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**Conversations with Coal Dawg: #2**

Coal pawed me for a tummy rub while I was working on my taxes. As much as I love my old dog buddy, I indulged him reluctantly. I quickly turned back to the IRS forms, so he plopped down beside me making that old dog/old man grunt whenever he sits.

Coal reminded me that I used to say that people who have a tax problem – don't. "Yeah, I recall. If you make enough money to have a tax problem, then you really don't have too much to worry about."

Coal egged me on with the old line, 'you can afford to pay more than taxes that other people'.

I smiled at his gray-muzzled face. "Is it fair that I take you, Mr. Big Male Dog, for a long walk every morning, while so many dogs don't get out of their yards at all?" Coal's brown eyes were warm, but otherwise vacant. I asked, "When you mark all that territory, does that keep other dogs from marking the same places?"

Coal panted, "I'm the big dog in the neighborhood."

"It's the same way with income and taxes. If I make ten dollars or you have ten dog bones, it doesn't mean that our neighbors can only have two dollars or two dog bones. It's not like there are only twelve dollars or twelve dog bones in the whole world."

Coal touched my foot with his paw. I continued, "That dumb idea is called the

‘zero sum game’ and it’s ridiculous when it’s applied to earnings and income taxes. If I make more, you don’t make less.”

Coal, a former Liberal Democrat, doesn’t understand anything about economics. It wasn’t taught in his obedience school. He mentioned, earnestly, that tax cuts for the rich are immoral.

“Fairness is moral. A flat tax is fair, by definition, to everyone. We all pay the same fair share,” I scratched his head.

“But, you have more so you should pay more, a bigger share,” Coal still knows how to say syrupy Liberal things like that.

“If you make more and have a flat tax, you will pay more. Simple math, buddy. But, if you demand to squeeze a bigger *share* from those who have more, that is only fair if you are the taker, not the takee. Taking an unequal portion from others simply because they have it, is not moral – unless envy and retribution are moral. Do you think a 50% tax rate is more moral than a 20% rate? Why?”

“But, the Bible says to give to the poor and to rend unto Caesar.”

“Yes, it’s moral to obey just laws. But, the Bible doesn’t tell the government to give your money to the others – it says *you* are to give to the orphan, the widow, the poor and the foreigner. The moral obligation is for you, not a government bureaucrat. The morality of rending taxes to Caesar doesn’t improve by paying more taxes.”

“Then, what is the problem with paying more taxes, a higher per cent? It’s just fair to give more if you can.”

“I don’t give taxes, I am forced to pay them. Okay, Coalie, if everything needs to be more equal – by taking more as the people have more, so they will have less like you – then from now on, you can’t walk as far, no car rides, you can play only in half the yard,

no more turkey when we make sandwiches – just dog food, only one dog bone a day and one rawhide a month, so you don't have more than other dogs. It's only fair."

Coal looked at me like he does when I say, "No" he can't go, as I head out. "I'm not a bad dog to have these things. You said I'm the best dog ever."

"You are, buddy. And no one is immoral for earning more than someone else for honest, hard work. Fairness means *equality of opportunity and obligation* – not outcome. Envy and jealousy don't justify taking more from some people. Taking more from someone just because they have more than you isn't fair. Taking it because you can do it doesn't make it right. It's just spite. Now, how about that tummy rub?" Coal rolled on his back and thumped his heavy tail.

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