

The Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity

Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

O Lord, absolve Your people from their offenses that from the bonds of our sins, which by reason of our frailty we have brought upon ourselves, we may be delivered by Your bountiful goodness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Which part is missing?

***Answer:** Address: "O Lord." Petition: "absolve Your people from their offenses." Purpose: "that from the bonds of our sins, which by reason of our frailty we have brought upon ourselves, we may be delivered by Your bountiful goodness." Ending: "through Jesus Christ..." The reason is missing. The prayer goes straight to the need.*

2. "Which by reason of our frailty we have brought upon ourselves." What does that phrase admit?

***Answer:** That the bonds are our own doing. We offer no excuse and blame no one else.*

3. On what does the collect rest our deliverance, and by what means does it come?

***Answer:** On God's "bountiful goodness," not on any improvement of ours. The word "absolve" names the means: His spoken word of forgiveness.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Matthew 22:15-22

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. **16** And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "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. **17** Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? **19** Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. **20** And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" **21** They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." **22** When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

1. The Pharisees and the Herodians usually opposed each other. Why did they team up, and how was the question a trap?

***Answer:** They shared an enemy in Jesus. The Pharisees resented Rome and the Herodians backed Herod and Rome. "Pay the tax" would anger the people; "don't pay" would be treason to Rome.*

2. Their opening words praise Jesus (v. 16). What is ironic about that?

***Answer:** Every word was true, but they did not mean it. Jesus calls them "hypocrites" (v. 18).*

3. Why did Jesus have them bring the coin?

Answer: They already carried and used Caesar's money, and the image stamped on it showed whose it was.

4. "Render to God the things that are God's." What bears God's image?

Answer: Human beings (Genesis 1:27). We owe God ourselves.

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: "Bonds" matches the plan "to entangle him in his words" (v. 15), a trap Jesus escapes as we cannot. "Offenses" matches their "malice" and hypocrisy (v. 18). "Delivered" matches "render to God the things that are God's" (v. 21): set free from sin, we are given back to God, whose image we bear. Any two, well explained, are enough.

2. Today's Epistle says, "But our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). How can a Christian be a good citizen of his or her country and of heaven at once?

Answer: Jesus gives each its due. We pay taxes and honor rulers as God's servants, while our first loyalty belongs to God, who has made us His own.

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The Table of Duties: Of Citizens. The Small Catechism gathers these passages for citizens. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21) "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." (Romans 13:1) "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed." (Romans 13:7) "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Cross-reference. "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." (1 Peter 2:16-17)

1. The Table of Duties quotes today's Gospel. What does Romans 13:1 add about why we honor rulers?

Answer: Their authority comes from God. Honoring them is part of rendering to God what is His.

2. How does 1 Peter 2:16-17 connect freedom from the bonds of sin with honoring the emperor?

Answer: Those whom God has set free serve Him willingly, and part of that service is honoring rulers. Freedom in Christ is not freedom from duty.

3. What if a ruler commands what God forbids?

Answer: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Caesar is owed taxes and honor, never what belongs to God alone.

Parent note: the question they may ask. "Do we have to obey leaders who are bad?" Caesar in Jesus' day was a pagan emperor, and Jesus still said to pay him. We honor the office and pray for the person, even when he is unworthy of it. The one limit is sin: when a ruler commands what God forbids, we obey God (Acts 5:29).

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: Answers will vary. Example: "O Lord, Your Son gave You everything that was Yours, even His life. Forgive us and set us free, that we may give ourselves to You and honor those You place over us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you when your sins tie you up?

Answer: He gave God everything that was owed, and He gave it for me. He forgives me, breaks the chains of my sins, and makes me God's own again.