

The Non-Negotiable Priority

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[0:00] Matthew chapter 5, and we're going to begin by reading the first 12 verses.! The disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven. For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Chapter 6, and verse 25 to the end of the chapter.

[1:41] Chapter 6, 625. Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes?

See how the lilies of the field grow? They do not labor or spin, yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

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.

[2:55] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own. Let's hear the preaching of God's word. Well, what place does God's kingdom have in your life?

We've been considering the Lord Jesus Christ as our king, a king who sets up his kingdom in the hearts of people here on this earth.

For wherever people bow to the rule and the reign of God, there is God's kingdom. Right there.

Where Jesus is trusted and obeyed, there the kingdom of God has come to earth.

And though this kingdom is already here and was here in the days of our Lord Jesus, it is not yet perfected. And so we saw last week that we are yet yearning and longing for the Lord Jesus to come back and to finish and to perfect his kingdom.

[4:24] But what about the meanwhile? What about now until he comes? What place is his kingdom to have in our lives?

Our king lays out our duty very clearly in Matthew 6 and verse 33 when he says, Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Matthew Henry says, This is the sum and substance of your duty. This pretty much wraps it all up. What am I to be about with this life?

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Now, these words are found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. And so we had some reading from this sermon.

It's a sermon that's called the King's Manifesto because it is the king speaking. And he's speaking about his kingdom, giving important lessons about the kingdom of God.

[5 : 25] And here he starts out in his sermon by describing the citizens of the kingdom. What are they like? Who belongs to the kingdom of God? And he describes them with these beatitudes. And then he sets forth the righteous laws of the kingdom.

Every king has a law. What are the laws of the kingdom? And he sets forth these laws. And then his sermon ends with an urgent command to enter the kingdom.

And we enter this kingdom through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, it's in this great sermon on the kingdom that our king says to us, Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

May these words come to us with fresh power this morning and further shape our lives to bring it in line with our king's words.

So we've seen in our study of Jesus, our king, all that he as king does for us, his people. Now the question is, what is our response to be to him?

[6 : 28] Yes, he serves us as our king. He died for us. He lives for us. He rules over us and defends us. Now what is our response to him and his kingdom to be?

Well, first of all, we're to seek it. Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Seek. Now that's a strong word in the original language.

It means to strive earnestly. It means to doggedly pursue. Maybe you've seen a dog on the scent of a rabbit. And it's not a casual thing. He's all after the rabbit.

That's the idea behind this word seek. And it becomes clearer, the meaning of this word seek, when we see it, the same word is used of the pagans in verse 32.

Now, pagans are simply unbelievers, people without God. And verse 31 says, So do not worry, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear?

[7 : 31] For the pagans run after. There's our word. Seek. Same word. The pagans run after all these things.

But you seek the kingdom of God. You run after the kingdom of God. They run after that. You run after this.

Same word. Run after. As seek. And so the idea becomes clear to us that unbelieving people, people without God, do not seek the kingdom of God.

Rather, they're pursuing material things. Things to eat and drink and wear. Position and power and possessions and pleasures of the earth.

And they do so for a good reason. That's all they've got. They have no assurance of life after death.

[8 : 29] And so if tomorrow we die, we'd better get after it now. You only go around once, so you better go with all the gusto. Let us eat and drink and be merry. Because tomorrow we die.

And so they seek after the things of this earth because they have no better things to seek after. No higher things to live for than themselves and the present.

Furthermore, the man without God runs after these things as his pursuit in life because he doesn't have a heavenly father to take care and provide for these things. He's all on his own.

It's all up to him to care for himself. So he makes it his number one business in life to make sure that I have plenty to eat and drink and wear and to take care of my retirement and take care of all my desires.

You see, if I don't do it, nobody else will. And so he's all worried about these things because he has no heavenly father to provide for him.

[9 : 34] So the pagan is all about these things, Jesus says. They run after them. It defines their life. It's not a casual thing with them.

It's their aim, their goal. They're engrossed in the pursuit. They're preoccupied with getting these things. Happy when they have them, sad when they don't. But you, verse 33, but you, you citizens of the king, you're not to be like that.

Something else is to be occupying your attention. You do have better things to run after. Eternal things, spiritual things. Like what?

