

A sportswriter once asked Joe Louis, "Who hit you the hardest during your ring career?" His reply was **"Uncle Sam."**

A prominent citizen of Washington, D. C. once invited President John F. Kennedy to play golf when Kennedy was President. On the first hole Kennedy floated a nice shot about three feet from the pin. He walked up to the ball and glanced over at the man who had invited him. Kennedy was looking for the man to concede him the putt. The man ignored him, and stared up at the sky. *"You're certainly going to give me this putt, aren't you?"* Kennedy asked.

*"Make a pass at it,"* the man replied. *"I want to see your stroke. A putt like that builds character. Besides, it will give you a little feel for the greens."*

With an anguished look, Kennedy said, *"I work in the Oval Office all day for citizens like you,"* he said. *"And now you're not going to give me this putt?"* The man said nothing. *"O.K.,"* Kennedy sighed. *"But let's keep moving. I've got an appointment after we finish with the director of the IRS."* *"The putt's good,"* the man said hastily. *"Pick it up."*

We have to tell jokes on the IRS, to keep from crying. After all, **the two inevitable events in this world are death and taxes.** As one wag said, "At least death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets." Look at the abuse Mr. Trump is taking over his pass due taxes and the possibility he owes millions and millions of dollars. **Most folks do not like taxes!**

**The people had to pay taxes in Jesus' time, too.** Even worse, they had to pay them to a despised government. Rome was occupying their land. Thus a portion of their livelihood ended up in the coffers of Caesar. It was a point of contention with every Jew. For they were a proud people and resented Roman domination.

Thus Jesus' dilemma when someone asked him that loaded question, *"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"* Would he offend the Jews by siding with the despised Romans or would he risk the wrath of the Romans by siding with Jewish sentiment?

He did neither. *"Whose likeness and inscription is this on the coin?"* he asked. **"Caesar's,"** they answered. *"Render, then,"* he said, *"to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and render unto God the things that are God's."*

**A CLASSIC ANSWER.** I want to use Jesus' answer to stimulate our thinking on a very important question: **WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS THAT BELONG TO GOD?** We know what belongs to Caesarea portion of every dollar we earn. What is there that belongs to God?

**ONE THING IS FOR CERTAIN. WE OWE GOD MUCH MORE THAN MONEY.** Don't get me wrong. Our money does belong to God. I was amused by a story published by the University of Oregon, in soliciting support from its alumni:

**"When the King of Siam came to America for an eye operation some years ago,** his American surgeon, accustomed to setting prices somewhat by ability to pay, couldn't decide exactly how much to charge His Royal Highness. He did know if he should charge \$1000 to be a good neighbor? Or \$10,000 to prove the operation worth the trip? **After all, a king is a king. Someone suggested that he check with the king's New York lawyer who might have some thought on the matter and so he did.** "No problem," said the lawyer. "The king is an honorable man. Like you, he understands value. **Simply send him an invoice with no amount indicated, and then add a handwritten footnote: `The king can do no wrong.'**" He did. **Back came a check for \$75,000!** The surgeon was overjoyed. He bought his wife a mink coat, ordered two new Cadillacs, and blew the rest on a three-month trip around the world. Upon arrival home, his pocketbook flattened, but happy and refreshed he opened his mail. **In it was a bill from the king's lawyer...with no amount indicated, but with a handwritten footnote: `The honorable doctor can do no wrong.'**"

**Many of us are far more honorable in giving to Caesar than we are to God.** We need to pray about our giving to God's work.

More than money is owed to God, however. "All things come from Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee." **Let me suggest three more important things that belong to God.**

**OUR BODIES BELONG TO GOD.** One of the dumbest remarks that we hear today is one that goes like this: "It's my body, I'll do with it as I please." That statement is dumb, first of all, because it is not true. Our bodies are God's creation. We are only temporary inhabitants. We are renters, or even squatters, using another's property.

Even more important, scientists have recently discovered that there is constant feedback going on back and forth between our brains and every cell in our body. Our minds and bodies have a unity that we are only now appreciating. You may not be aware of it, but that fits in beautifully with Christian theology.

It was the Greeks who contended there is a division between mind, soul and body. The Jews, however, knew that wasn't true. When the Jew spoke of the soul, he was referring to the total person, including mind and body. That is why in the Apostles' Creed we say we believe in the resurrection of the body. Not the same physical body that we've inhabited all these years, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom, but a new spiritual body which God will grant us.

The body as part of our total being gives new emphasis to Paul's writing in I Corinthians 6 that we are not to be joined to a prostitute. Why? Because our bodies are joined with our spirits which are joined to Christ. Joining our body to immorality is desecration of the temple of the living God. Thus it is dumb to say, "It is my body, I'll do with it as I please," first of all, because that's not true. We are God's creation, His temple.

