

Seek First the Kingdom

House of Christ's Love Church

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What Does it Mean to Seek First the Kingdom?

Matthew 6:25-6:33

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Introduction:

One night, a group of thieves broke into a jewelry store. But rather than stealing anything, they simply switched all the price tags. The next day no one could tell what was valuable and what was 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 were leaving the store with treasures.

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.

III. Several years ago, construction workers happened upon a corpse outside the ancient city of Pompeii, where many people died when a volcano exploded. The evidence surrounding this corpse (a woman) was interesting. Apparently, she had been fleeing from the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Overtaken by the molten lava, she died in the hot ashes. The corpses revealed hands that were clutched around jewels. The jewels had survived, but the woman had not.

Often times we say things that we do not really mean. Perhaps sometimes we even think we mean them, but we don't really. For example, often times when I hear someone proclaiming, "I love God" I often realize their idea of love and my idea of love are quite different. For some "love" is some emotional feeling or positive feeling towards someone else. Jesus said, "If you love me you will obey my commandments." Perhaps some are like that with the church. They say, "I love the church", but their actions tell a different story because they fail to do any real work to support the church.

After Jesus' resurrection, he came to Peter and asked him three times if he loved him. Three times Peter assured Jesus that he did, in fact becoming a little frustrated at the redundancy of the questioning by the third time. Jesus asked three times if Peter loved him because three times Peter denied Jesus, and Jesus was trying to make the point to Peter that if you really love me don't just back it up with mere words, but also with your actions.

To me one of the most interesting statements that Jesus made was when he taught, to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. I suspect I will spend a lifetime attempting to unpack and understand the depth of what it means to seek first His kingdom. The idea or concept of the "kingdom" is a prominent theme throughout the entire Bible. Jesus taught his disciples that when they prayed, they were to say, "Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done..." There was great confusion among those during Jesus' time about what the nature of the kingdom that the Messiah was to set up would be like. They expected some earthly, physical kingdom that would overthrow the Roman rule of the time, but the kingdom of which Jesus rules over is not of this world. His kingdom's boundaries cannot be measured, and mere man cannot number the members of that kingdom, but His Kingdom is the

Church. Therefore, if His kingdom is His church and we are to seek first the kingdom of God, shouldn't the church be a priority for our lives?

Text: Matthew 6:25-33

This whole passage regarding seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness is all in the context of Jesus' teachings on worry. He teaches that we do not have to worry about our basic physical needs because he will take care of it, and we need to seek the kingdom first and his righteousness. So I began to think to myself, that sounds like a great offer, but how do I seek first His kingdom and His righteousness? What exactly does it mean to seek the kingdom first? Obviously, it is a matter of priorities. What is it that we spend our time and energy focusing on? Jesus said, that the pagans seek after those physical things, but we should make the kingdom and His righteousness a priority in our lives.

I. It Means You Will Love the Kingdom

I have heard some people say before, "I love Christ, but I don't love the church". Well it is impossible to love Christ without also loving the bride of Christ His Church. If we are going to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness than we must love the kingdom of God.

a. Love the Kingdom Individually

I hope that we all know and understand that the church is not a building, if you are a Christian today than you are the church and a part of the kingdom of God. If you are to seek first the kingdom of God, you must love the kingdom and the individuals that make up that kingdom. Jesus made it clear that the greatest command is to love the Lord you God with all of your heart, soul and mind and the second greatest is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself. I cannot over emphasize the importance of having love for one another within the church. The Apostle John all throughout the book of I John spoke of the importance of loving those that makes up the kingdom as individuals. We need to love the church, but loving the church is not about loving a building or a mass of people, it is about loving your brothers and sisters in Christ and that love will compel you to put their needs even above your needs.

I John 3:18

The love that we have for one another is of the utmost importance; we cannot be Christians and not love one another. In fact Jesus taught that the world would know we are his disciples by the way in which we love one another. Let us as the Apostle says, not let that love be merely with tongue, but let us show it through how we act and through how we treat one another.

I John 4:12

b. Love the Kingdom Collectively

We also must love the church as a whole. The Church is perhaps the greatest institution ever established, and though it has faults and flaws from within, seeking first the Kingdom of God means that we will love that Kingdom that Jesus loved so much that He shed His blood for Her.