Like the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The one thing needful. The most important thing. So instead of running after the things of earth like unbelievers, you're to run after the kingdom of God and his righteousness. That's the idea then of seeking the kingdom of God.

[10 : 40] Run after it. Let it define your life. Make it your preoccupation in the way that a worldling makes earthly things, his preoccupying pursuit.

And the word is in the present tense. Seek continually. Always be absorbed in this search. Never get off the trail. Keep the scent of the kingdom of God always before you.

And run after it. I wonder, would anyone conclude from following you around for a week that the kingdom of God was your preoccupation in life?

Does the kingdom of God monopolize your life in the way that the things of earth monopolizes a pagan's life? This is what you are all about.

When I think of you, I think of the kingdom of God. Seek the kingdom of God, we're told.

[11:48] Seek to enter it yourselves. Be sure that you possess the kingdom of God. Let it permeate your heart and life so that God rules in every aspect of your heart and being.

And then seek the advance of the kingdom to others. That they too might come under the kind rule of King Jesus before it's eternally too late.

Seek the kingdom of God. Secondly, notice we're to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And his righteousness.

Now this qualifying phrase is significant because it throws light on God's kingdom and what it is that we are to seek. It informs us that the kingdom of God is a righteous kingdom.

And it is present wherever God's righteous rule is submitted to in the hearts and lives of his people. And that rule of Christ is a rule in righteousness.

[12:54] Paul says in Romans 14, 17, For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but a matter of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

God's kingdom is a matter of righteousness. And we are to seek after that righteousness. Not only the perfect righteousness of Christ put to our account in heaven.

Yes, we seek after that and we seek that by faith in Jesus alone. And when by faith we trust in Jesus, all his righteousness in heaven on the account of heaven is put to our account in heaven.

Surely we must seek that righteousness first. But we must also seek righteous living here and now, in this world, to conform our lives to his righteous laws.

And where there's one, there's always the other. When we are united by faith to Jesus Christ, the result is always that his righteousness in heaven is put to our account.

[14:04] So it makes us right with God. But on earth, the result is that his holy and righteous spirit comes to live in us and to create our hearts and lives after his righteousness.

What is this righteousness of God's kingdom that we're to seek? Notice it's his righteousness. It's his very own personal righteousness. It's an attribute of God. It's his very own righteousness.

He himself in his righteousness, his rightness is the standard for everything in his kingdom. So what we seek is a life that lines up with his righteousness, with him, a life that is right in his eyes, a holy, righteous life of loving God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength and loving our neighbor with the same intensity that we love ourselves.

That's the righteousness that we seek. Now what does this righteous life in the kingdom of God look like? Well, Jesus spells it out in his kingdom sermon on the mountain.

First he says this righteousness is marked by eight attitudes. We call them the B attitudes. And notice in verse 6 of chapter 5 of Matthew, It's a life of hungering and thirsting.

[15:31] For what? For righteousness. For righteousness. Now you all know what it is to be hungry and to be thirsty.

You know that it's an unsatisfied longing inside. It's a void that's crying out for filling and it's so strong that you'd actually feel it.

It's something of a pain, a discomfort that you want to see that void filled. You are hungering and thirsting. And what the citizens of the kingdom are hungering and thirsting for is his righteousness.

They want to be like him. They want to be like Jesus. Righteous in their thoughts, their desires, their will, their words, their ways. And it is a hunger with them.

They long to be dominated by the righteousness of God. It's not something that they're satisfied with. Anything lasts. They're hungry. They've got to have it.

[16:38] We must see God's rule, his righteous rule, make its way into every nook and cranny of our hearts and our lives.

righteousness. We're hungry for righteousness. Now. And we long for the day when Jesus comes back and makes a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness, where it will be perfect righteousness.

We're hungry. We're thirsty for that. And it's a life of mourning for our lack of righteousness. Chapter 5 and verse 4.

Blessed are those who mourn. You see, our sins are not something that we are content with. They bother us. They grieve us. They send us, confessing our unrighteousness to God. And because he has promised that if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[17:41] Yes, the kingdom is about righteousness, hungering for it, mourning our lack of conformity to it. And it's about purity of heart.

Verse 8. This is a righteousness that extends beyond just outward externals to the very desires of our heart. And notice it's a life of being persecuted because of righteousness.