Secondly, it is dumb, because, when we do what we please with our bodies, we usually do ourselves harm. Our bodies are such wondrous, miraculous gifts. I like the way Zig Ziglar puts it. He asks, "If you had a million dollar race horse, would you allow it to smoke cigarettes, drink whiskey and stay out all night? How about a thousand dollar dog? How about a five dollar cat." If you wouldn't treat a million dollar race horse like that, then how can you abuse a six million dollar body?

This was brought home to me recently when I read a story about a young man named Sal. Sal was thirty years old, vigorous and athletic, when he developed multiple myeloma, a painful and disabling form of bone cancer from which he died two years later. In some ways Sal's last two years were the richest of his life. Though he lived in considerable pain and though he was encased in a full body cast (because of multiple bone fractures), Sal found great meaning in life by being of service to many young people. Sal toured high schools in the area counseling teenagers on the hazards of drug abuse. He used his cancer and his visibly deteriorating body as powerful leverage in his mission. He was extraordinarily effective: the whole auditorium trembled when Sal, in a wheelchair, frozen in his cast, exhorted: "You want to destroy your body with nicotine or alcohol or heroin? You want to smash it up in autos? You're depressed and want to throw it off the Golden Gate Bridge? Then give me your body! Let me have it! I want it! I'll take it! I want to live!" (2) No, it's not your body. Our bodies belong to God.

**IF OUR BODIES BELONG TO GOD, CERTAINLY OUR BRAINS DO AS WELL.** As fantastic as our bodies are, they pale in comparison to the wonder of the human brain. Recent research has discovered that we have more than 100 billion neuron cells in our brains. Each one of these neuron cells can store more data than the most sophisticated computer on earth. At the beginning of the century, psychologist William James estimated that on the average we use perhaps 5 to 10 percent of our full mental potential. However, recent research indicates that we may only use up an average of less than 1 percent of the brain cells available to us in a lifetime. I know some people who obviously use far less than that!

How are you treating your brain? What kinds of nutrients are you giving it? What kind of exercise? I have a perfect diet for shrinking the brain. Put it on a steady diet of soaps and sit coms. I am astounded by the number of hours the average American spends in front of the television. No wonder college entrance scores keep falling. Garbage in, garbage out.

It disturbs me to see young children going into R-rated motion pictures where they soak up graphic scenes of sex, violence and obscenities. What is to happen to all that garbage going in? And don't tell me it doesn't matter. Our brain forms meaning out of the symbols, the images and vocabulary, we feed it. What if our young people have been fed a

steady diet from the gutter? What kind of meaning will they be able to fashion from all those symbols - the images of sex, violence, obscenities which they have been fed?

**Our brains belong to God.** They are a wonderful, extraordinary gift. We need to feed them with knowledge and information that will help them to grow. We need to spend more time reading the Scriptures and letting those Scriptures infiltrate and become part of those billions of cells God has given us. After all, the Scriptures contain the vital Word of life that we need for now and for eternity. Our bodies belong to God, our brains belong to God.

**THIS IS ALL TO SAY THAT OUR HEARTS BELONG TO GOD.** If we say to our husband or wife or sweetheart, *"I love you with all my heart,"* we are saying, *"I am committed to you. All that I have is yours. I trust you enough that I am willing to share with you everything I have, everything I am, and everything I hope to be."* That kind of commitment is what God asks as well. For truly it's all His in the first place. **Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Render unto God the things that are God's.**

There was a silly story that went around while back, that makes a powerful point about where many of us are right now. **According to the story, Pope John Paul II was needing a heart transplant.** There was much concern throughout the Roman Catholic world. Everyone gathered outside of the Vatican screaming and waving their hands. **"Take my heart, Pope, take my heart!"**

Well, the Pope didn't know what to do, so an idea popped into his head. He asked everyone to please be quiet for a few minutes and he told all of them that he was going to throw down a feather. **Whoever the feather landed on, he would take their heart for the transplant.** Pope John Paul II then threw the feather down upon the people. Everyone was still screaming and waving their hands, *"Take my heart, Pope,"* but with one difference: **they were leaning their heads back and blowing the feather back into the air. "Take my heart, Pope (blow), Take my heart (blow)."**

**I suspect that is where many of us are. We are willing to give a few tokens to God.**

**But what about our bodies? Our brains? Our hearts?**

*"Take my heart, Lord." (blow)*

**Save the tokens for Uncle Sam.** God wants everything we have, everything we are, and everything we hope to be.

*So, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's---And if you do, your life will be more Complete!! Amen.*