

First Things First

Harmony M.B.C., June 1, 2008 (Morning)

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Mat 6:24-33

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Jesus was on earth during an era of what we call subsistence living, at least in this Jewish society. That is to say, the culture in Israel during that day was such that the common man had to be more concerned about whether he could earn enough to make sure groceries were on the table and there was sufficient clothing to cover his family than to wonder whether he had enough money or credit to buy a new car or a new house; or whether he was going to be able to afford that wide screen HD TV or a new boat or swimming pool, or ATVs for his kids to ride.

In this kind of cultural and financial situation, Christ went straight to the center of issues that captured people's minds and consumed their time. He understood clearly that it was all this concern about getting stuff that would interfere with people's capacity to focus on things more sublime, more spiritual. But regardless of whether the distraction that snares people is too much concern about getting groceries, or too much concern about getting a shiny new toy, the outcome is the same. It causes people to be carried aside from the most important things. Humans...being humans, can be so easily drawn away from spiritual things to the point that they can completely lose sight of what is really important. Jesus knew this. Because He knew this, He left us this lecture to think about and to use as a guideline for our thinking and behavior in the world. This is a lecture about anxiety (the Greek word that we read as "take no thought" carries the idea of anxiety). It seems almost absurd to think that Christians in our society today would be anxious about material possessions, even things as necessary as groceries and clothes. I seriously doubt that anybody that is mature enough to realize what help exists in our society, and is willing to ask for that help, would go hungry or naked in America. Some do, but it is not because there is no assistance around. But people worry. More than that, people worry about material possessions that aren't even essentials. When they worry, they are carried aside from being able to focus on the real valuable issues...things that have to do with the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness.

So, Jesus has given us this lecture to help us. May we have the spiritual insight to look at His guidance this morning and to frame our behavior to fit the principle.

I. This fits perfectly as a commandment to those not yet saved

First order of concern should be to discover what the kingdom of God and true righteousness is all about.

Second order of concern is to find the way to enter the kingdom of God and to lay hold on His righteousness.

Personal ambition can wait

Pursuing other life goals can wait

Building relationships and coalitions can wait
Amassing material wealth can wait
Gaining other knowledge can wait

- The Kingdom of God is all the realm of God. He is ruler over all the earth and of heaven
- His righteousness is that rightness which He possesses; in contrast to the unrighteousness of fallen humanity.
- To find His righteousness we only need to look at Jesus Christ
- To obtain His righteousness, we only need to be made right in Jesus Christ

II. This is the perfect rule of life for believers

Seek ye first...

(Short commentary on what the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is and is not)

A. First In Order of Time

“The Lord wants our precious time, not our spare time.” —Anonymous

Time relative to Daily Schedule

Time relative to the passing of your life

B. First In Order of Preferences and Priorities

People are all about setting priorities today - the wisest of all things a person can do in this life is to set this seeking we are talking about as the **first priority**.

The gentle scolding of Martha by our Lord was all about priorities (Luke 10:41-42):

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things...42 But one thing is **needful**: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

- It was not that Martha’s activities were not important...it was that the one thing was of first importance...was the first priority...because that one thing was pursuit of the things of the kingdom of God and His righteousness!

We can confuse our priorities and even ignorantly set earthly things ahead of the Lord. So it is important for us to take inventory of how we prioritize in our lives. I am reminded of the biblical invitation a certain man made to several people to come to a feast (Luke 14:16-20).

This is all about prioritizing...about preferences.

“Live near to God, and so all things will appear to you little in comparison with eternal realities.”
—Robert Murray McCheyne

C. First In Order of Intensity

“seek ye first” has to do with:

level of interest;

with level of zeal;

In John 2 we read about Jesus going through the temple and seeing all the commercialism that had taken over the Jewish worship ritual. There were all the money changers and the dealers in

merchandise associated with people offering sacrifices...they had commercialized the things of God...much like businesses today make sure that they draw your attention and buying power to their stores on Easter and Christmas...he stopped for a bit and wove a whip out of small cords and beat them out of the temple...what was the statement made about this action by John in his writing? (John 2:17) “And his disciples remembered that it was written, **The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.**”

III. The Promise Made to Those Who Seek The Kingdom of God and His Righteousness First

“...all these other things shall be added unto you.”

First Things First

Of all the firsts that I might know,
And seek to gain in time,
There's only one that's worth the toil,
There's only one that is sublime.

It's seeking first God's Kingdom high,
And righteousness in Christ my King,
To find those things in life's great trial,
Will full reward for seeking bring.

So, let us seek with diligence empowered,
By God's great grace and love,
And find the Kingdom and its righteousness,
Revealed from Christ who sits above.

Robert P. Myers, 2008