Verse 10. You see, righteousness is the theme of this kingdom passage because it is a righteous kingdom and we seek the kingdom and his righteousness.

And we're persecuted because of righteousness because the world we live in is an unrighteous world. And it hates the righteousness of God's kingdom. It hates the righteous laws of God that we are seeking to live by.

And so it brings persecution because of righteousness. And it's this very righteous character shown in the first eight Beatitudes that makes our lives the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

[18:45] And the righteousness of God's kingdom is then further spelled out, not only in the Beatitudes, but then in God's righteous commandments as this sermon goes on, Matthew 5 through 7.

What is this righteousness in God's kingdom? It's a life of obedience to the king's righteous laws.

And he tells us in chapter 5, verses 17 through 20, that those Old Testament moral laws that God gave to his Old Testament kingdom are still enforced in the new covenant kingdom.

And he says, those who practice and teach these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 519. And then Jesus starts quoting a sampling of these moral laws that were given in the Old Testament that are still enforced in the New Testament.

And he gives the law, and then he gives its true interpretation because the Pharisees and scribes had twisted the interpretation on the law. They had put the commandment, which was claiming something that is above us by nature, and they had put it down so low that they could step over it without any new hearts, without the help of the Holy Spirit.

They made it manageable. They made it doable. So yeah, all I have to do to not break the sixth commandment is to keep a knife out of my neighbor's back. Yeah, I can handle that one.

[20:11] And Jesus says, no, that's not the righteousness of my kingdom. My righteousness demands that you not have hatred in your heart.

That is murder of the heart. And you break the sixth commandment without a knife, if in the heart you hate your brother. And those commands make demands upon the very desires of our heart. And adultery is not just going to bed with your neighbor's wife, but it's looking at her with lust in your heart. You see, the righteousness of the kingdom of God is the law of God, but with the interpretation of God, with it.

It makes demands of our hearts. It demands that we cut off the occasions of sin, things that cause us to sin.

It demands that we keep our words, that our yes mean yes, and our no means no. It demands that we're faithful to our marriage vows. It demands that we love our enemies, not just those who love us.

[21:26] It demands that we get rid of a vengeful spirit and we turn the other cheek. That we do good in return for evil, receive that we go the second mile with people.

This is the righteousness of the kingdom embodied in the king's righteous laws. And this is what we seek. It's his righteousness, not the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

His only concern was outward acts of righteousness, who were satisfied merely to do those outward acts of righteousness just so other people could see.

And as long as other people saw me acting righteous, it didn't matter to them whether they really were righteous. It didn't matter what God sees when he looks into the heart behind the action.

They're happy to have people see them praying, giving, fasting, doing their religion, so that they could see. And Jesus says, no, no, that's not the righteousness of this kingdom.

[22:30] In fact, he says, you may find it hard to believe, but I tell you the truth, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

The righteousness of my kingdom works from the inside out. This righteousness of the kingdom is seen in the laws that the king gives, and it's the rule by which he will judge at the last day.

For not everyone, our king says, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, not just who professes that I'm their Lord and king, not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven and who has expressed his will, in his holy, righteous laws.

So seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. You see, the kingdom has citizens that have had their hearts changed, that once wanted to go our way, and we didn't care about God's laws because our desires were this way.

And where the two conflicted, we went our way. As long as God's laws are things that we didn't mind doing, well, then we'd give in and we'd do it. But when there's conflict, we turned each to our own way and did not go God's way.

[23 : 58] But these, the citizens of the kingdom have been born again. They have a new heart. The spirit of God lives in them so that now they do the will of their heavenly father. They obey the righteous commands of their king.

They're not like that man building on the sand who hears the words of Jesus and does not put them into practice. But they're like the man who's building his house upon the rock.

And when they hear the words of Jesus, it changes the way they live. It changes the way they think, their attitudes, their behavior, their actions.

Nothing's the same once the king has spoken. That's their one critical concern. What does our king say? That's what we are to continually be running after, seeking with all diligence by the power of God's spirit who lives within.

Are you seeking God's kingdom and righteousness? Are you seeking his rule to increase in your heart, in your family, in your church, in your school, your workplace, your community, your nation, seeking God's kingdom and righteousness to fill the earth?

