What do you think of when you see that drawing of Col. Sanders atop the red and white painted fast food restaurant?

I think of fried chicken that's finger-lickin' good. When I see Col. Sanders's image, I associate it with a particular brand – KFC. Because we see an image of Col. Sanders at the top of the restaurant, we identify that restaurant as belonging to him. When we see that image of Col. Sanders at the top of the restaurant, we realize that Col. Sanders owns that restaurant (or at least did own those restaurants until he sold them for the equivalent of $16.5 million in the 1960s.)

Caesar's image was on the coin of the realm. Caesar's image on the money showed that he ruled the secular kingdom. So, the Jews needed to pay to him the taxes of that earthly kingdom. We know those taxes are his because his image is on the money. Jesus said to Give unto Caesar what was Caesar's, so paying homage to an earthly kingdom is OK.

But when Jesus answered the question about whether paying taxes to the emperor was lawful, he also added a phrase. He said to give to God what is God's. The word for "give" can be translated to give back. For Jesus to add this phrase without being asked about it means that Jesus wants to make the point that we should not neglect giving back to God what is God's.

So, what is God's? The things that are God's are the things that have God's image on them. Human beings are created in the image of God. We all are stamped as belonging to God because we all are created in God's image. We are to give ourselves to God – our whole selves.

All these parables we've read over the past few weeks stress the importance of giving back all of ourselves to God. The one last week about the guest who came to the wedding without being appropriately dressed. The two sons – one of whom said he would go work and didn't, the other who said he wouldn't and did. The servant who wouldn't forgive debts owed him even though the master had forgiven him. We are created in God's image, and we belong to Him. When we give to God of our talents and treasure, we are only giving back to God what God owns anyway. We are called to give back to God what God owns. Jesus refers to this call when he adds that we should give to God what belongs to God.

Let's think about what giving ourselves to God means. It means that we continue the work of God even in times when we don't understand what God is doing. Like, now, for example. We have no idea why God is letting this virus continue to kill people, make people sick, and change our happy little lives into something more complicated. But, whether we understand or not, we are created in God's image, and we keep on working in God's church and in the community for good because we, ourselves, belong to God. Eventually, we may see what God is up to, but whether we do or not, we keep using our talents, treasure, and time to worship God, to help support God's church and God's people who need help.

Let's take that a little farther. Suppose we are unhappy with someone at God's church or something at God's church. Maybe we don't like something that happened at the church 10 years ago, 5 years ago, or even last week. Perhaps we don't like something the priest did or didn't do. We are still stamped with God's image. We give to God what is God's – our treasure, which means our money -- our time and talents – which, of course, means we still worship in whatever way is safe for us. It also means we always help with outreach, fellowship, stewardship, or whatever ministry we've been called to.

The church, although not perfect as Christ is, is a primary way in which we who are baptized into it serve God. Whether we are happy with everyone in it or the actions it has taken or not – as long as it hasn't turned into a pagan custom – we still support it. We are called to give back even if we don't always understand or agree.

We are created in God's image and marked as Christ's own. God owns us and all our gifts and our money. We are called to give to God those things that bear God's image. No matter what happens, we still bear God's image on us. We are called to give all of ourselves, always.

Give to God what is God's.