

**Worship Material**  
**What it means to belong to God and others.**  
**Materials from Roots Bible Study**  
**Sunday 22nd October**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

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.**

**Read Matthew 22:15-22**

**Bible notes**

In first-century Israel the paying of taxes was a contentious issue. The land was occupied by the Romans, who gathered these taxes on behalf of the emperor. Generally, locals were employed to collect the taxes on behalf of the local Roman leaders, and they were viewed by their peers as traitors. This was exacerbated because the role of tax-collector was unpaid, and so there was a custom of collecting a greater amount than that demanded by the emperor, the surplus being kept as a wage for their work.

The question asked of Jesus was therefore intended to cause trouble, hence Matthew's note of the questioners' malice (verse 18).

Jesus was presented with a likely no-win situation. Speaking in favour of taxes could diminish his popularity among his followers and set him once again at odds with the religious leaders. Speaking against would set him firmly against the Herodian supporters of Rome. Jesus' own question also had the potential to cause trouble. There were various titles given to the emperor. Some of these – Lord, Saviour, Son of God – were clearly offensive to the people. Jesus' answer, however, requires his hearers to reflect, to pray, to use their consciences. However unpopular, there are things that belong to the emperor. More significantly, however, is that all things belong to God. The coins have the mark of the emperor; all of creation has the mark of its maker. This also requires Jesus' hearers to reflect, to pray, to use their consciences, to consider how this works out in practice. God can use whoever, or whatever, is necessary to achieve his purposes. God can work through the emperor just as he worked

through Cyrus in today's Isaiah passage. Being the people of God entails joining in with what God is doing.

### **A prayer of praise**

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.**

### **A prayer to conclude**

Lord, this day and every day,  
may we touch many lives for you by our living,  
by allowing your love to flow in and through us,  
reaching all among whom we live, and work, and play.  
May we be generous with our time and resources,  
and may you be glorified in all we do.  
In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**