[25 : 20] Now, if that's all this text said, it would be plenty for us to deal with, wouldn't it? I've got enough with two points to go home and say, wow, what a challenge from our king.

What a clarion call to seek his kingdom and righteousness. But you do see, don't you, in verse 33 of chapter 6, that it demands even more because the passage does not just say seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

It says, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Kids, you know what first means.

It means in front of all the rest, doesn't it? I got first. It doesn't mean you were second, weren't third, fourth. You were the lead. Everything, everyone was beneath or behind you.

It's a word of priority, isn't it? The word first. In other words, the kingdom of God and his righteousness cannot be a side issue with you.

[26 : 33] It can't be something that dwells in the outskirts of our lives, something that we give a day, a couple hours a week to. and it can't be that.

Not in the kingdom of God. Rather, God's kingdom and righteousness is to be the great priority of our lives.

The non-negotiable priority. You know what it is to negotiate. Well, I guess if you do this, I'll do that. There's no negotiating with this priority. It's the uncompromised priority.

It's the stubborn priority of God's kingdom where the interest of the kingdom of God and his righteousness are jealously guarded against every intruder to keep them in the first place.

Now, it's no small thing to keep the main thing the main thing, to keep first things first. And in many ways, this idea summarizes the battle of the Christian life.

[27 : 40] What is your great battle in the Christian life? Is it not to keep the first things first? Every day, you've got a battle to keep that which is most important most important.

To keep the king and his kingdom first in your life. Now, what makes it so hard? Why is that a struggle for us? Our king laid down his life and died for us. Why is it so hard to keep him and his kingdom first place in our lives?

Well, you've got three enemies working against you. There's the devil and his crew and they work hard to make you neglect the king and his kingdom. To divert your attention to other things, indeed, anything but God's kingdom and righteousness.

And so we have to sing as we do from time to time. And confessing our sins that the things of earth have filled our thoughts and trifles of the passing hour.

Why haven't we been more about God's king? Because the things of earth have filled our thoughts like the pagans. Trifles of the passing hour.

[28:53] Innocent things, perhaps, but things that won't mean a hill of beans after we die. And the devil's not particular, is he?

He'll use anything, even good things, to keep you from the best thing. God's kingdom. God's righteousness. And so he brings personalized, tailor-made temptations that appeal to you.

And he brings tailor-made temptations to me. Look at this to take my eyes off of that.

Have you identified the things that the devil is tempting you with to pull your attention away from the kingdom of God? Are you aware of his schemes, his strategies?

And then there's the world. If the devil were our only foe, he'd be enough, for on earth it's not as equal as we sang, but there's the world, the whole sum total of unbelieving thought working together, opposed to Christ's kingdom like the devil himself.

[30:09] And that world is ever putting before you a virtual vanity fair of alternative things to capture your attention, to dazzle you, to wow you, to pull you off the great priority of God's kingdom.

And so often what I find, it's not just one thing, but it's the conglomeration of many lesser things that become more important and crowd out the kingdom in my life.

So it's not just one thing, but it's this, that, and the other. All that the world has to offer to us, crying out loud, you can get, it seems, thousands of channels to watch.

Surely there's something there to watch more important than seeking God's kingdom. There's so much that the world is holding out to us to be involved in.

Again, innocent things often, lesser things that together become more important than the great priority of the kingdom.

[31:17] So rise up, O church of Christ. Have done with lesser things. Give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the king of kings.

And then there's our flesh. Not only the devil, the world around us, but there's the flesh within. That living principle of inward opposition to Christ and his kingdom. And I've told you before, dear Christians, and I'll tell you again, there is a part of you, inside of you, it's called the flesh, that still lives.

And it is allergic to the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And it would rather seek, you seek anything but the kingdom of God.

And that's why when you would do good, evil is present with you. It's why when kingdom concerns are presented, it always offers you a hundred other things to do instead.

urges you to fall in with one of the devil's temptations or one of the world's offers. And so I say, your threefold enemy of the world, the flesh, and the devil ensures that it will only be by all-out war that you keep first the kingdom of God in your heart and life.

[32:40] Are there things that you have allowed to crowd and clutter your life such that God's kingdom has been bounced ever so imperceptibly to second and third and fourth place in your life?

