40-06-02-First Things First
Kingdom of God, righteousness, provision, discipleship
Matthew 6:33
Many things call for our attention, but we must put first things first.

INTRODUCTION:
—Did anyone make New Year resolutions? Why are they hard to keep?
  1) Ingrained habits are hard to break (older we are, harder to let go)
  2) New habits are hard to form (but the change makes us feel younger)
  3) Everything else has our attention. (A distraction is an attraction to
     something other than where we know we need to place our attention.)
—God tells us what’s important, so that we can set priorities. When not
living by God’s priorities, distractions capture our attention and rob us
of the time and energy we need to spend on what’s really important.
—In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us what’s really important—
Mat 6:25-33 (ESV), “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what
you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not
life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air:
they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds
them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can
add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing?
Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell
you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so
clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the
oven, will he not much more clothe you. O you of little faith? Therefore do not be
anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we
wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows
that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and
all these things will be added to you.”
—The key to priority-setting is in that last sentence, v.33. HOM.idea.

I. Seek First God’s Reign in Our Lives (“the kingdom of God”)
   A. The ultimate goal in redemption is for Jesus to rule as the King of
      the entire universe, but this rule must begin in the human heart:
      1. This is central to the Gospel. Christ must be King of our lives—
         Rom 14:9. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he
         might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.
      2. His lordship in our lives must be practical, not just verbal— Mat
         7:21. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of
         heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
B. *God’s rule in our life* means the end of other rulers:

1. In *Wizard of Oz*: Dorothy melts the Witch with water, and leader of her army, instead of getting angry says, “Hail to Dorothy! The Wicked Witch is dead!”

2. In *Lordship salvation* teaching, “if He’s not Lord of all, He’s not Lord at all!” I disagree: He’s my Lord whether I obey Him perfectly or not; but I WILL obey Him perfectly by following His directive: “Seek first the kingdom [or the *rulership*] of God.”

**TRANS:** In a *Civil War movie*, Red Skelton tries to get past a battle between the Union and Confederate armies by walking down the middle of them. With one half of his uniform painted purple and the other blue, he carried the two flags sewn together. All firing ceased, until he got distracted and turned around.] [A baseball player can’t play right field, center field, and left field all at once.] Many things *call for our attention*, but we must *put first things first*.

**II. Seek First God’s Righteousness** (“*His righteousness*”)

A. The *context explains the meaning*—since Jesus told us what to, then *His teachings* are the “*righteousness*” *God wants us to put first*.

B. *God’s will* for us stands *in contrast to worldly concerns*—v.31-32, So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them*. Father knows that you need them.

1. Worrying about life’s material needs can’t meet them, but it can narrow our focus upon this world alone.

2. *God calls us to trust* in Him: He is not only the Provider of our *physical needs* in life, but the Source of our *spiritual life*.

C. *Worldly cares can lull us to sleep*, but the light of Christ can rouse us from *worldly slumber*, waking us up to “*His righteousness*”—Isa 60:1-2 (NKJV), Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.

**TRANS: The glory of God is the priority of the whole universe, and it must also be ours. Many things call for our attention, but we must put first things first.** If we put “*the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” first in our lives, everything else will falls into place. *We do not need to worry*: God *loves* and *cares* for us better than we know, and He will make sure that our needs are taken care of.

**CONCLUSION:**

–Humans busy themselves with many things in life that *call for our attention*, but we need to *put first things first*. Mat 6:33 (ESV), But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. This is God’s will for us, this is our divine calling, this is the top priority in our lives. [Frances Ridley Havergal’s poem: WHOSE I AM

Jesus, Master, whose I am, Is my daily, hourly prayer. Purchased Thine alone to be, Whom have I in heaven but Thee? By Thy blood, O spotless Lamb, Nothing else my joy can be. // Shed so willingly for me; Jesus, Master! I am Thine; Let my heart be all Thine own, Keep me faithful, keep me near, Let me live to Thee alone. // Other lords have long held sway; Let Thy presence in me shine Now, Thy name alone to bear, All my homeward way to cheer, Thy dear voice alone obey, Jesus! at Thy feet I fall, Oh, be Thou my All-in-all.]

–It’s never too late to make new resolutions, especially when they are God’s will for our lives, and we make them in prayer....