II. It Means You Will Support the Kingdom

a. Physically (Participation)

If we love the kingdom of God, we must show it physically through our support and participation. We need to physically support the church first of all by being present when the church assembles together. I hope I do not need to plainly

emphasize the importance of meeting together for the times we have set. The services we have we do not have them for the preacher's benefit or for any other benefit, but for the body of Christ to be strengthened. And if we are going to love the kingdom, we need to love being where the kingdom is gathered. William Gladstone once said, "Tell me what the young men of England are doing on Sunday and I will tell you what the future of England will be." I believe there is a lot of truth to that. Surely, the people here would say I love the kingdom because they know that is the right answer, but do you love and support the kingdom enough to make a choice to be gathered here when it is inconvenient? When you have things to do? When you are busy? When you are tired? When there are other things you also want to do? Let us physically show our support for the kingdom by our participation.

I have learned that many times people are all talk and no action. Many people have such high aims for the church. They say they want the church to do all sorts of things, but I often wonder those that have such high aspirations, what are they doing to achieve that goal. If we are going to seek first the kingdom we must support the church physically ourselves and not just rely upon other to do the work of the kingdom.

This Is My Church

It is composed of people just like me.

It will be friendly if I am.

It will do a great work if I work.

It will make generous gifts to many causes if I am generous.

It will bring others into its fellowship if I bring them.

Its seats will be filled if I fill them.

It will be a church of loyalty and love, of faith and service.

If I who make it what it is, am filled with these,

Therefore, with God's help, I dedicate myself to the task of being

All these things I want my Church to be.

Will you show your love and support from the kingdom by participating in the things of the church and by serving within the church? I have learned that the greatest complainers in the church often are the ones that take no initiative to do anything themselves. They are the ones that expect to be served and not to serve, they are the ones that see the church as a vending machine, and have a consumer mentality to God and when they do not get what they want when they want it they will just go somewhere else. Why not rather support the church through our serving in the church? Why not if we think the church needs to be more loving, us be more loving ourselves? Why not if we think the church should be reaching more lost people, we taking the initiative to do it ourselves? Why not if we think the church should be better about visiting the sick, why not visit the sick ourselves? You are the church and the church will only go as far as the people who make up the church are willing to go. Let us support the church physically through our attendance and through our serving within the church.

b. Prayerfully

Nothing can be more valuable than your prayerful support to the church. We show our love and devotion to the church by our commitment and support to the church. I want to ask you as people who make up the body of Christ here to commit to praying for the church on a regular basis. When is the last time you prayed for the church? You can pray for the church leaders for God to give them wisdom to make good and godly decisions. You can pray for growth in the church both numerical growth and spiritual growth from within. You can pray for those that are sick among us. You can pray for the classes that we have regularly that God will work through those classes to equip people to live better lives and serve Him diligently. You can pray for the church finances that we will be good stewards of what God has entrusted us with. You can pray for each other, as we have needs develop there is nothing more reassuring than the fact that you

have people within the church praying for you. If you love the church then you need to support the church prayerfully. I love the account of Peter's arrest. After James had been killed, Herod saw that the Jews were pleased by it, so he had Peter arrested to be executed also. But...

Acts 12:5

We as people tend to be diligent in pray for the things that concern us most. Often times when illness or hard times befall someone they are driven to their knees. The reasons why is because they care about their life. I want to encourage you to pray for the church and see what amazing things God will do as His people seek His face through prayer. If we seek first His kingdom we should be praying that the kingdom may be strong.

c. Verbally (Evangelism)

Ephesians 3:10

d. Financially

Have you ever wondered why people give their money to the places that they do? Why do people send money into televangelists? Why do people support certain charities? The reason why people financially support something is because they believe in that group or person and they believe in what they are trying to do and they want to be a part of it. People are going to invest in those things, which they really believe in. I know that a lot of people in this world and the church included have a hard time with the concept of giving, but I do think that God calls us to give a portion of our incomes to the local church.

I Corinthians 16:1-2

Please, keep in mind that giving to the local charities and giving to other groups does not remove you responsibility to tithing to the local church.

III. A mother wanted to teach her daughter a moral lesson. She gave the little girl a quarter and a dollar for church "Put whichever one you want in the collection plate and keep the other for yourself," she told the girl. When they were coming out of church, the mother asked her daughter which amount she had given. "Well," said the little girl, "I was going to give the dollar, but just before the collection the man in the pulpit said that we should all be cheerful givers. I knew I'd be a lot more cheerful if I gave the quarter, so I did."