To where God's kingdom concerns have been forced to the back seat, put on the back burner of your life? You must identify those lesser things that are crowding out the kingdom.

That's where seeking first the kingdom of God begins, by identifying what are the threats to that reality in my life? And then being willing once we've identified them to get out the knife and do the painful work of cutting off hands and feet and eyes, anything that is keeping us from the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Those things that are dear to us as hands and feet and eyes. Of course, He's not talking that we literally do that, but He is saying that's the kind of surgery we must do with anything that would bump the kingdom from first place.

There's a death that must be died to lesser things if the main thing is to stay the main thing. So whenever there's a competing desire, everything else must take a subordinate place to the kingdom.

[34:07] to the back of the bus with you, we must say to these other things. You don't belong up here. This is priority, top priority here, kingdom stuff.

Get to the back. And so brothers and sisters, protect your schedules from lesser things that rob you of the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Guard your hearts. Maintain the priority of God's kingdom and righteousness. One of the ways we seek God's kingdom and righteousness is on our knees. It's by praying, your kingdom come, your

will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus is telling us in this very sermon, that's how we seek the kingdom. We pray for it to come. And if I want the kingdom of God to come to my heart, then I've got to ask, Lord, help me to cut out everything else that's competing with that kingdom and to put it down and to put your kingdom up. And Lord, I'm concerned about other people that they're not entering the kingdom and they don't care about the kingdom. But Lord, they've got to be born again or they will never see much less enter the kingdom of God.

[35 : 21] So Lord, in praying your kingdom come, I'm asking you to bring to birth dead sinners. Make their hearts alive. Lord, if you don't, then they could be walking along and see the kingdom of God and they'll stumble over it and see no value in it.

But if you give them a new heart, when they see the kingdom of God, they will sell everything they have just to have the treasure of the kingdom of God and the King, Jesus. Oh, give them new birth. I'm praying for your kingdom to advance in my heart, in the lives of others, to the ends of the earth. And even in praying for his kingdom to come, we're to maintain the priority of God's kingdom and righteousness.

In our prayer life, kingdom concerns are to be first. Isn't that what our word says in his prayer that he's teaching us to pray? When you pray, say our Father who art in heaven.

And where does the prayer begin? Where do the petitions begin? With me or with him and his kingdom? With him and his kingdom. May your name be hallowed. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[36 : 34] And having sought first the kingdom of God. And Father, you know that I'm dependent on you. So give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us and protect us. But it's you first. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Do you pray for the advance of God's kingdom and righteousness?

Do you pray for it over in Nepal that in these critical days the love and provision and kindness of God would be poured out on needy sinners and they would come to learn about Jesus Christ and be saved?

You say, I've never met those people. You don't have to have met them. Does the king mean anything to you? Does his kingdom? Then you can pray. You can pray for people you never met. seeking first the kingdom on our knees.

As I've observed my own heart in this, you know what I found? I found that the secret to keeping God's kingdom first in my life is to keep the king first in my heart.

[37 : 44] It seems like the one follows the other in my life. When my love is set upon the king within his kingdom is all important to me.

But when love for Christ wanes and other things have my heart and affections it seems that his kingdom has less of my attention as well.

As your relationship with Christ the king is maintained it has an amazing way of sorting out priorities and keeping the things that are dear to him top priority with you.

That in all things he might have the preeminence. He Christ the preeminence and so he comes seeking our first love.

I have something against you John you've left your first love I deserve the first place. And you see when we give to Christ the first place in our hearts well then he has the first fruits of our money and the first fruits of our time and the first day of the week that he calls his.

[39 : 03] He has the his kingdom has the first concern of my life all seven days of the week when he is kept first. You see as we focus on him what do we see?

we see that no one ever sought first the kingdom of God like Jesus did. Do you realize that that passion for the kingdom of God and his righteousness brought the eternal son of God out of heaven and into the womb of the virgin Mary?

That's why he came to earth because first place to him was God's kingdom and righteousness. Now we find him as a 12 year old boy in the temple in Jerusalem and already this passion for the kingdom of God has dawned on his consciousness as a 12 year old boy and he's been lost for three days from his parents and they come back worried and his mother said son why have you done this to us?

