

TO GET YOUR NEEDS MET, DON'T MAKE A PRIORITY OF GETTING YOUR NEEDS MET!

On Mother's Day, we **unofficially** started a series on **faith**. I say "unofficially" because **I didn't announce** it as a series until now—three weeks after the fact! To refresh your memories, that particular message—entitled "The Model Mom Who Made up Her Mind"—was about the Canaanite women in Matthew 15 that would not take "no" for an answer when it came to asking Jesus **to heal her daughter**. One of the things we learned from this mother was that **persistence in prayer** is an indicator of faith.

Two weeks ago, we looked at Mark 11:22 where Jesus commands us to "Have faith in God." We learned from that passage about the **Person of faith**—which, of course, is God! Our faith can't be in our **persistence**—and it can't be in our **prayers**. Our faith can't even be **in our faith!** Remember the story I told you about the woman who wrote to John R. Rice of her disappointment that God had given her **a baby boy?** **Why** was she disappointed? Because she felt she had **"perfect faith"** to get from God a baby **girl!** But faith is **not conjuring up enough** feelings to **talk yourself into believing** that you will get whatever you want! Our faith has to be **in God**—and what He tells us about Himself in His Word!

And even last week, in more of a Memorial-Day themed message, we noted that Paul was ready to die **without fear—or regrets**—because he faithfully poured out his life in living for God. Why did he do that? Because he believed there was a crown awaiting him from the Lord, the righteous judge (II Tim 4:8)!

Please take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 6; follow along as I read verses 25-34. This is a wonderful passage about how **not to worry**—and about **having faith** in your heavenly Father. I'm not going to preach on worry, though. Instead, we are going to focus on just two verses—32 and 33—especially verse 33.

Big Picture, we've seen **persistence in prayer** as an indicator of faith—and God needing to be the **Person of our faith**. This morning—from vs 33—we will be considering **a promise from God that requires faith**. How is faith connected to vs 33? Because it takes faith to believe that **the way to get your needs met is to not make a priority** of getting your needs met!

If I were to choose a life verse—a verse that I have tried to live my life by—it would be Matthew 6:33. As just mentioned, it is a wonderful promise that requires **faith**. But it requires more than faith—it also requires **commitment and obedience**. In other words, it is a **conditional** promise. That means **it doesn't happen automatically**—there are "strings" attached. It means that God **expects us to do something** before He will keep His promise!

Before we dig into what God expects us to do, let's notice first...**1. The contrast**

Vs 33 starts with the common, small, 3-letter word "but." It is a **conjunction**—meaning it connects vs 33 to vs 32—but it is a conjunction of **contrast**. That means that what vs 33 says is **going to be different**—it is going to contrast and conflict—with what vs 32 says. Let's look at two of those contrasts.

A. The people being contrasted.

Two groups of people are being referred to in verse 32. Group 1 is the **Gentiles**; we see them mentioned in the beginning of vs 32 "For after all these things do the **Gentiles** seek..."

Who are Gentiles? Sometimes the word "Gentile" is used to simply indicate that the person is not of Jewish descent. Stated another way, 'The Jews are Jews—and everyone else is a Gentile!'

That's not the only way the word is used, however. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, it can also mean "foreign nations not worshipping the true God." In other words, it has more to do with **what they believe—or don't believe**—and how they live than what **their nationality is**. We see this meaning in **Ephesians 4:17-18** "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other **Gentiles** walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸ Having the **understanding darkened**, being **alienated from the life of God** through the ignorance that is in them, because of the **blindness of their heart**:"

Here Paul plainly refers to Gentiles as those who are "alienated from the life of God"—meaning an unbeliever!

Who is Jesus contrasting **unbelievers** with? Notice the middle of Mt 6:32 “...for **your heavenly Father.**”

Jesus is differentiating between **believers and unbelievers**...between those who are born again—and those who are not...between those who are saved—and those who are lost!

B. The pursuit being contrasted.

What do the unsaved seek? What do they **pursue after**? Vs 32 “...all these things...” What things?

--According to vs 31, what they should eat...and what they should drink...and what they should wear. In other words, they pursue—they seek after—the **meeting of their needs**. They are trusting in themselves. The context shows there is more to it than that, though. What else do unbelievers do?

--Look at vs 19. They “lay up for themselves treasures upon earth.” Their pursuit...their preoccupation...their priority—is not just their needs. It is **possessions and things**.

--In the end of vs 24, Jesus says “Ye cannot serve God and mammon”—meaning “money.” The unsaved certainly do that—but sadly, many of God’s children do, too!

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it like this: “There are so many people who can be described as **spiritual worldlings**.... When it is a matter of the salvation of the soul they have the correct answer; but if you listen to their ordinary conversation about life in this world you will discover a heathen philosophy. They are worried about food and drink; they are always talking about wealth and position and their various possessions. These things really control them. They are made happy or unhappy by them; they are put out by them or pleased by them; and they are always thinking and talking about them. That is to be like the heathen, says Christ; for the Christians should not be controlled by these things.” (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, pgs 407-408)

We’ve seen **the contrast**: unbelieving Gentiles seek things—and God’s children are told not to be like them!

