

Putting First Things First
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
August 1, 2021

Text: Key Verse: Matthew 6:33 – *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”*
Background Verses: Matthew 6:19-34

Purpose: Jesus gives us the key to putting our faith into daily practice. If we put the King and the Kingdom of God first in all things, put on the righteousness of Christ, then all the cares and worries of life – finances, food, and clothing – no longer need to burden us. For our Heavenly Father knows we have need of them and will care for us. The key is putting God first!

On a wintry day, a 90-year-old man was in the supermarket trying to pay for his groceries. Bundled up against the cold, his gloved hands were having trouble retrieving and counting the exact change.

The transaction evidently took too long for the man behind him in line, who muttered a curse.



The man stopped counting, turned around, and warned, "Be quiet or I'll write a check."¹

¹ Mikey's Funnies – July 5, 2021 – A Shop Funny

Don't we become frustrated at others that are not moving along so we can get done with our tasks? Check out lines, traffic jams, airport delays, fast food lines, and at many larger events – bathroom lines. Maybe we need to slow down and begin to examine our priorities.

We come today to a passage of scripture that immediately follows the Lord's Prayer. We have come to understand and appreciate how this Model Prayer communicates our relationship to God as Father, how central the Kingdom of God is to be in our prayer life, and seeking God's will for our life. In studying this prayer more closely, we need to acknowledge and accept our daily bread as a provision from God to us. We learned about the relationship between our need for forgiveness and our need to forgive others. Two weeks ago, we concluded the Model prayer and saw how the power of temptation comes in our lives and how we need to take a stand and not to yield to it. The Lord saw how important this was that He even included lead us not into temptation as one of the three petitions – bread – forgiveness – and leading us not into temptation.

RECITED THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus gave the disciples this prayer as a guide for prayer and a guide for life. After all, our prayers are empty words if we don't back them up with actions.

This passage of scripture moves us from the prayer closet to the highways and byways of life. It is one thing to say you



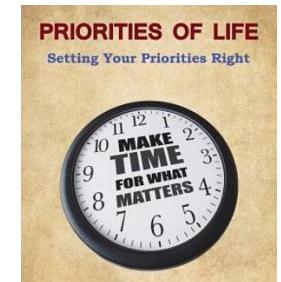
depend upon God and then to actually live like you depend upon God.



How many of us want the blessings of God? The key to a successful Christian life and the blessings of God is found in Matthew 6:33. *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."* That sounds so holy, so pious, and so religious. But do we really do that in our lives? Do I really do that in my life? Do we put the kingdom of God first consistently in our life? Do we put the righteousness of God first in our lives? Maybe that is why we are lacking in so many areas of life.

FIRST, SET PROPER PRIORITIES²

Now everything rises and falls right here. If your priorities are not in order, your life will not be in order. If your priorities are not right, you won't be right. I know of individuals that have not put the kingdom of God first in their lives and their lives are completely upside down. They are trying to build their house from the roof down instead of from the foundation up!



We struggle to find out what we should do in this life. You don't have to pray about what your number one priority in life ought to be. You don't have to think about it. You don't have to discuss it. You don't have to look for it. Because Jesus has already told us what our



² Outline from Sermon Central

first priority ought to be, "*seek ye first the kingdom of God.*"

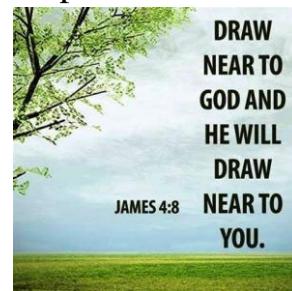
The word "seek" means to "*actively pursue*" or "*to go after.*" It's in the present tense. It means continuously. Every day of your life you ought to seek first the kingdom of God.

Now in order to seek the kingdom, you must first seek the King. The Book of Matthew speaks of Jesus Christ as our King. You cannot have a kingdom without a king. The first priority of your life ought to be to seek the King of the kingdom – Jesus Christ.

Did you know that the Christian life is more than just accepting the Lord; it also involves seeking the Lord. The Lord is not just someone you passively accept. He is someone you need to actively seek.

Scripture affirms the fact that God is no respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34) We have heard it said, God does not play favorites. I want you to know He does have intimates. If you want to have a close relationship with God, then heed the words found in James 4:8: "*Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.*" God has promised in His word, "*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*" (Jeremiah 29:13)

It is not enough to seek the Lord. You must seek Him first. Jesus said, "*seek first the kingdom of God.*" "First things first" means we are putting the Father first.



If you read Matthew 6:30-33 you will find three key words you may want to underline in this passage. In verse 30 underline the word *faith*. In verse 32, underline the word *Father*. In verse 33, underline the word *first*. The Bible says in **Hebrews 11:6**, "*Without faith it is impossible to please him.*"



Faith is putting the Father first. You need to hear this: Jesus does not want A place in your life. Jesus does not even want prominence in your life. Jesus wants preeminence in your life. He wants you to place Him first and foremost in every area of your life.