They find him in the temple we've been searching for you and the 12 year old Jesus says why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be about my father's business?

He came to seek first father's business the kingdom of God and his righteousness that brought him into the world and it's going to bring him back a second time to finish that kingdom no one ever prayed to the father more heartily than he did your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven and no one was ready to die to other things in his life like Jesus was because in order to bring God's kingdom and rule to earth as it is in heaven it would mean him going to the cross and standing as the great substitute of his people and taking all the wrath of God all the punishment that his people's sins deserve poured out upon him he would pay dearly for what he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane not my will but yours be done not my kingdom but your kingdom come your will be done it took him to the cross that there might even be such a thing as a kingdom of God on earth made up of redeemed sinners like you and me sins forgiven loved for

[41:34] Jesus sake made a citizen of heaven a son of God and it's as this king reigns in our hearts and he captures our love that his agenda becomes ours what's first with him naturally will become more first with us as in our hearts we set apart Jesus as Lord it's not that we just have what we eat and drink and wear and school and work and recreation and hobbies and over here's Jesus as well it's not what it means to set apart Christ as Lord he's got one piece of the pie it's to set him apart from all the rest to take him out of the pie and to put him over it and say Lord Jesus what's important to you is more important and must dominate every slice of the pie in my life it's then when he's first that we do seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness then we ask Lord how can

I best use my time to advance the kingdom how can this money this house this these possessions my abilities my job how can it best serve the interests of your kingdom kingdom and we don't want to let any area of our lives exist in isolation from the kingdom of God.

We want every nook and cranny of our lives to bear the stamp, your kingdom first, your kingdom come. So you're at work. And of course you're there to provide for yourselves and your family, food and clothing and drink and house and all the rest.

But first and foremost, you are there on business for the king. You're there to seek first the kingdom of God. You're there to bring God's kingdom to earth at that job, in that place, to interact with people, your boss, your fellow workers, customers, whoever it is that is there at your work.

You're there to treat them according to the righteous laws of the kingdom. You're there to bring the kingdom of God to that place. That's your first and foremost business, to seek first the kingdom.

[43:48] So you're at the park. And yes, you're there to unwind and to recreate and rest and to enjoy all things that God has given you so richly to enjoy. But you are there first and foremost as a representative of the king to seek first his kingdom.

Yes, there. To bring the kingdom of God to all that you do, to your hobbies, to all your pursuits. Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, this is always the highest priority.

God's kingdom and his righteousness. I wonder if we've thought sufficiently how the kingdom of God and his righteousness must affect every area of our lives.

It's our non-negotiable priority. So when the king is front and center of your heart, then his kingdom is kept front and center in your life.

And if you ever think that seeking God's kingdom and righteousness first is costing you too dearly, then remember it costs your king everything to bring you into this kingdom and to give you a reserved place in that kingdom that he is bringing at his return.

[45:03] And he did not begrudgingly pay the price to purchase you, who for the joy set before him endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God where he now reigns and rejoices to have you in his kingdom.

This is the one who calls us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. So rise up, O church of Christ. Have done with lesser things.

Give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the king of kings. And young people, how many of you are living with the thought that someday I'll get around to seeking the kingdom of God?

I believe I know several young people like that here. You know, I want to experience this first. I want to do that first.

And you've missed the first word. Seek first the kingdom of God. It goes for young and old.

[46:09] It means the strength of your youth. The first part of your life. What you are and have right now. First given to serve Christ the king and his purposes.

Whatever you want, O king, you must be first. Is that controlling who you're looking at as a future mate? Will he or she enable me to advance the kingdom of God?

Or will they be a hindrance to me, to the kingdom's righteousness and the kingdom's purposes? Does that job...

What are the things by which you evaluate that future job? Well, the pay better be good. And it better be in a good climate.

And maybe there ought to be a good church there too. No, not three. Not three. Not third place. First place.

[47 : 10] You seek a job where there is an outpost of the kingdom of heaven. A church of Jesus Christ. Where you can worship and serve your king. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Give him your first thoughts. Your first years. Your best years. Child of the kingdom, seek first my kingdom and righteousness.

And if the kingdom of God is worth anything, it's worth everything. And that's why he presses us. He knows what it is worth.