Perhaps that is the case with some people, but as we love the church it should be a joy to give what is expected of us. The Bible does teach from very early on that God's people are to give 10% of their income to Him.

III. C.S. Lewis once said, "I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare."

Many people have a hard time with that because they fail to realize that it is the Lord's money that we are dealing with not our own. The look at in black and white and see what they are loosing, but the y fail to realize that God blesses those that give. Notice, that not everyone has to bring the same amount of money, but everyone has to make the same sacrifice. Today, if you love the church you will support her financially. I am convinced that if every Christian tithed the church would be able to do far more than it is doing now.

J.L. Kraft, head of the Kraft Cheese Corporation, who had given approximately 25% of his enormous income to Christian causes for many years, said, "The only investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord."

What a joy and privilege it is to be able to invest our earthly money on something eternal. I am here today to tell you that we need to stand behind and support the church is all she strives to do.

Will you show your love for the church by supporting her in every area of your life, even your wallet?

III. It Means You Will Be Kingdom Focused

We need to learn to realize that the kingdom of God is bigger than any one person. The Kingdom of God is even bigger than this church here. So many people seek to do things because of their own selfish motives and agenda, but the Kingdom of God does not revolve around us. Whenever I hear someone complain about how things are done within the church I want them to learn and realize that the kingdom of God is not about them, but it is about God. Our attention and our focus should be on the bigger picture of the Kingdom of God. That is one reason why we support missions all around the world, because we realize that the kingdom is bigger than any one person and any one city. We want to not just build up this church, but we want to build up the Kingdom of God as a whole.

a. Have A Commitment to the Kingdom

There is something important in the text that I want to note. Jesus just gets through exhorting those listening to not worry about what they will wear or what they will eat. He promises that God will take care of those needs, and then he says what we can do. He says the way you can work those things out is to seek first the kingdom of God. The key word there probably being the word "first". Meaning that the kingdom of God will take a place of priority in our lives. There are so many things competing for our time in the world and what is more important will always win out.

b. Have An Allegiance to the Kingdom

When we were in school we quoted, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands. One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." The pledge that we make to Christ and His kingdom should be very similar to that pledge of allegiance. The kids at Vacation Bible Schools say it this way, "I pledge Allegiance to the Christian Flag and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands, one brotherhood uniting all Christians in service and in love". We say that, but do we really mean our allegiance to the Kingdom? I really believe that the key trait to a kingdom-focused person is an unwavering allegiance to the Kingdom.

I am very proud to be an American. I think that overall we live in the best country in the entire world, however there are many times I have a problem with things that take place. I have problems with some of the moral of America, the agenda of some people against Christianity, the politics of some liberal politicians, and this list can go on and on. From time to time we may need to stand up against some of those problems, but no matter what disagreements or problems I may have I maintain my allegiance to America as a nation, and those problems would not cause me to ever want my citizenship changed because I know there is no better alternative.

The same is true in the church. We may get our feelings hurt, we may disagree with decisions made, we may not like how some things are done, but I will never compromise my allegiance to the church because there is no better alternative.

I get blown away when someone quits the church. I do not know if in my short tenure as a preacher if I have ever seen someone with a valid reason to leave a church. Listen, the church is not Burger King, where you can get it your way right

away. The church is not something you can quit just because you do not get what you want or get treated how you want. The Church is the Kingdom of God and our allegiance to that Kingdom better be firm, because the Church is the Bride of Christ, which He is returning for. If you want the blessings promised of a worry-free life, you must seek first His Kingdom, and if His kingdom is a priority for you than you will have a allegiance to that Kingdom.

IV. It Means You Will Strive to be Right with the King

The second part of Jesus' instructions are equally as important. He says to seek first His kingdom, but that wasn't all. We are to see also His righteousness.

If you remember in John the Baptist's preaching he called people to "repent for the Kingdom of God is near". Why was it such a big deal? Well, God demands people to be repentant over sin if they want to be a part of this new kingdom. Paul said in Athens, "in the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he demands all people, everywhere to repent".

We have an obligation to live lives pleasing to God

I Thessalonians 4:1

We must be in a right relationship with the King.

We need to ensure there is not sin in our life to cause us to not be right with the king

Hebrews 4:1

We need to be pleasing to God in all that we say, do and think

Psalm 19:14

We must seek the Kingdom of God in everything and above everything else

Communion -