

First Things First – Seek His Kingdom and Righteousness  
Matthew 6:25-34  
January 30, 2011

Read the scripture

When our worship team met this week, we started to kick around some ideas for the background slides as we do every week. We started thinking about those words of Jesus and thought maybe a slide of a fork or Y in the road that leads to different lifestyles could be the image that describes his message. One path would lead toward a glitzy looking city with money and material attractions and the other path would be maybe a plain looking road with Jesus pictured somewhere down the road calling us to follow him. So the choice would be follow Jesus or have the glitzy lifestyle.

Then we got to discussing how that really isn't the scene portrayed in this scripture. Jesus isn't setting up a choice to follow him or Donald Trump or whoever symbolizes the life of financial security and wealth in our eyes.

This message is part of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was preaching mostly to the poor and the blue collar every day 9-5 type of people. The more appropriate picture is a picture of good old life in Newbern, Tennessee.

Jesus was preaching to people who were just trying to scratch out a daily living. He spoke to people living week to week, paycheck to paycheck. He taught people with limited financial resources, little political power over their lives. In spite of all that **he calls them to put first things first. He said don't worry** "what you will eat or what you will drink, about your body what you will wear." V.25 And then, in verse 27 he goes on to ask who can even add an hour to your life by worrying? Then in verse 31 Jesus repeats his instruction not to worry about the basics, food, water, clothing, and housing.

Then Jesus said, putting first things first is to **strive (seek) first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**” The antibiotic for worry is **putting God’s kingdom first.**

- Do we buy what Jesus is selling?
- What does it mean to first seek God’s kingdom and righteousness?
- Do our calendars and daily planners prove we were putting God’s kingdom first?
- Does our checkbook, and debit receipts prove God comes first?
- Do our conversations at work, our texting, and our Facebook chats show we are striving to live the life the way Jesus would want us to live?

**Play Rothchild video:** The woman in the music video we used as our prelude is Jennifer Rothchild. She has a very inspiring testimony. We want to share her story this morning.

I love her statement, **“He makes it well with my soul even when it is not well with my circumstances.”**

Verse 33 is the way God makes it well with us even when we struggle for the basics in life.

### **Seek - a keener sense of the spiritual: v.33**

First we are to strive or seek the kingdom of God. To seek means to have **a keener sense of the spiritual. It is to have that spiritual vision that** there is more to life than the physical world. It is what the words of an early church leader St. Augustine was getting at who once said, “our hearts are restless until they rest in you O God.” C.S. Lewis is famous for saying that we could

only have the idea about God if that idea was planted within us just like a duck can only have desire to swim because they were created to swim. But Jesus knows there is a difference between just being a general believer that says God exist and there is a heaven. **He says seek something particular, strive for it. Be intentional about pursuing it.** The early church was born, thrived and rocked the world even though they were made up of the least powerful people in society because they were seekers of God's kingdom, God's power and leadership in their lives no matter how bleak their circumstances.

First things first for Christians is to seek God; not just live day to day with a hazy I believe in something.

**Illustration:** A few weeks back there was man out in the parking lot sitting in his car. I was leaving the office around 5:00 walking to the parsonage and as I approached him I could tell he was using his cell phone. He stopped talking and lowered his window and said to me, "Hope you don't mind if I sit here and use my cell phone but when I am traveling through this town this where I get the best signal."

Listen we are all traveling through this life and we need to seek God to get the best signal of how to enjoy this life. We gather for worship, we come to Sunday school, we come to Wednesday night groups like the How to Make Your Love Last a Life Time or study the gospel of Matthew, the youth to their groups or attend home group and do other things because that is part of the way we seek God's kingdom his rule, we get his signal.

### **Seek the kingdom by seeking the king: v.33**

**Jesus said, "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.** It is important to remember that this is not teaching that just wants us to find a list of do's and don'ts. This is not encouraging us to live by seeking to have just information or a ritual of what we do on

Sundays and Wednesdays. Jesus said seek the kingdom and His righteousness. This seeking is personal and a relationship. When he said seek “His Kingdom”, he is reminding us to seek a relationship with God. **We seek the kingdom by getting to know the king.** We seek God’s kingdom by having an intimate personal relationship with God. **Preacher and author Larry Crabb has said, “Whenever we place a higher priority on solving our problems than pursuing God we are immoral.” (Larry Crabb, Christianity today, vol. 38, 6)** First things first means, we seek God who was perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul said in the book of Philippians, the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter that he wanted to know Christ and power of his resurrection, he counted everything else as garbage compared to knowing Christ.

Yes there are certain standards as Christians by which we are to live that contain God’s will. However, it begins and is always sustained by pursuing a relationship. The question isn’t about getting religion. We are not about a religion here we are about pursuing a relationship with the king so we live in his kingdom.

You know what is so great and true about Jesus throwing in the personal side of this is when he said His? It means there is no reason not to give God the benefit of our doubt. Some people hold back from becoming a Christian and going deeper because we don’t know where God will take us or unsure if we can live up to what God expects; two quick answers to those types of concerns.

- 1.) None of us completely live up to what God expects. Our relationship with God is based on his love for us; not our perfection.
- 2.) You can always go back to the life you had before if you really are disappointed. We use to tell kids at in treatment for drugs and alcohol that if living clean and sober is really that disappointing, you can always go back to the drinking and doping and of course all the problems, but you can go back.

In her testimony Jennifer Rothchild said the darkness helped her become more dependent on God meaning she sought a relationship and that relationship went deeper. Seek the kingdom by desiring to know the better the King.

### **Live by God's sense of rightness; not the world's: v.33**

Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness - meaning his way of living; not the world's. A little earlier in this same sermon Jesus said **“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will hate the one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”**

That was a pretty bold statement to say to people who were mostly barely getting by to live; but he wanted them to know the lack of money was not their greatest need. He wanted them to see material the influences of this world are not the answer.

Remember what Jennifer Rothchild said in her testimony that ultimately every problem we face is really a spiritual problem. Every problem we face is ultimately going to reveal what we believe and who we trust the most.

**Illustration:** There is a story about a group of thieves who one night broke into a jewelry store. But rather than stealing anything, they simply switched all the price tags on all the jewelry. The next day, no one could tell the valuable jewelry from the cheap. The expensive jewels had suddenly become cheap, and the costume jewelry, which had been virtually worthless before, was suddenly of great value. Customers who thought they were purchasing valuable gems were getting fakes. Those who couldn't afford the higher priced items and bought the costume jewelry were leaving the store with treasures.

The pastor who shared that story goes onto say, “Sometimes I think we might be a little bit like that as a people. Sometimes we forget

what is really valuable and important and we often get distracted with those things of lesser importance.  
(Jason Cole, sermoncentral.com)

The person Jesus Christ and his teachings/ his righteousness are the way we can lay hold of the real treasures in this life. We are to pursue, seek, chase, dog, hunt, and hound after Jesus Christ and what he says his good and right. Then no matter what our outside circumstances may be; it will be well with our souls.