And presses us to seek it. And so every day I need to be saved from my little myopic world of a life that revolves around me, myself, and mine. And what a blessing to be saved from such puny things and to be brought into the grand orbit of the greatest thing to live for, the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Daily I must lose my life that I might truly find it in him. And so it means a death to the pursuit of my kingdom. If I am to pursue his.

[48 : 19] He must increase. I must decrease. Oh, to be caught up in the big program. To die daily to the pathetic substitutes. To seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Is that your need? It's mine. Let's pray for each other. And let us know as we pray that this is a prayer that our king loves to answer. For he himself taught us to pray.

Your kingdom come. He himself told us to seek first his kingdom and righteousness. Notice there's a promise attached.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And here's the promise. All these things will be added to you as well. Wow. You mean if I seek first God's kingdom and righteousness.

That he will add to me what I must eat and drink and wear. And the material needs of my. That's what he's saying to us.

[49 : 25] You see to be preoccupied and worried about material things is not only distracting and dishonoring. It is unnecessary. Because we have a father in heaven who knows what we have need of.

Amen. And so as you make his kingdom and righteousness your preoccupied priority. He makes your needs.

His care. His concern. And so Solomon. Has got an opportunity to choose anything he wants. And God will give it to him. And he says Lord I find myself as the newly installed king of your kingdom. And I'm here to rule for you. I need wisdom.

If I'm to rule in righteousness. Give me wisdom. God was so pleased with that request that he gave what he'd asked. And he added all the other things to him.

[50 : 22] Riches and honor and long life. And now there's a little woman. A little widow woman of Zarephath. And she's out collecting sticks.

And she's gathering them together. To start a fire and to bake what little provision she has left for her and her son. And they will eat and they will die.

Because they're in the midst of famine. The prophet of God's kingdom. Steps up and says.

Make a little cake for me. First. And your jar of oil. Your jar of flour and your jug of oil will never run out until it rains again.

You say. Seek first the kingdom of God. And all these other things will be added to you as well. And that's exactly what happened. And then there was a church in Philippi. And there. It was a group of people who had come to put their trust in Jesus Christ.

[51 : 27] And they found all their sins forgiven. And all their guilt gone. And they were so thankful. And so happy for the gospel of the kingdom of God. That they had heard and believed. That they said to Paul. Well we want you to take this gospel.

And go preach it every hour. In other places. That people like us. Who are just ignoring God. And living for ourselves. That they might hear the best news of sins forgiven. So here.

Here's some of our hard earned money. Here's Lydia. That woman. The seller of purple. And she's giving out of her earnings. And there's that jailer. Who was converted that night of the earthquake. In Philippi. And he's in the congregation. And he's giving money. So that the gospel of the kingdom of God. Can be preached elsewhere by Paul. And Paul writes back to these people.

The church at Philippi. And he says. Now because you put Christ's kingdom first. My God. Will supply all your needs. According to his riches and glory.

[52:23] By Christ Jesus. This is our king. Isn't he gracious? He calls on us to seek first his kingdom and righteousness. And he says. You're safe to do that.

Oh but who? You seek first the kingdom of God. And your right. His righteousness. And I will add all these other things. Does that mean we're negligent? We don't go to. Of course not.

But that does not define us. We're not running after it. That's not our life. That's not first. That's a far second or third. But there's one thing that defines us.

And it's the kingdom of our God and his righteousness. And it's that gracious king who rules over it all. Let's pray.

Father in heaven. Thank you for giving us your son. Thank you that you have rescued us from the kingdom of darkness. And brought us into the kingdom of the son you love.

[53:23] Lord Jesus what a gracious king you are. To die for us. To now live for us. We thank you.

And we're ashamed Lord that there are so many lesser things that often crowd out you and your kingdom. Forgive us. And help us. Help us to guard against every intruder.

To keep you and the concerns of your kingdom as the non-negotiable priority of our life. Today and every day that you give us here.

Thank you for your graciousness. The things you've promised to do for us. All that you are for your people. Extend your kingdom in our own hearts.

Don't let us think of and doing anything in our lives without it being attached to the concerns of your kingdom. And bring others who are here into the kingdom by faith in Jesus today.

[54:31] We ask in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen.