

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. [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 blue and the other gray, 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.
 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 fall 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.

III. Seek First God's Resources ("all these things will be added to you")

- A. The *main thing* is the *main thing*, and it remains the main thing, no matter what is "added to" it. [TV commercials: "Buy the *mixer*, and in *addition to it*, we'll throw in the *vegetable peeler*, the *dicer*, and the *shredder!*" The big deal is the **mixer**...the *extras* are fringe benefits of the major purchase.]
- B. Jesus calls us to a major transaction: putting God and God's will first in our lives. When we do, we'll find, *in addition*, that:
 1. God is a Provider (All creation knows it, and so should we— v.26, 28-30 (ESV), 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?
 2. God is a Promise-Keeper [The Promise-Keeper movement tried its best, but didn't always keep men from failing to measure up to their promises.] God has promised to take care of us, and based on His divine character of faithfulness, we can trust Him to keep His promises— 1 Pet 5:7 (NIV), Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

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. //	Let Thy presence in me shine
Other lords have long held sway;	All my homeward way to cheer.
Now, Thy name alone to bear,	Jesus! at Thy feet I fall,
Thy dear voice alone obey,	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....