mindful of the reputation of the Church in all our behaviour. When we “let our light shine” the result should be that others see *good works* and give glory to God (Matthew 5:16).

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In a moment we’ll take a look at the example and teaching of Jesus, as recorded in St. Matthew’s Gospel. We’ll look at two stories. In the first, Jesus and St. Peter are approached about a religious tax that supported the upkeep of the temple. In the second, Jesus is confronted about the Roman tax, which was paid to an oppressive and idolatrous regime.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

During this unit, we’re going to focus our prayers on specific people in our world.

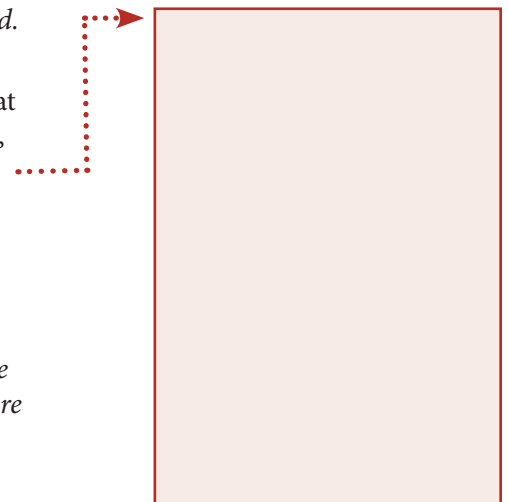
Each day this week, take time to pray for each of those named on your group’s list. Ask God to help them to exercise their authority in a way that respects *his* authority. Or in the words of the Litany, to give them, “grace, wisdom, and understanding” as they carry out their responsibilities.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, send forth, we beseech thee, upon thy servants who bear office in this city [or town, or village, or municipality] the spirit of prudence, charity, and justice; that they may in all things walk before thee with steadfast purpose and a single heart, and faithfully serve in their several offices; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(PRAYER FOR CIVIC AUTHORITIES, BCP PAGE 50)



AUTHORITY

MATTHEW 17, 22: **FREE TO RENDER WHAT IS OWED**

(MATTHEW 17): ²⁴When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the tax?” ²⁵He said, “Yes.” And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?” ²⁶And when he said, “From others”, Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free. ²⁷However, not to give offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

(MATTHEW 22): ¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show 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.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²²When they heard it, they marvelled. And they left him and went away.