

FIRST THINGS FIRST
Matt. 6:33

Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:24-34.

Intro: What better way could we begin the new year than by giving special and renewed attention to the Word of God?

Long ago the Psalmist wrote,

Great peace have they which love thy law:
and nothing shall offend them (Psa. 119:165).

And in the same Psalm we learn more about what it means to love the Word of God:

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all
the day (Psa. 119:97).

None of us spends as much time in the Word as we should, and as we could. Therefore, it would be good for all of us to resolve in our hearts by the grace of God that we are going to spend more time reading the Word this coming year, and more time meditating on the Word, that we may be more obedient to the Lord than we have ever been.

New year's resolutions are often ridiculed because we break them so quickly, but the Scriptures certainly encourage us to be resolving daily that we might know and do the will of God. For example, take Psalm 119:59,

I thought on my ways,
and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

The trouble about many of our resolutions is that we try to carry them out in our own strength instead of looking to the Lord for the strength to do His will. It is very significant that Psalm 119 which has so much to say about the Word of God also has much prayer in it!

Psalm 19:14 is a good example for all of us--a prayer that we might please the Lord:

Let the words of my mouth,
and the meditation of my heart,
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength,
and my redeemer.

Our words and our thoughts cannot be pleasing to the Lord unless they are in harmony with the Word of God.

When we think about the Bible, we believe that it is all the Word of God--that no one part is more inspired of God than any other part. We cannot neglect any part of it without suffering real loss for ourselves. But there probably is in the heart of every child of God a special attraction to those words of our Lord Jesus Christ, just as we are attracted to those words in the OT when the writers will say, "Thus saith the Lord, . . ."

From the words of the Lord Jesus, I want to direct your attention today to a good verse for the new year--and not just for the

beginning of the year, but for every day of the year: the words of Matthew 6:33,

But seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.

Let us consider this verse, trusting the Lord to make it a blessing in our lives for this coming year.

The first thing that I would point out is that the Lord was speaking of . . .

I. THE NEED FOR A PRIORITY.

It is seen in the word, "first."

This means that there not only will be one thing that is the most important thing in your life, but that it is important to have the right priority. Our priorities determine the direction that our lives are going to take, and this is where we all need help. This is one reason that God has given us His Word--so we will have the right priority.

You have one. What is it? Perhaps our text will help us to see that this is where our problem is--not that we are without a priority, but that we have the wrong one!

The second thing in our text is . . .

II. THE NEED TO PURSUE OUR PRIORITY.

This is brought out by our Lord's use of the word, "seek." It means that there must be diligent, continuous effort put forth by every child of God to maintain and achieve that priority every day.

It is not something that is accomplished at the beginning of the year for the whole year, but it is the work of every day. And it must be done throughout the day.

In short, this is to be the very reason for our existence. We may not always abide by it, but it is then that we need to come back to it, and to pursue it again!

III. THE RIGHT PRIORITY.

Here it is: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

A. It is the same for every child of God.

There is not one priority for the pastor, and some other

priority for his people. There is not one priority for young Christians, and another priority for older Christians. But it is the same for all: "But seek ye first . . ."

And we never outgrow this. As long as we live, this will continue to be our one priority.

B. What does it mean?

1. First of all, the expressions, "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," indicate that there are really only two possible priorities.

We are either going to be primarily concerned about heavenly things, or earthly things; or about temporal things, or eternal things; or about spiritual things, or material things.

The whole context of verse 33, our Scripture reading, indicates this.

Stating it very simply, we can be concerned about what we are going to eat, what we are going to drink, and what we are going to wear, OR we are going to be primarily concerned about "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

The word, "first," indicates that we have to be concerned about both, but the question here is, Which is the most important? Are we living primarily to see that our needs are met, or are we mainly concerned about the things of God?

We cannot give priority to both. See Matt. 6:24.

But there is more to this priority.

2. It means that we need to be concerned about salvation.

Do you remember what the Lord said to Nicodemus about entering the kingdom of God? Cf. John 3:3-12.

To seek the kingdom of God means that we must make sure that we are in that kingdom, that we have been born again, that we are in the family of God!

Are you? How do you know? What evidence do you have that you are a child of God? Do you know what to look for?

3. To seek the kingdom of God means that you will be

concerned primarily about the will of God and the work of God on earth.

See Matt. 6:9, 10.

If you have the right priority, you will not be concerned about the so-called "good life" but with the fulfillment of God's purposes upon the earth in anticipation of eternity.

4. To seek "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," will mean that you will be concerned about how you can become more like the Lord. You will not be anxious to be like other people, and to have what they have, but you will desire to be holy, and to be like Christ!

This will change the way you will read your Bible. You will not be satisfied just to read it from cover to cover, but you will be looking for the Lord. This will change your prayer life. No longer will your prayers be directed primarily to getting things from God, but your heart will cry out for the Lord Himself, for greater knowledge of Him, and for more conformity to all that He is. It will change your purpose in going to church, and it will increase your desire to serve the Lord. It will mean a greater concern for His will and for His glory.

It will affect the way you come to the Lord's table, and your desire to remember Him.

It does not mean that we quit working. But it does mean that making money is not the main reason for our existence. We will begin to live for eternity, and, if we are anxious about anything, it is our relationship to God and our conformity to Christ.

But this is not all that there is to our text. The verse closes with . . .

- IV. A GREAT PROMISE: "and all these things shall be added unto you."

What "things" was the Lord referring to? He was speaking of the necessities of life--"what ye shall eat . . . what ye shall drink . . . what ye shall put on" (v. 25).

If our priority is right, our needs will be met!

Concl: The Lord gave three reasons in this passage as to why we must put Him first in our lives, depending upon Him to meet our needs:

- 1) Because our Father cares for us.
- 2) Because the people of the world put themselves and their needs first.
- 3) Because our Father knows what our needs are, and is capable of providing them for us.

Do you have first things first in your life?

Do you know the Lord? If so, are you living for Him more than for anyone else? If not, there is no better time than today to change. It is when our priority is the Lord that we learn how blessed is the life of those who know Him and who really seek to live for Him.

DAVID - PSA. 27:4

JESUS - LUKE 10:41, 42

PAUL - PHIL. 3:13, 14