

Seeking God's Kingdom in 2016
Matthew 6:24-34

January 3, 2016

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This morning, our subject is "Seeking God's Kingdom in 2016." Many important things will happen in 2016. In a few days, our city-parish will inaugurate a new city-parish president, and our state will inaugurate a new governor. By year's end, we will elect a new president. All eyes will be on the oil and gas industry praying for a rebound. Many of you enter this New Year with unanswered questions and unresolved issues of 2015. All of this is important, but none of these things are important as "Seeking first the Kingdom of God." That's why we turn our attention there this morning as we begin this year.

Text: ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. ³⁴ Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

You are living for a kingdom whether you realize it or not. You are either living for your own kingdom or you are living for the kingdom of God. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are commanded to "Seek first the Kingdom of God."

One Principle: Seek first the Kingdom of God

Our text this morning is part of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has been teaching about life in His kingdom. He began with the beatitudes—those little proverbs that teach us how to really have the life God meant for us to have. Then, Jesus addressed other matters of kingdom living—lessons on being salt and light, lessons on fulfilling the law of God, and lessons on prayer just to name a few. In our text today, I get the sense that Jesus is saying, "You really want to know what it means to live as my disciple—just seek the Kingdom of God first." That is, let God be the number one priority in your life. In your business, in your home, in your church, in every decision you make, be guided by this principle: **seek first the kingdom of God!**

What does this mean? Paul gave insight on this subject.

Colossians 3:2 "Set your mind on what is above, not on what is on earth."

The key to seeking God's kingdom is to focus more on things eternal than things on the earth.

Two Promises:

The next part of this passage helps us to understand the wonderful promises associated with seeking God's kingdom first.

- God will fulfill all of our needs.

First, God says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you." As we seek the kingdom of God first, we will find that we have all the earthly things we need.

- We will have the freedom to live in the present.

Second, we will be able to focus on "today." Verse 34 says, "Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Three Questions:

How do I know if I am "seeking first the kingdom of God?" The real question is how do I know if I am seeking first the kingdom of God? The text that precedes verse 33 gives us three real practical questions to ask ourselves.

1. Am I wandering away from God? (Matthew 6:24)

No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money.

Notice, first, the **impossibility** of serving two masters. You cannot serve two masters. The most spiritually mature person cannot serve two masters. If something or somebody is your master, implied in the word is the impossibility that you can have two.

Second, notice the **irony** of serving two masters. The irony is that you will actually end up hating one of the two masters. Hear the words of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians.

Join in imitating me, brothers, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For I have often told you, and now say again with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction; their god is their stomach; their glory is in their shame. They are focused on earthly things, (Philippians 3:17-19)

Again, to Timothy, Paul wrote about one named Demas:

Demas has deserted me, because he loved this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. (2 Timothy 4:10)

Is there any part of you, today, that feels distant from God? Maybe you can look at your life and remember a time when you were more "in step with God." The first question to discovering whether you are seeking first His kingdom is "Am I wandering away from God?"

2. Do I worry more than I should? (Matthew 6:25-31)

²⁵ "This is why I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your

heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? ²⁷ Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don't labor or spin thread. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! ³⁰ If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't He do much more for you—you of little faith? ³¹ So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'

Could it be that worry is a sign that you are seeking your own kingdom? The text indicates yes. If we are seeking God's kingdom, we will be so focused on Him that we won't worry about the material things of this life.

Just to put it real bluntly, most of us are more worried about what is happening with our businesses, our incomes, our stocks, our sports teams, our next vacation than we are about the kingdom of God. I remember reading a story about a gentleman who owned a business. He worried all the time. He worried when things were bad, but he even worried when things were good. He worried about everything pertaining to his business. One day, he was tired of all of the worrying and he voiced this prayer to God, "God, I'm turning this business over to You. It's Yours! You can do with it whatever you want." That night, he was awakened in the middle of the night to the news that his business was on fire. He made his way down to the business to watch it burn to the ground. One of his employees who knew how much the man worried walked over to console his boss. The owner of that business was able to say, "It's not my problem. You see, just today, I gave that business to God. It's His! If He wants to burn it down, it's no concern of mine." What a change in attitude! To seek God's Kingdom, first, means to turn it all over to Him.

3. Do I want more than I have? (Matthew 6:32)

³² For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

The final question is "Do I want more than I have?" Seekers of the kingdom of this world are always wanting more. Christian author, Steven Farrar, describes our predicament as affluenza. He wrote, "People drive to the mall in cars that they cannot afford to spend money that they don't have, to buy things that they don't need, to impress people that they don't like."

The tragedy of our excessive desires is that our wants change the focus of our activity and control us. Equally tragic is that when we get what we thought we wanted, we are still not satisfied. Only one thing can satisfy and that is a personal relationship with Jesus.