

SEEKING THE KINGDOM

In Matt. 6:33, Jesus said, “*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*”. When you pray, what is it that you seek from Jesus? Do you seek first his kingdom and his righteousness or do you go to Him with a list of personal wants? Do you ask Him to work through you or to work for you? Do you seek the miraculous to puff yourself up or do you seek to be a humble servant as the Lord requests? I think that we have all been guilty of all of the above at some point in time but let's look at what the Lord wants us to seek.

In this article I'd like to look at -

- 1) Seeking His kingdom.
- 2) Seeking His righteousness.
- 3) All things being given.

1) **Seeking His kingdom.**

The Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5-7 is all about God's kingdom which exists spiritually now and will be a physical reality one day. Seeking the kingdom has many aspects some of which are evangelising the lost, being a light for the Lord, discipling believers, missionary work, serving in the local church, giving, being kind to a cranky neighbour, helping anyone in need and anything else which advances the kingdom.

1 John 3:18 tells us, “*Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth*” and James 1:27 gives us practical examples of actions where it says, “*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*”. James tells us that looking after those in need, saved or not, and keeping from the pollution of sin is faultless religion.

Seeking His kingdom is serving the Lord to benefit the kingdom. Each of us can only do so much but if we do whatever God lays on our heart then we are doing well and storing up treasures in heaven.

2) **Seeking His righteousness.**

Righteousness is simply a state of being right with God. It is the holiness of heart and purity of life which Jesus spoke of in the Sermon on the Mount. Righteousness includes being salt and light to those around us, not hating or being immoral, loving even our enemies, not worrying, not judging hypocritically or seeking revenge, fasting, praying and bearing the spiritual fruit of Gal. 5:22-23.

Righteousness does not come in a bag that we can keep like money in the bank. It's our lifestyle. 1 John 3:7 (ESV) says, “*Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous*”. The words “*practices righteousness*” tell us that righteousness is ours only as we continue in a holy lifestyle. It follows that if we are not practising righteousness then we are not righteous. We can't be righteous and sinful at the same time.

Repentance is the missing link in many pulpits. In Isa 59:2, God says that “*your iniquities have separated you from your God*” and this separation will be eternal for those who refuse to repent. Repentance seems to have become a dirty word. Many pastors skip the subject of sin to please the flock and keep the money coming in because the church would empty if they heard a bit of fire and brimstone rather than what their itching ears want to hear. The link that binds man to God is a holy, repentant life and that link must be present in the life of every soul who wishes to inherit eternal life. Heb. 12:14 warns us very clearly to “*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord*”.

Seeking His righteousness is practising righteousness and, as we continue to do this, we are holy and righteousness just as Jesus is holy and righteousness. We can't be in Christ and in sin at the same time.

3) All things being given.

In Matt. 6:25-33, Jesus talked about our basic needs in life and ended by saying “*seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*”. Notice how Jesus said that these things will be given as a bonus for seeking Him. So, we can be certain that if seeking His kingdom and His righteousness is our first priority then our basic needs will be faithfully supplied by the Lord just as He feeds the birds and dresses the lilies of the field.

Nowhere does the Bible encourage us to seek personal fame or fortune.

- ▲ Regarding money, Jesus said in Matt. 6:24, “*No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve both God and money*” (Matt. 6:24).
- ▲ Regarding personal fame, Jesus said in Mat 23:11-12, “*The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted*”.
- ▲ Even our church leaders are told to be humble servants and not greedy for money. 1 Pet. 5:2-4 say, “*Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away*”.

To finish off, seeking His kingdom and His righteousness is not about what we can get from God but rather it is about honouring Him with a holy walk and humbly serving to further His kingdom. Micah 6:8 says, “*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*”. When we deny self for His sake we can be sure that He will meet all our needs and 1 Tim. 6:8 tells us that “*if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that*”.

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