Next, let’s consider... **2. The command**

The contrast was in vs 32, the command is in vs 33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness;”

A. The priority of the command

The word “seek” is translated from the Greek word “*dzay-teh’o*.” It is in the **imperative**—meaning it is a **command**—and it is in the **present tense**—meaning it is something we are to be **continually doing**. It is not a one-time event—it is to be a **constant, continuous pursuit**.

What does it mean? The same thing it means in English! It means to seek **after**—or seek **for**—something. It means to **aim at and strive after** (Thayer’s). But there is an **earnestness** about it—it is an **intense pursuit**—not a half-hearted, hap-hazard one. It implies **diligence and effort**.

And it is to be our **number one** priority! “But seek ye **first**...”

--Not **second**—but first!

--Not if you **have time**—but before you make time for other things!

--Not if you **have energy**—but before you put your energy into other things.

How else do you explain “seek first”?

B. Pursuit #1—“The kingdom of God”

We are to continually be seeking first—diligently and intensely—the “kingdom of God.” But what does that mean? First, what it **doesn’t** mean! I don’t believe it means to seek to **become a child of God** and get into His family and kingdom. Why do I say that?

Because Jesus reminded them that **their heavenly Father** knew what they needed before they even asked Him! And Jesus wouldn’t say God was **their Father** if He wasn’t!

So...because they were **already in the family**—and **already in the kingdom**—Jesus was telling them **how to live as members** of the kingdom. What is the kingdom of God? You ready? Here it is: The kingdom of God is **the kingdom that God is king over!** It is the kingdom that God rules! Pretty deep, eh?

Although we may chuckle **at the simplicity** of what I just said, let’s not overlook the seriousness of God being the King of His kingdom—and you and I being **the subjects—the servants**—in that kingdom!

First, let's think about... 1) Your relationship with your King. I've already implied it, but I want to plainly say it one more time—if you are a child of God, God is your Father—and your King!

--Do you treat Him **as a King**—the One who has the **right to rule you**—or are you the ruler of your life?

--Do you want to **please** Him first—or do you want to please you first?

--Do you seek first **His will** so you can know His and do His will—or do you seek first your will?

In this very chapter—probably on the same page in most of our Bibles—we have what is called the “Lord’s Prayer” beginning in vs 9. I’m not going to read the whole thing, but notice vs 9-10 (read). Did you catch that? “Thy kingdom come. **Thy will be done in earth**, as it is in heaven.”

Think of all the people that “pray this prayer”—or at least say the words—and yet have **no desire to know or do God’s will on earth!** Some of them are not saved, of course—but some are!

Please know that I’m not trying to “be mean just to be mean,” but I’m afraid too many Christians are more concerned about pleasing their boss—or their friends—than they are about pleasing their God and King!

Second, let's consider... 2) Your responsibilities to **the Kingdom**. We have a relationship to **the King**, but we also have responsibilities to **the Kingdom**.

--Do you **represent** your King well—or do you bring shame to His name?

--Do you **promote His glory** by boasting about Him to others—or are you silent about what He has done?

--Do you try to **expand His kingdom** by being ambassadors and bringing others into it—or are you too preoccupied with other things?

We **speak up and speak out** about a lot of things—but do we speak up and speak out about God’s kingdom? If we were seeking first God’s kingdom, I believe we would be doing all these things—and more!

Paul captures the same thought in **Colossians 3:1-2**. “If ye then be risen with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **Set your affection on things above**, not on things on the earth.” Is **your affection** on your King and His kingdom?

Pursuit #1? Seek first God’s kingdom by treating Him as King in your life—and by promoting His kingdom.

Pursuit #2—the second part of the command—is found in the middle of vs 33...

C. Pursuit #2—“and His righteousness”

So what’s the difference between seeking first God’s **kingdom**—and seeking His **righteousness**? They obviously have to be similar—you can’t **make two different things a priority**—but there has to be at least a slight difference or Jesus would not have mentioned it!

Again—because Jesus is talking to those who have God as their Father—He is **not suggesting** that they need to seek the righteousness that comes **with salvation** because they already have that!

I believe **Mt 5:6** offers some insight as to what Jesus means. Feel free to turn there. Please know that Mt 5, 6, and 7 are all part of the **same sermon** given by Jesus, commonly referred to as the “Sermon on the Mount.” And since they all belong to the **same sermon**, it is not “taking it out of context” to use Mt 5:6 to help explain and understand Mt 6:33! Notice **Mt 5:6** “Blessed are they which do **hunger and thirst after righteousness**: for they shall be filled.”

