



Session Three

Countering Caesar

I been paying attention and tried my best but I cannot follow
and I have to admit that it's too strange a script for me to
swallow -- can't swallow that
I don't get it...what is this all about?
I don't get it... wondering, can we work it out?

-- *"I don't get it" by Stephen Stills*

Orientation Texts

Luke 2

1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

Luke 3

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

John 19.14-16

[Pilate] said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" 15 They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." 16 Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

Acts 17.6

When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city authorities, shouting, "These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus."

Romans 12

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Active Listening:

Counter obedience

Junk food of Pharaoh

Overview

1. The story of Jesus' life is completely bracketed by Caesar (the New Testament cognate for "Pharaoh")
2. Jesus calls the disciples to an alternative obedience outside the definitions of reality offered by establishment power
3. The whole Biblical narrative sits outside of Pharaoh's production-consumption system
4. We have not understood that the world has changed – we have moved from Pharaoh's scarcity to Yahweh's abundance

Questions:

1. If hospitality, generosity, and not practicing vengeance are so important to Paul, why have churches generally kept these "summons" a secret?

2. What are the implications of Brueggemann's primary marks of the unified church and their relationship to "secondary issues"?

3. According to Brueggemann, what's one of the saddest lines in scripture?

4. How are Pharaoh's system, the Roman system, and our system similar?

Your Personal Strategy to Counter Pharaoh:

Brueggemann suggests several ideas for countering Pharaoh in this session. Name one discipline that you will commit to between now and your next meeting that will counter your Pharaoh.