

Striving for the Right Kingdom

*Using Earthly Possessions to
Accomplish Heaven's Purposes*

Stewardship Series

PBC 2024

Texts: Matthew 6:19-34; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Last January, the elders and spiritual leaders deemed it a wise and useful thing for our church to receive instruction from God's Word about the gracious opportunity and spiritual responsibility God has set before us to be people whose lives are marked by grace-enabled, radical generosity.

We took four Sundays to explore this topic from God's Word and over the course of this last year, it has been evident to all of us that not only was this a needful thing for our congregation, God enabled us to receive this encouragement from His Word and to act in faith to deepen our commitment to be radically generous with resources He had or would supply. Here is what happened – He supplied just as He promised, and you were radically generous just as you committed! And as elders we want to do three things:

1. We want to thank God for His faithfulness.
2. We want to thank God for helping us be radically generous.
3. We want to ask God to continue to grow us in this important area through His Word.

To that end, the elders believe our congregation should devote this Sunday and next to listening carefully, understanding accurately, and applying personally what Jesus meant when He said, *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33).*

If we are going to really understand what Jesus meant when He exhorted His followers to "***seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness***" (Matt. 6:33), we must let Matthew put this statement in the larger context of the story God inspired him to tell the world about Jesus and the stunning nature of the Kingdom He came to establish.

The Context Surrounding the Statement

- Jesus' statement in Matt. 6:33 did not come as an isolated exhortation in a long list of suggestions, commands, applications, or exhortations Jesus gave His followers in order that they might have a better life as citizens of His kingdom than what they would have as citizens of the dark kingdoms of the world.
- The statement was climactic – it came as the focal point of the very first sermon Jesus preached in His public ministry. And it came at the end of a series of important events Matthew has called to our attention:

1. The Joy-Filled Arrival of Messiah (Matt. 1-2)

2. The Divine Affirmation of His Ministry (Matt. 3-4)

3. The Stunning Exhortation of His Preaching (Matt. 5-7)

What will be required of us if we take Jesus' words seriously? What will we have to do if we truly want to make God's Kingdom and His righteousness our primary focus and our chief pursuit? According to Jesus, we will need to embrace and display four radical commitments found in our text this morning:

I. Unqualified Loyalty and Allegiance to the Values of His Kingdom (6:19-21):

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- To make this point, Jesus teaches about two kinds of treasures that are stored up to be used for two different kingdoms.

A. *The Exhortation:* *Do not strive to treasure up for yourselves treasure on earth; instead strive to treasure up for yourselves treasure in heaven!*

B. *The Reason:* *where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal.*

C. *The Revelation:* *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

II. Unadulterated Love and Undivided Affection for the Lord of This Kingdom (6:22-24):

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

A. Seeking God’s Kingdom First Demands Unadulterated Love Cultivated by Unclouded Vision (6:22-23).

B. Seeking God’s Kingdom First Demands Undivided Affection Cultivated by Wholehearted Devotion (6:24).

Which brings us to the third commitment Jesus demands we cultivate and display as citizens of His kingdom:

III. Unshakeable Confidence in the Goodness of God toward His Children in This Kingdom (6:25-32):

“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?²⁶ 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?²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.³⁰ 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?³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Jesus introduces a third teaching about wealth and possession in this section of the sermon by telling His disciples, *“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?”*

A. The Conflict Articulated:

- Is not life more than food and clothing?

B. The Contrast Displayed:

- God cares for the creatures of His creation who are not able to labor, toil, or spin. (6:26-30)
- The Gentiles who do not know God labor to the point of exhaustion for the things about which you are anxious – food and raiment. (6:32)

C. The Comparison Explained:

- You are an image-bearer and not a mere animal or inanimate part of God's creation! If God faithfully cares and abundantly provides for His creation . . . how much more will He do so for His image-bearers! Even the Gentiles know this!
- You are related to God differently than the Gentiles are related to their gods – which is why they toil and labor the way they do and why you can trust and rest in the wise and loving provision of your Heavenly Father who knows what you need and has promised to provide!

D. The Problem Exposed: "O you of little faith!" (6:30)

- You have weak faith that does not fully trust in the promise and providence of God who is your Father!
- "Weak faith" is different from "small faith" that moves mountains.

IV. Unrestrained Pursuit of the Priorities of This Kingdom (6:33-34):

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

A. Expressed as a Priority: *Seek first the kingdom of God*

B. Accomplished through a Prayer: *and His righteousness*

C. Accompanied by a Promise: *and all these things will be added*

Conclusion: A Surprising Assessment

- The kind of kingdom devotion Jesus called for in the sermon was difficult even for His disciples to grasp. But it was even harder for those in the kingdom with great possessions. Listen to Paul's exhortation to the rich members at the church Timothy pastored.
- **1 Timothy 6:17-19:** *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

- You say, well thankfully, I am not rich in this present age! BUT . . . most of us in this congregation would be wealthier than most of the believers scattered throughout the kingdoms of the world! Many of those believers with much less are far more willing to part with their meager resources to advance the Kingdom of God and to set forth His righteousness among the nations.
- I am not speaking this way to shame us or to guilt us into giving. I am speaking this way because this is what the Holy Spirit instructed Paul to say to people like us! *We are to do good! We are to be rich in good works. We are to be radically generous with our resources! We are to be busy using our earthly treasure to store up Heavenly treasure!*

What practical things can I do?

- You can commit to give faithfully.
- You can increase your giving joyfully.
- You can serve fervently.
- You can speak up graciously and courageously.