



Grain

“...Render therefore to Cesar the things that are Cesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”
Matthew 22:21

Field

“This life, therefore, is not righteousness but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be but we are growing toward it. The process is not yet finished, but it is going on. This is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.”

Dr. Martin Luther

Submitted by K. Fred Rist, Alma, WI

Thoughts

Martin Luther knew back in the 16th century that being Christian was a journey, a path we grow on as individuals and as a church. Members of predecessor bodies of the ELCA separated from some other Lutherans over the question of whether scripture and Luther’s confessions were dynamic or static. Our predecessors went with dynamic. We have a tradition of always reforming and being attentive to how the Holy Spirit is working in the present moment.

What does Matthew 22:21 mean today? In the reading many hear Jesus telling us to pay our taxes and just worship when we worship - separate church and state; or everything belongs to God anyway, meaning God is above Cesar. Or maybe Jesus was having fun getting out of a trap set by two unlikely allies, the Herodians and the Pharisees, whose desire to get rid of Jesus was likely the only thing they had in common. Or maybe the statement is like a paradox or enigma that prods us as parables do, stopping us in our tracks in a different way in each generation. How are we giving ourselves over to the empire too much today? In this society mixed with values worth advocating for and corruption, how much do we fall into being purists trying to be perfect ourselves as we separate good from evil? Activists and advocates can be very hard on ourselves and one another; the church has a message of grace for them/us. Discerning what belongs to the empire and to God is worth our prayer and dialogue. We are not perfect or alone on our path of discernment. Happy Monday!

Prayer

Highly recommended.

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy