

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

[The Order (and *Dis*-order) of Creation]

“In the beginning, God created...” (Genesis 1:1)

He made angels with spirits.

He made animals with bodies. (Genesis 1:20, 24)

And He made human beings of both body and spirit

–in His Image– to rule all Creation. (Genesis 1:26)

Not to destroy the earth

or plunder it of its resources,

or abuse its inhabitants,

but to *lovingly* and *justly* rule the earth,

its resources and all the animals—

and to do so *in His Image*,

joyfully giving thanks to God for what he has made. (Genesis 1:28)

This was the intended **Order of Creation**.

And it was very good. (Genesis 1:31)

But, as we know, Adam and Eve ate the fruit they were explicitly told not to. (Genesis 3)

They abandoned the Image of God for sin.

They tried to hide from God.

The Order of Creation was cast into ***Dis*-order**.

And since human beings rejected God’s **Order of Creation**,

Over time, God allowed governments to maintain order *for* Creation in His stead.

Leading us all the way to today’s Gospel lesson.

Jesus was teaching in the Temple courtyard,

when the Pharisees thought they’d catch Him in a “Catch-22.” (Matthew 22:15-22)

See, the Jews were living under the Roman government.

A government which demanded taxes paid in coins with *graven images* on them!

Pay the tax in that pagan coin, and the Pharisees could accuse you of *idol-worship*;

Refuse to pay it, and the Romans would accuse you of *rebellion* against the Empire.

So the Pharisees approach Jesus:

“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.

Tell us, then, what you think:

Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?”

Jesus asks to see the coin.

They give Him one, a denarius.

*(Never mind that observant Jews such as the Pharisees
shouldn't be carrying graven images of Caesar into the Temple grounds...)*

And you know what happens next.

“Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s,” Jesus says.

“And to God the things that are God’s.”

The Pharisees go away befuddled at His words.

Sometimes, we go away befuddled at these words, too.

There’s a common misconception that Jesus was saying
that God rules part of our lives

and ‘Caesar’ (the government) rules a different, separate part.

That because *this* country has a ‘separation between church and state,’

There also exists some ‘separation between *God* and State.’

This is false; God rules all.

God works through people and means.

In the spiritual realm, that means God rules through the church,
his pastors and vicars.

In the earthly realm, that means God rules through governments, parents,
And in this country, elected leaders.

God rules every part of life.

That’s the Order for Creation God has put in place. (Romans 13)

[Creation in Order]

There is a bird who lives around the church.

In the taxonomic order *Corvus brachyrhynchos* – a crow.

He’s a *Corvid*, along with ravens, bluejays and magpies.

He’s been nicknamed ‘Edgar Allen Crow’ by the staff.

He’s an interesting fellow.

A couple times each week,

he comes by and taps at the glass to let us know he’s arrived.

He’s especially fond of Lorrie,

but he’s been known to follow Kaja around the building too.

Lorrie leaves crackers out for him.

In return, Edgar drops shiny things at the window:

Gum wrappers, screws, paperclips, whatever he finds—even coins!

In fact, Edgar’s *Mite Box* has over \$2.00 in it!

I was curious about this behavior,
so I contacted a friend of mine who works in wildlife rehabilitation.
She specializes in ornithological veterinary care—she’s a bird doctor.

“Amazing,” she said. But, “it’s normal for that species.”
“Corvids are incredibly smart and can learn a ton of behaviors.”
Normal? A wild animal is leaving us shiny gifts!

She sent me a few links and I learned that Edgar is likely acting on a learned behavior.
He probably did it once by accident and now enjoys the free snack.
Maybe that’s the case.

I certainly don’t pretend to understand what goes on in Edgar’s little mind.
But I’d like to think, at some level, Edgar understands the **Order of Creation**.
Or at least, how it’s supposed to be.

That he *knows*—inasmuch as a bird-brained Corvid can *know*—
that human beings have a place over him in the **Order of Creation**,
and he *joyfully gives* to those who bear *God’s Image* in the world.

[Creation in Dis-order]

As odd as it might be, Edgar’s behavior is a model for us.
It’s a reminder of how the **Order of Creation** ought to work, with *joyful giving*.
We do not give as we should—not of our time, skills, or our finances.

Creation is in **Dis-order**, and has been since Adam and Eve’s actions plunged the world into sin.
We do not care for God’s creation as we should.
We pollute the skies that Edgar and his buddies fly around in.
We destroy the trees he nests in.
Worst of all, we do not care for our fellow Image-Bearers in the world;
We do not love our neighbors as ourselves.
We do not give to the church as we should.
We want things for ourselves, and forget that all we have is already God’s.

This isn’t just on a grand, social scale—it’s in our personal lives, too.
We think some part of “our” lives remains “private” from God.
We go into hiding, just as Adam and Eve did after they ate the forbidden fruit.
We carve out spaces where we can be our own little *Caesars*:
“Why should I give *my* money to *God’s* work?”
“*This* section is mine; *that* section is God’s.”

We reject God’s good **Order of Creation**.
We do not always reflect the **Image of God**.

[Re-Ordering of Creation]

As Jesus teaches us elsewhere in Matthew:

“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns,
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they?”

And then He bids us, as we just sang:

**“...Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.”** (Matthew 6:25-33)

Brothers and sisters, you are more valuable than birds.

Your Savior loves you; He has always loved you.

He loved you so much, that He died for you.

When you were baptized into His death,
your old, sinful, *dis-ordered* self died too.

In its place, God gave you new life—

He completed a **“Re-Ordering of Creation.”**

He did the greatest work that could ever be done, and He did it freely—for others.

“Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness...”

Seek to serve others, and the rest will take care of itself.

Pray for others, work for others, suffer for others, *give* for others.

Praise God for what He has done!

Praise him in thought, in words, and in *deeds*.

We can (and should!) joyfully *give* what He has given us,
so that He might use us for His good works.

God works through people and means; let Him work through you.

Including financially.

What does that look like, practically? I don't pretend to have a number for you.

Scripture doesn't give us a percentage for what financial giving should be.

But no part of your life is exempt from God's presence.

Your talents, your skills, your gifts, your earthly freedom, *and* your finances—
all these belong to God.

You are a steward of *God's* Creation—what a wonderful privilege!

Give as part of your worship of God!

Let everything from your songs to your pocketbook:

**Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among the people. Amen! (Psalm 96:3)**
