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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | |  |  | | **Song: "Counting Stars" -- OneRepublic**  **NO MORE COUNTING DOLLARS** | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | **The Gospel** | **MATTHEW 22:17-22** |   **[At that time, they said to Jesus:] “Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?” Knowing their malice, Jesus said, “Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax.” Then they handed him the Roman coin. He said to them, “Whose image is this and whose inscription? They replied, “Caesar’s.” At that he said to them, “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” When they heard this they were amazed, and leaving him they went away.** |
| ***Gospelthink: They try to trick me again, but I tell them to pay attention to all legitimate law.*Do I respect both God and my country as I should?** |
| |  | | --- | |  |   ***“Lately I been losing sleep, dreaming about the things that we could be. But I been prayin’ hard, said no more counting dollars, we’ll be counting stars. I see this life like a swinging vine. Swing my heart across the line. In my face is flashing signs—seek it out and ye shall find. Everything that kills me makes me feel alive. Take that money, watch it burn, sink it in the river—the lessons I learned."*** |
| **Money and the use of money have always been problems for our world. No matter what time, what country, what kind of money, once money is established as a means of barter, it begins to interact with our human natures. We want more of it, we misuse it, we sin in order to have it, we like the feeling it gives us. It becomes an entity of its own, no longer a means, only an end.  Jesus' time was no different. However, in this passage of Scripture, Jesus was asked to choose whether to give money to the hated Romans or not. Jesus answer is a statement that the world must learn: you cannot mix money and God. They represent two different categories, and if people mix them up, only confusion will result.  In OneRepublic's song "Counting Stars," the group sings a similar statement: you cannot mix money and love. Again, if people try to do it, it destroys everything. As the group sings, singing of a couple in a relationship, how much money they have cannot be a consideration. What they must count on is the love between the two of them. In fact, they sing with conviction: burn the money or sink it in the river.  Generally, we will not do that. Nor should we. But the point is made. If money is the dominant thought in any relationship, be it with God or love, it is a mistake, and will usually mess up the relationship. The unfortunate fact in life is that we must have money as a means of connection with God and people. The usual way that we give back to God, for example, is with the use of money. Likewise, the love relationship of two people will involve the use of money in some way. But, if we want the relationship to work, we must keep money in its place.  Money may make us feel alive, but in the end, as the group sings, it only kills relationships.** |
| ***PRAYER***  **Good and gracious God, we have become people who hold money in the highest regard. Help us understand that our relationships with you and with others must be based on love and not on money. Be with us, we pray.** |
| **+++++**  **GUIDE FOR CLASSROOM PRESENTATION AND PERSONAL ENRICHMENT**   **Theme: The foundation of a good relationship is love and has nothing to do with money.**  **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**  1. In the Gospel, the Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus by making him say that he paid tribute to the Romans, an enemy of the Israelite people. What was the principal reason why the Pharisees did not appreciate Jesus? 2. What are the things that "belong to God"? 3. In today's world, what are the things that "belong to Caesar"?  4. Text analysis: "counting stars." What does the phrase mean? 5. Text analysis: "I see this life like a swinging vine." What is the meaning of the sentence? 6. Analysis: "Everything that kills me makes me feel alive." Besides money as suggested in the meditation, name some other things for which the statement is true.  7. Obviously, religion is an area of life in which "God and money" have come into play. Name some problems that this creates. 8. In your opinion, do most people have a good understanding of money in their lives? 9. Giving back to God is what the Church names "stewardship." Describe "stewardship as you understand it. 10. What is the best way to "keep money in its place"?  11. What does the song "Counting Stars"  teach young people today? |
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