

“Seek First God’s Kingdom”
(Matthew 6:25-34)

Introduction: We saw this morning the command of Jesus to stop laying up treasures on the earth, but instead to put all our efforts into storing up our treasures in heaven. He said we should do this for two reasons. The first is that we can lose the things that we have on earth, but we cannot lose the things we shall have in heaven. When you think about it, there is nothing you possess now that you can know for sure that you will possess tomorrow. But this is not the case with the things which are in heaven. You can know that the things you store up there today will still be there a thousand ages from now, for there you can never lose them. The second reason we are not to store up treasures on earth, but instead in heaven, is that where your treasure is, there your heart will be too. If you love the world, you will treasure up things in the world, you will make you home in the world, and you will perish with the world. But if you love heaven, then you will store your treasures there, you will long to be there, and eventually you will make you eternal home there. Jesus says you cannot serve two masters. You may serve only one, and that one must be God, if you are ever to see heaven.

This now brings us to what Jesus tells us this evening. Seeing that we may only store up our treasures in one place, how is this to affect the way that we live now? Jesus says,

We to trust that the Lord will take care of our needs here below, and instead place all of our energy in seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness.

I. First, we are to trust that the Lord will provide everything we need for our daily living.

- A. This is a wonderful promise, especially in the light of Y2K, which is now just around the corner. God will take care of us, if we are His children.
 1. Jesus says stop worrying about what you will eat or drink, or what you will wear.
 - a. When you stop and think about it, isn’t this what usually takes up most of our time and energy? We spend most of our thoughts upon making sure that our families are well-fed and well-clothed.
 - b. And this is important. Jesus is not saying here that it isn’t. He’s simply telling us that we don’t need to worry about it.
 - c. There is more to life than this. Life is more than food. The body is more than clothing. We shall see in a moment what that more is.
 2. But for now, realize that God has promised to meet the needs of His children.
 - a. Jesus first points to the birds.
 - (i) He says that they don’t sow seed in the fields, they don’t reap harvests, nor do they store their grain into barns. They don’t plan ahead. They don’t store up food for the coming year.
 - (ii) If you have ever looked into a bird’s nest, the one thing you will notice is

that there are only either baby birds, or nothing but broken shells. Birds, for the most part, don't store things in their nests. There are birds that try and hide some of the things they find. The scrub jays around here will take some of their almonds and bury them in your yard. But they rarely ever seem to find them again. Usually, they end up planting a crop of almond trees for you to harvest with your lawnmower. Woodpeckers also take acorns and drive them into pine trees, so that they can have them when food is scarce.

- (iii) But the point is that they don't plant, cultivate, or harvest their food, or store it into barns. The Father in heaven, who provides abundantly for all of His creatures, causes food to grow for them. He gives them permission to take all the fruit they want from your trees, and from the trees which grow in the wild. He provides for them everyday. Everyday they go out searching for food and find it, so they can feed themselves and their little ones.
 - (iv) Now if God cares so much for a bird, which are really worthless little creatures, how much more will He care for one who is made in His image, especially one who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ?
- b. Jesus next points to the fact that no matter how much you worry, you won't be able to change the number of your days (v. 27).
- (i) The food is to sustain you, after all, and to allow you to live.
 - (ii) But no matter how much you worry about food, or anything else, it won't cause you to live any longer than what God has ordained for you.
 - (iii) Now Jesus is not saying that you shouldn't take any care to make sure that you eat the right foods and get enough rest. He is not advocating that you break the sixth commandment by poisoning yourself slowly with things you know are bad for you.
 - (iv) He is simply saying that when you have done all you can, don't worry. Your days are numbered by the Lord. You won't die one second sooner or later than what He has ordained. So don't be concerned about it. God has promised to take care of you.
- c. But what about clothes? Should you worry about that? Jesus points to the lilies and says no.
- (i) Look at the flowers, He says. Do you see them laboring? Do you see them spinning cotton into thread? No.
 - (ii) But have you ever seen a more beautiful set of clothes than what they are wearing? Even wise and wealthy Solomon didn't have clothes like these.
 - (iii) This, by the way, is one of the most amazing things about the unbeliever. He can look at a field of flowers in all their color and beauty, and yet in his mind, he does all he can to convince himself that there is no God. But he can see God. He knows that God made all these things. But he will not bring himself to admit it, because once he does, he will also need to admit that he is accountable to this God.
 - (iv) But Jesus says look at these flowers. Even the grass of the field is

clothed with a beauty all its own. But if God gives to these clothes like this, and these things are so temporary and so transient, that today they are alive and tomorrow they are thrown into a furnace as fuel for the fire, how much more will He take care to make sure that your nakedness is covered and your body kept warm?

- (v) He will do it. He will do it, inasmuch as it tends to His glory. We mustn't forget that there are times when the Lord will withhold these things for His good and just purposes, to allow us to glorify Him in another way. But generally speaking, God will provide, faithfully!

B. The point is that we are not to worry about these things.

1. We shouldn't worry about the things we need to eat and drink. We shouldn't worry about the clothes we need to wear.
 - a. This doesn't mean that we won't do anything about providing for these things, but it does mean that we won't worry or fret about them.
 - b. We will simply trust the promise of the Lord.
2. Worry betrays the fact that we really don't trust Him. It shows that we really don't believe that God is going to take care of us.
 - a. If we worry, we are no different than the Gentiles, who at this time had no such promise from God. Their lives were wrapped up in the pursuit of these things.
 - b. But we have a heavenly Father who knows all our needs. And He not only knows them, He has promised that He will provide for them. And He has the power to do it.
 - c. *And so Jesus is telling us that not only should we not treasure the things of this world, He also tells us that we shouldn't even overly concern ourselves with our daily needs, because the Father has given us His assurance that He will provide for us.*

II. But now there is a reason why He has done this. There is something else that He wants us to do. Jesus says, "Do not be anxious . . . but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness."