- Jesus wants the first moments of everyday.
- Jesus wants the first day of every week.
- Jesus wants the first part of every paycheck.
- He wants to be first in every area of your life.

Jesus is not interested in being the first runner-up in your beauty contest. He is not interested in being vice-president in your corporation. He is not interested in being second in command in your army. He wants to be the King on the throne of your heart, not a co-partner in a duplex.

Not only are we to put the King first, we are called to seek the kingdom as well. The kingdom of God ought to be the obsession of your life. The word *kingdom* there literally means *rule or reign*. A kingdom is a place where a king rules. To seek the kingdom of God is to seek the rule and the reign of God over your entire life.



I have a friend Melanie who serves as missionary in a foreign country. I have heard her speak several times over the years. Every time I hear her, I come away with the impression that she is a person that has become so sold out to expanding the Kingdom of God that it makes me feel completely inadequate. She has a single-minded focus on expanding the Gospel through many different avenues.

When you set about to seek the kingdom of God first, you ...

First, ***are seeking for the glory of the king.*** Every part and parcel of your life, every minute and moment of your time, every ounce and pound of your strength, every muscle and fiber of your body ought to be given for the glory of God. "***Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.***" (**I Corinthians 10:31**)



This means we are ***to seek the guidance of the king.*** A loyal subject always wants to do whatever the king would have him to do. There is no higher calling in life than to find out what your King wants done and then to do it. Every morning of your life you ought to begin by asking Jesus what Paul asked Him on the Damascus Road, "***Lord, what would you have me to do?***"

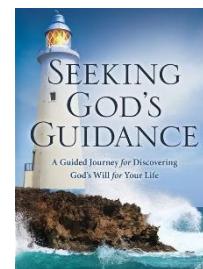


But it also means ***to seek the government of the king.*** A loyal subject desires to be controlled by the king, to be governed by the king, to be ruled by the king.

Someone might say, "Are you talking about slavery?" May I tell you, that the greatest liberty in the world is found in being controlled by the master, Jesus Christ. He is the rightful master of our life.

Jesus said, "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.*" You cannot serve the Lord and the world system. You cannot follow Jesus and align yourself with the morals of this world. Jesus said you cannot serve/live in/give allegiance to both worlds. Choose whom you will seek first – God and His kingdom – or the unrighteous mammon of the world.

Has it ever occurred to you that if your will was God's will, then your will would always be done in your life? However, most of us want our will without first seeking the will of God.



I read a story about a woman who was deathly sick. A neighbor came to visit her and he asked her whether she wanted to live or to die. She said, "I just want whatever pleases God."

The neighbor said, "Well, what if God were to refer the matter to you, which would you choose?"

She said, "If God were to refer the matter to me, I would just refer the matter back to Him." That lady had her priorities in the right order.



You may not believe this, but it would be better to die in the will of God than to live outside of the will of God.

SECONDLY, SEEK PERSONAL PURITY

Not only are we to seek His kingdom, we are to seek "His righteousness." That is, not only are we to be seeking God's control over us, but we are also to be seeking God's character within us. The kingdom of God is not only to be inwardly experienced. It is to be outwardly expressed.



You see, if God is ruling over you, then His righteousness will be within you. Because a man's character is simply the outward expression of whatever is controlling him inwardly. Faith is always seen by its fruit. Character is always seen by its conduct. **Proverbs 20:12** tells us, "*The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.*" You see, as we seek the kingdom of God, people ought to be able to see the kingdom in us.

We are never going to make a difference in this world until the world sees a difference in us. Nietzsche, the German philosopher, was the philosophical founder of the Nazi Movement in Germany. He was the one that trumpeted, "God is dead." He came to that conclusion by looking at Christianity. Do you know what he said about Christians? He said, "If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you are going to have to look a little more redeemed."



The real mark of a Christian is that he makes it easier for others to believe in God. Now what does it mean to seek the righteousness of God?

We must desire the righteousness of God. We examined the Beatitudes and found in Matthew 5:6, "*Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.*"

We need to realize we cannot, by our own strength have the righteousness of God. It only comes about as we accept and receive the righteousness of Christ through the finished work of Calvary. Paul notes in Philippians 3:9, "*And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*" We obtain this righteousness by faith. It is given to us by God.

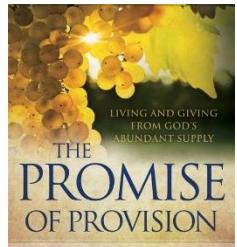


II Corinthians 5:21 says, "*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

Once we come to accept that our right standing before God only comes through Christ, **we need to live it.** We need to live like sons and daughters of the King of Kings. As Will Rogers once said, "We need to live in such a way that we would not be ashamed to sell the family parrot to the town gossip."

