

Money, money, money



Becky Mynett *reflects on* Matthew 22:15-22

In today's Gospel Jesus' enemies ask, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" This was a hot topic at the time and they probably thought that it was the perfect trick question. No doubt they expected Jesus to answer no – which would have got him into trouble with the Roman

authorities. It was a win-win for them, so they thought, because if he answered yes, Jesus would lose the support of the crowds, who resented the tax in question.

Jesus saw through their plan and asked them to show him the coin used to pay the tax. Very devout Jews, such as the

Pharisees, wouldn't want to touch such coins, because they were blasphemously inscribed with the emperor's title, which declared him to be divine. The crowds would have recognised that they were hypocrites for showing him the coin.

So why are they amazed by Jesus' answer? Well, he rather deftly avoids their trap by refusing to answer yes or no. The Romans

cannot object to people being told to give the emperor "the things that are the emperor's". But those in the crowd who object to paying taxes to the oppressive regime of a blasphemous emperor are happy too, because Jesus goes on to say that we should give to God "the things that are God's". Since everything in creation is God's, nothing is the emperor's. ☺

Sovereign Lord, help us to remember that all things come from you. May we use our material resources to further your kingdom and purpose for the world, and always seek to live according to your will. Amen.

The Bible through the week

by Jane Williams

Starting with a six-week series, from time to time we will be looking at the readings for the coming week, from Monday to Saturday.

In this week's readings from Romans, Paul tackles the vexed question of sin. For him, sin is not primarily about individual wrongdoing, but flows from the fact that the world is out of tune with its maker.

Paul's description of the internal battle between right and wrong is

as true today as ever (Romans 7:19-20). He traces this lack of freedom to be ourselves back to Adam's "original" sin (5:12). Our only hope of freedom and life is in the saving action of God in Christ Jesus.

Some of Paul's opponents clearly felt he was encouraging Christians not to mind about sin, since we can't do anything about it for ourselves. But that is not at all the conclusion that Paul draws, as 6:19-23 makes clear. We do have a choice about whether we will be enslaved by sin or "enslaved to God" (6:22). ☺

“You will pray to him, and he will hear you.”

Job 22:27

United Nations Day

A symbol of hope for global unity

by Caroline Hodgson

On Tuesday, United Nations Day marks the anniversary of the UN Charter coming into force in 1945. UN Day, celebrated every year on 24 October, offers the opportunity to highlight the common agenda of the UN member states and to reaffirm the purposes and principles that have guided the UN for seventy-eight years.

The organisation's website claims no other global

organisation has the legitimacy, power and impact of the United Nations. We also read that, "No other global organisation gives hope to so many people for a better world and can deliver the future we want."

Those last words are key – "the future we want". What does that future look like for us? On Tuesday, let's make that the focus of our prayers, and pray that humanity, through the work of organisations like the UN, at last comes together to work towards the kingdom of God. ☺