

Seek First The Kingdom Of God

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

How badly do you want to go to heaven? Do you want it more than anything else? I know you do. We would all like to know the sure way to accomplish that goal. I do not want to oversimplify things. However, I believe I can show you a verse that will give us the sure way to enter heaven. If we will follow this one verse, everything else will fall into place naturally and heaven will be given to us as God promised. The verse is **Matthew 6:33**. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." When all is said and done, if we make this verse our constant guide, we will go to heaven and God will take care of us here also. Examine what this verse means.

Discussion:

I. "Seek"

- A. This word is active, not passive, and is also used to describe the woman in **Luke 15:8**, who searched diligently until she found her missing coin. We must seek actively and diligently.
- B. Jesus had already taught that we should hunger and thirst for righteousness (**Matthew 5:6**). We are to desire, crave and long for the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are to be like the song that we sing, taken from **Psalms 42:1**, longing for the Lord and His will like a deer panting for water. Imagine yourself coming home from a long day at work or school in which you had to skip lunch. As soon as you got home and were about to eat, an emergency came up. Finally, you get back home late in the evening, what are you searching for? Food. That is the starving desire with which we should pursue God's kingdom and righteousness.
- C. The fact that Jesus tells us to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness implies some very important concepts. First, we do not already have it. We are not at the goal yet. We must keep progressing, growing and improving. Second, we must be looking for God's kingdom and righteousness. We will not stumble across it accidentally the way we may stumble across a \$20 bill some one accidentally dropped. Third, God's kingdom and righteousness take work. This is not a natural or passive thing. You do not fall into God's kingdom and righteousness the way you fall into bed. We must seek God's kingdom and righteousness.

II. "The kingdom of God and His righteousness"

- A. Jesus is referring back to the theme of His sermon (**Matthew 5:20**). He said that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will "by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." As the scribes and Pharisees promoted a physical kingdom that would conquer the Romans, they lived an outward righteousness that focused on trivial rituals but neglected the weighty matters of God's will for them (**Matthew 23:23-28**). Instead of seeking their kingdom and righteousness, we must seek God's kingdom and righteousness.
- B. Jesus helps us understand the kingdom of God in **Luke 17:20-21** as He explained to the Pharisees that the kingdom of God would not come with observation. It would come in the hearts of men, "the kingdom of God is within you." The Pharisees were looking for a physical, earthly, national kingdom which ruled over the territory of cities, countries and continents. But, Jesus said God's kingdom is different. It is not of this world (**John 18:36**). The territory that God rules is the hearts of men. Seeking the kingdom of God then, in this context, means seeking God's rule over my life. If God were living my life, what would He do?
- C. Seeking God's righteousness is clarified by Paul in **Philippians 3:9**. The righteousness of God is not our own righteousness, but rather the righteousness that comes through faith. Faith here is not a mental assent, but an absolute surrender. Having God's righteousness comes from surrendering to God's will. If God says it works in a certain way, then that is the way it works. If He tells me how to deal with other people, that is what I will do. If He tells me how to live at home, on the job, at school, etc., I will live His way, no matter what anyone else thinks about it.
- D. These two concepts of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness are summed up in **Galatians 2:20**. My life is not mine. Jesus is on the throne in my life. He governs my choices. He is living through me. I let that happen because I have surrendered myself to Him in faith, believing at every level that God's way is best, despite what my friends, family or foes think.

III. "First"

- A. The most challenging part of this verse is that Jesus commands us to seek God's kingdom and righteousness first. Seeking God's kingdom and righteousness should be the central governing factor in all we do. In every choice we make, our first thought should be what is God's rule on this? If I really believed God and His promises, how would I behave or act? What choice would I make? If God's kingdom were really the most important thing to me, what would I do here? This concept is illustrated by Mary and Martha in **Luke 10:38-42**. Martha was worried by many things. Mary was focused on the one important thing—God's kingdom and righteousness. Jesus said that Mary's choice would not be taken away from her.
- B. Jesus sets seeking first God's kingdom and righteousness in contrast with the Gentiles who seek after clothing, food and riches. Their decisions are made based on material goods. They ask what will give them the highest financial return. They wonder how they can make more money. They make decisions based on what will provide financial security over the long haul. We are different. We want to know what will grant us God's kingdom and righteousness.
- C. There will be some choices in which more than one option meets the standard of God's kingdom and righteousness. In those cases, then you can allow other standards to help you make a decision. For instance, consider your career choice. There are many career options that fit in with seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. God does not care which one of those options you choose. Feel free to follow your hearts desire based on whatever standards you choose (**Ecclesiastes 11:9**), so long as they also fit in with seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- D. Many of the hard questions we must answer individually are answered in this verse. We ask, "When is it forsaking the assembly?" It is forsaking when we are not seeking first God's kingdom and righteousness. "When is a dress too short or a shirt too tight?" When our apparel is not motivated by seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. I do not want to overstate the case, but I believe that every question we have to ask about crossing lines is answered by this verse. We have crossed the line when our choices are not motivated by seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

IV. "And all these things will be added to you."

- A. If we seek God's things first, He will provide our physical needs. We are to be content with that provision (**I Timothy 6:8**), remembering that we brought nothing into this world and will take nothing out. Spending our days fretting over these things will not help us in eternity.
- B. These are secondary benefits to serving the Lord. As Jesus taught in **Matthew 19:29**, when we forsake all in this life to serve God, we will actually receive a hundredfold, plus eternal life. God will take care of us. That does not mean we will be wealthy, though most of us, by the standard presented in **I Timothy 6:8**, are extremely wealthy. But whatever we have, God has provided and we will be thankful, no matter how we compare to others whom God has also blessed.
- C. When I spend my life seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God will add all these other things to me. But it does not work the other way. If I spend my life seeking first financial security, physical health, emotional well-being, personal happiness and pleasure, God will not add His kingdom and righteousness to me. We must ask what Jesus asked in **Matthew 16:26**. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, but lose his soul?
- D. Jesus concludes in **Matthew 6:34** that we should not be worried about tomorrow. That is typically the worry for those who seek first all those other things. Most of us have clothes and food today. We worry about tomorrow and the next day and next year. We worry about retirement. Jesus said instead of seeking first physical and financial security for the years to come, seek first God's kingdom and righteousness today—God will take care of us if we do. If we do not seek first His kingdom and righteousness, then all those other things will not help us a bit when our souls are required of us (**Luke 12:16-21**).

Conclusion:

Do you really want to go to heaven? The only way is to seek it consistently and constantly by making every choice based on **Matthew 6:33**—"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."