

Kingdom First Living

“Therefore do not worry, saying, what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6: 31-33)

We all have needs and desires. We all pursue them. We spend our time, our thoughts, and our energies thinking about them. However, there is another way to live, a better way. And that is to understand the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and pursue it first. If we do this, Jesus promises that the other things we seek will be added to us.

The list He gives (eat, drink, wear) is not exhaustive, and was not meant to be. It was an example of the basic things we all desire and seek. However, people desire and seek many things. Our heavenly Father knows what we need. We have health needs. We have financial needs. We have relational needs. We have emotional needs. And we have many desires as well, as diverse as the people seeking them.

But we are told there is an order. We are to seek what’s most important first, and that’s the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. When the order of our attention is right, the other things will be added. That’s His promise. Deut. 28: 2 says if we listen carefully to His voice and obey His commands, all these blessings shall come on us and overtake us.

This promise in Deuteronomy is the same idea. Put God first and the rest will be added. In fact, the implication is that we won’t have to seek these other things as much anymore, since they will seek us and overtake us. He will make sure of it.

So the important question to ask here is, “What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness?”

In this “sermon on the mount” there are approximately 20 instructions given by Jesus. Each of them are examples of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. They may seem to be too many or beyond our ability, but the good news is that we are not expected to keep them all at one time or keep them perfectly. We are expected to seek them. We know which we are to pursue based on whichever of these comes up in our situation day by day.

1. Rejoice in hard times (Matt. 5: 12)
2. Shine with good works (v. 16)
3. Reconcile with people (v. 23-25)
4. Cut off sin (v. 27-30)
5. Keep your word (v. 33-37)
6. Return evil with good (v. 38-41)
7. Be generous (v. 42)
8. Love the unlovely (v. 46-47)
9. Give without fanfare (6: 1-4)
10. Pray without hypocrisy (v. 5-8)
11. Pray for His kingdom – The Lord’s prayer (v. 9-13)
12. Fast quietly (v. 16-19)
13. Lay up treasure in heaven (v. 19-21)
14. Stop worrying (v.25, 31)
15. Judge people righteously, and start with yourself (7: 1-5)
16. Avoid casting pearls before swine (v. 6)
17. Keep asking, seeking and knocking (v. 7-8)
18. Keep the “golden rule” (v. 12)
19. Enter by the narrow gate (v. 13-14)
20. Beware of false prophets (v. 15)

In this series we will take time to discuss each of these, find out what they mean, how to apply them, and why it matters. But for now, we can know for certain that as we do what Jesus says here, we will be building our houses on rock, and no matter what comes, we will stand (7: 24-25). We will also experience all the other things we desire being added to us.

1. Rejoicing in hard times

There are many things we may not feel like doing, but the secret is to do even what we don't feel like doing, because it puts us above the control of our feelings and we learn to be controlled by the Spirit of God. This is what rejoicing in hard times does. It disciplines the flesh, brings God's presence into our situation and reminds us of how much greater He is.

"In everything give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thess. 5: 18

We may understand rejoicing and praising God, but being exceedingly glad? How can we be glad when persecuted, when the enemy comes against us? Jesus gives us a clue. The key is our great reward in heaven. When we remember this world is not our home, and every time we experience tribulation for His sake, our eternal reward becomes greater. This is the motivation for being exceedingly glad.

2. Shine with Good Works

We are created to do good works (Eph. 2:10). This is our mission, our calling. We need to make sure we are committed to discovering our passion, finding our place, and fulfilling our purpose. Again, we may not fulfill it perfectly, but we must seek it. And remember, we want people to glorify God, not us. We don't seek the applause. When we don't get it we should not be offended, and when we do get it we should not become proud. God often tests us by how we handle praise.

Prov. 27:1 – The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but people are tested by their praise.

The world is often a very dark place, in some places darker than others. God sends us as light in darkness (Phil 2: 15). People need what we have. So give them what God has given you. Love people enough to give yourself away.