THIRD, SEEK PROMISED PROVISION

It is at this point we can begin to seek the promises of God. Jesus said once we have sought the kingdom of God first, and His righteousness, then He promises, "*all these things shall be added unto you.*"



What things is Jesus talking about? I believe it is all the things that people worry about.

In verse 19, we are told that people worry about finances. "**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.**" Have you ever worried about finances? I am guilty. I simply had to turn it over to the Lord.

In verse 25 we are told that people worry about food. "**Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?**" We have put up a "Blessing Box" in which we are helping people in our community. We do not know who we are helping, but the Lord does. We just need to continue to be faithful in helping be a conduit of love and compassion.

In verse 27, we are told that people worry about fitness. "**Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?**" I know I need to exercise more, lose some weight and change my eating habits. Instead of worrying about it, I have decided to take small steps to change my life to a healthier one.

In verse 28, we are told that people worry about fashion. "**And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:**" You cannot help but be bombarded from a thousand places telling you that you need to update your wardrobe, buy the latest style of jeans or shirts, purchase the perfect color or trend. Jesus is saying we don't need to worry about that. If God so clothed the lilies of the field, how much more important are you.

I believe these items are important to God. He knows we need them – finances to pay our bills, food to nourish our body, and clothes to cover us. That is why he said in verse 32, "**For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.**" Now the Lord has promised that if you will seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, you will have all the things you need. Now I did not say you would have necessarily the things that you want.



I am convinced there are four lessons parents ought to teach their children early, and that it would be good for even some adults to re-learn.

First of all, ***you don't need everything you want.*** I wish I had all the money back that I had spent in my life on things that I wanted that I didn't really need.

The **second** lesson is, ***you don't want everything you need.*** Growing up I never wanted any of the whippings I got, but I needed everyone I got.

The **third** lesson is, ***God doesn't give us everything we want.*** I, for one, am so glad that He doesn't. You know, the older I get, the more I realize the greatest blessings I have received are the things that I haven't gotten. I came across a poem from an unknown soldier that exhibits this lesson so well:

*I asked God for strength that I might achieve.
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.*

*I asked God for health that I might do greater things.
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.*

*I asked for riches that I might be happy.
I was given poverty that I might be wise.*

*I asked for power that I might have the praise of men.
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.*

*I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.*

*I got nothing that I asked for –
But everything I had hoped for....
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers
were answered
I am among all men most richly blessed.*

The **last** lesson is, ***God always give us what we need.***

I heard about two stores that were across the street from each other, highly competitive, always trying to get ahead. The manager of one store came out one day and nailed a great big sign over the front of his store that said, "*If you want it, we have it.*" Well, the manager from the other store walked out and saw that sign, thought about it for a few moments, went back into his store, and awhile later came out with a sign he nailed over his store that said, "*If we don't have it, you don't need it.*" I can tell you something right now, no matter what you may think, if you don't have it, it's because God knows at this point in your life you don't need it.



You see, what the Lord was trying to teach us here was this. It is our job to serve God. It is His job to supply us. Now most people have that backwards. Most people think that it is our job to supply us and it is God's job to serve us. If they could, they would sing the old hymn this way:

*I'll have my own way, Lord, I'll have my own way,
I'll be the potter, You be the clay;
I'll mold You and make You after my will,
While you are waiting, yielded and still.*

It is exactly that attitude that cuts off the blessing of God. You see, in a real sense, we have been called to live from hand to mouth. But that's alright if it's His hand and my mouth.

I read of a story about a missionary who was getting ready to embark and go away to a foreign country. As he was getting on the ship, just going up the gangway, a friend of his, who was a very wealthy person, came to him and slipped an envelope into his hand that was sealed.



His friend said, "You take this envelope, and if at any time while you are overseas you come to the place where you have exhausted every other possibility, and you don't have anywhere else to turn, and you have a need that you cannot meet anywhere else, open the envelope."

Well, the missionary took the envelope, thanked him, put it in his pocket, went up the gangplank and he stayed on that mission field for twenty years. At the end of twenty years, he came back home, walked down that same gangplank, met by that same wealthy friend, and he returned the envelope back to the man, still sealed, still unopened, and he said, "Never did I come to a place where I did not know where to turn, nor what to do."

Do you want to make the rest of your life the best of your life? You should allow Jesus Christ to be your Lord. Put Him first.

Put first things first. Live every moment for Him, and He will take care of the rest.

Living for Jesus

Living for Jesus a life that is true, Striving to serve Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free, This is the pathway of blessing for me.

Living for Jesus thru earth's little while, My dearest treasure, the light of His smile;
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem, Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
for Thou in Thy atonement, Didst give Thyself for me;
I own no other Master, My heart shall be Thy throne;
My life I give, hence forth to live, O Christ for Thee alone.

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LET US PRAY