A. This is basically the same thing we saw this morning.

1. Jesus doesn't want us to set our affections on the things below, in order that we might set them on the things above.
2. He doesn't want us to get caught up in the affairs of day to day life, in order that we might instead promote the things which will endure forever.

B. We are not to be anxiously seeking then even the things we need to survive.

Instead we are to seek first of all God's kingdom and righteousness.

1. To seek God's kingdom means to desire it so strongly that you try and take hold of it.
 - a. The kingdom, He is speaking of, is His redemptive kingdom, the eternal kingdom of salvation, the kingdom which Christ came to establish.
 - b. This seeking or striving, He is referring to here, is the only way that anyone

will ever enter into it.

- c. It's the same thing Paul is talking about, when he says that God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, [He will give] eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation" (Rom. 2:6-8). If a man is to obtain eternal life, if he is to enter into God's eternal kingdom in the end, he must seek for it. He must persevere in doing good.
 - d. Jesus said, "Strive to enter by the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24). The way into His redemptive kingdom is narrow. It is a narrow door that only few will find. And of those few who find it, only a few will enter it. There will be those who will try, but will not be able. The reason will be that they didn't strive enough.
 - e. Jesus says again, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). John the Baptist was the one who came first preaching the kingdom of heaven. From that time, those who saw its value, those who realized its worth, have done all that they can to enter into it. What is required is a holy violence, a denial of self, a denial of the things of this world, that you might enter into heaven. Jesus said that "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (13:44-46). Jesus said, "So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Luke 14:33).
 - f. It will cost you everything you have to enter into that kingdom. It will cost you your possessions, your closest relations, even your own life. But if you see its value, then like the merchant, you will be willing to give it all up in order to obtain it. And you will not stop seeking until you actually enter that eternal kingdom.
2. Secondly, Jesus says that you must also seek God's righteousness.
 - a. What He means here is that you will also strive to become holy.
 - b. Remember what the author to the Hebrews said, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (12:14). It's a different word, but the idea is the same. You are to seek after or pursue sanctification, for this is the only way you will ever see the Lord.
 - c. Jesus said earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). Those who ultimately will find the satisfaction of the Lord must first hunger and thirst after it.
 - d. Now this means two things: we must be putting off the deeds of the flesh and be putting on the deeds of the Spirit. Paul writes in Romans 8:13, "For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." He says later, "But put

on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts” (13:14).

- e. To pursue holiness we must kill the sin which is in us, and we must put on all of the righteous character of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - f. How do we do this? We must do it by the strength which God supplies through the Spirit of His Son. What is to be our standard? It must be the standard of God’s Holy Word, especially that moral standard which He gives to us in His 10 Commandments. This is what He expounds for us, at least in part, in the Sermon on the Mount.
3. And finally, Jesus says that we must seek His Kingdom and His righteousness first, or above all things. We must make them our main pursuit in life.
 - a. If you think about it for a moment, this is the only way it can be.
 - b. Paul says that we must persevere, if we are to enter this kingdom. Jesus says that we must strive to enter that narrow door, if we are to enter His kingdom. We must hunger and thirst for righteousness. We must pursue holiness. We must be willing to part with all of our possession and even our own life to enter that kingdom. And Jesus says that it is only the one who endures to the end who will be saved (Matt. 24:13).
 - c. Now if entrance into God’s kingdom is like this, do you think that this is something you can do short of putting everything you have into it? This will require all that you have, your whole life, and much more. It will require the supernatural work of God’s Spirit. As a matter of fact, you can’t even want to start the race until the Spirit first unites you to Christ.
 - d. But the wonderful news is that if Christ has given you His Spirit, if you are savingly trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then He will ensure that you will persevere in this strenuous pursuit of holiness, to the very end of your life. God has promised it. And don’t forget, that if these things are true of you, God has also pledged to provide for all of your other needs as well. You don’t need to concern yourself with where those things are going to come from tomorrow. God has given you this day and every day to focus instead on finishing your course. Place your mind on the things of today, and let tomorrow take care of itself.
 - e. But lastly, I would challenge those of you here this evening to examine your life to see whether or not you have even begun this race. Do these words of Christ describe you? Is your heart so filled with the prospect of entering God’s kingdom that you are doing holy violence to yourself? Are you cutting off the eye that offends, the hands and the feet that hinder? Have you given up all your own possessions and even your closest relations, that you might pursue God’s kingdom and righteousness with all your might? If not, then you need to come to the Savior before you will ever be able to. This world is strong, and its pull is strong. It is impossible to break free of its grip, apart from the grace of Christ. But you must break free of it, if you are ever to enter into heaven. Jesus said you cannot serve two masters. You cannot have God and this world. God must be your treasure. He must be the One who has hold of your heart. If He doesn’t, then you will never be able to do

what you must to enter into His eternal kingdom. If God is not your only and best love tonight, then call out on the Lord now in your heart. Ask Him to break the chains that hold you. Ask Him to break your stony heart and to give you a heart of flesh, one that beats for Him. Ask Him to enable you to trust in Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul. God is able to make you new. He has provided everything you need through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to Him now. May God grant that you will. Amen.