I believe righteousness here is a reference to **holiness**—living a holy life. It is about becoming more and more **Christ-like**. It is **longing to be holy** because God is holy. Here are some questions to ponder:

--Do you **hate sin**? We’re supposed to! **Ps 97:10** “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil...”

And many of us do! We are angered—and at the same time, saddened—over the evils of abortion...and drag-queen story hours...and same-sex unions...and transgenderism. Let’s bring it a little closer to home, though.

--How about this question: Do you **hate sin in you**? We often times hate it in **others**—but we don’t mind it **in ourselves!** We make excuses for our foul language...and hot tempers...and being irritated with our spouses...and complaining about trials.

--We aren’t bothered that **the fruit of the Spirit**—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance—is not seen in us.

--God wants us to be holy. Are you seeking to be holy?

So what is the difference between seeking first God's kingdom—and seeking His righteousness? Seeking first God's kingdom focuses **on God and His kingdom**; seeking His righteousness focuses on **our need for His holiness** to be produced in us. The two are obviously connected because it is the will of the King that we be holy—and only the King can make us holy!

Back to Matthew 6:33...

Lastly, let's consider... **3. The consequences**

Consequences may not be the best word, but **what happens** when we obey this command? What are the **results**? We see what the results are in the end of vs 33 "...all these things shall be added unto you."

All "**what** things" will be added unto us? I don't believe it means an abundance of treasures on earth—based on what Jesus said in vs 19; and I don't believe it means a large bank account because of what Jesus says in vs 24. But it does mean that **your needs**—your food...drink...clothing...shelter...job, etc—**will be met**.

That is **a promise**—a wonderful promise—that we can claim—and God **wants us to claim!** God delights in the faith that says to Him, "Lord, as best I know I am seeking you and your kingdom first. I have a need—and you promise to meet that need—so I am expectantly looking to you to provide for that need."

About now, some of you might be thinking, "But Pastor, does it **really** work that way?" To which I can say without hesitation, **YES**—it **really does** work that way! Here's **a personal example** that some of you have heard before. Please know that I don't share this with you so you think of me as someone who has great faith.

I share it with you to demonstrate the faithfulness of our **promise-keeping God!**

Very early in our marriage—or possibly even before we were married—Louise and I had been taught the **importance of consistent, faithful giving of 10%** of our income to the church. We **made a decision to do that**—even though we certainly fit into the "poor as church mice" category. If I remember right, I was making **\$4.25 an hour** working at an Ember's Restaurant—which is like a Perkins—and Louise was going to school. We barely had enough money to pay our bills—and **tuna fish sandwiches** were a pretty regular part of our diet. But we **faithfully gave 10%** to the Lord's work—and He faithfully took care of us!

I was also involved in the **bus ministry** of our church at that time. Pretty much every Saturday—except when I had National Guard training—I would take my car and drive my bus route to visit the kids who came regularly. I also was on the **lookout for new kids** that I could invite. More than once I entertained the thought, "I really don't have the gas money to do this"—followed by the thought, "Lord, I'm seeking first your kingdom—please take care of me." And He did!

We never missed a meal...we never filed bankruptcy...and we always paid our bills! And never once—in our whole married life right up to the present—have we failed to give 10% of our income to God. Why? Because I believe God can take care of me better on 90% of my income than I can take care of me on 100%!

And He has done above and beyond what we ever imagined!

Louise and I aren't the only ones, though. My guess is that a number of you could give testimonies of God's provision in your life because you have sought Him first.

So, do you want a **guarantee** from God—**a promise** from the One who cannot lie and cannot fail—that **all your needs** will be met? If so, follow Mt 6:33! Please notice that I did not say, "Put 10% of your income in the offering plate if you want your needs to be met!"

Why did I not say that? Because seeking God first is **more than about giving!** You can reluctantly throw 10% in the offering plate each week, but not be seeking God at all! Seeking God and His kingdom first certainly includes giving—but it includes much more than that. It includes how we use **our time**...and our **talents!** It also includes what we do with our **treasures**—what God has given us—and our **temple** (meaning our bodies) ...and the **truth** (meaning God's Word).

So there you have it! Mt 6:33 is one of the ***greatest promises*** in the Bible! It is also what we call a ***paradox***—something that seems to contradict itself. ***Humanly speaking***, it doesn't make sense that the way to have your needs met is to not make a priority of getting your needs met! But that is what Jesus asks us to do! He doesn't just ask us to do it, though. He commands us! Are you obeying that command?

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First, do an honest assessment of your priorities.

--Are you seeking first God...and His kingdom...and His righteousness?

--If not, why not?

--What are you waiting for?

2. Second, are you God's child? You can't seek first God's kingdom if you aren't in it! Besides, this promise is not made to everyone—it is only for God's children!

3. Third, if God has not been your priority—or you've been slipping in that regard—make Him your priority today. When we sing in just a moment, "Take My Life and Let it Be Consecrated Lord, to Thee," make it a prayer of dedication to God.