

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on August 1, 2021:**

**"Why are we here? Seeking the Kingdom
(Matthew 6:33)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us how that what God asks us to seek first in Matthew 6:33 is related to the church.]

Introduction:

- Here's a question for each of us this morning – what do you place first in your life?
- Is it a spouse? Is it a child? Is it a grandchild or grandchildren?
- Is first in your life financial concerns; is it health concerns?

- And so, today is a good day to ask that question, because this gives us an opportunity to re-orient ourselves, as to why we are here and to answer that question.
- So, why do we take time to gather in worship, to listen to beautiful music, to share in fellowship with one another, to give offerings, to bless each other, to take a look at scripture and to focus on what Jesus would have us know today?

- Now our recent church conference focused on Matthew 6:33.
- So, today, we'll read several different translations of this scripture, and what God asks us to place first in our lives.
- These are Jesus' words to us.

Matthew 6:33 (NASB), But seek first His kingdom

- Now doesn't the word "seek" imply that we are taking on some potentiality, that we're actively doing things?
- Now, the form of this Greek word "seek" is in the imperative, which means "to continually seek."
- So, this isn't just a one and done kind of thing.

- And then Jesus adds the word "first." So what is it we "seek first"? What is it that God asks us to seek first?
- And how does that "seeking first His kingdom" relate to church and what we're doing today?

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,

- In the past, we saw righteousness as answering a "what" question.
- But this isn't really a "what" question or a "how" question, but rather, this is a "who" question.
- Who is God's righteousness? It's Jesus. Can we all agree on that?

- We don't have to do anything to become righteous, but rather we simply believe.
- We believe in Jesus, because He's the righteous one.

- And when we believe, which has to do with seeking, when we believe in Jesus, whom is God's righteousness, we are THEN righteous.
- Now, we may not always feel that way, we may not always act that way, but in God's eyes through His Son Jesus, we are righteous.
- Now, when we think about, "Am I seeking God's righteousness?" it's truly an answer to the real question, "Do I have a relationship with Jesus?"
- So, the answer to the question, "How do I seek God's kingdom and His righteousness" is by having a relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit through Jesus.
- And that means conversation through morning prayer, which means curiosity entering into scripture, which is God's word and what Jesus has to say to each one of us.
- And all of this is renewed day by day, by the way.
- The way we receive what Jesus tells us can be completely different each day, depending on what's going on in our lives.
- And that's why we need daily renewal.
- Now seeking God's kingdom is very closely related to church, because the church represents what God is doing here on earth.

and all these things will be provided to you.

- Now in the context of Mathew 6, Jesus earlier talked about how God provides for the lilies of the field and then asked the question – then why do we place our concerns so important to us about what we're going to eat and drink, and what kind of clothes are we going to wear?
- But, Jesus tells us that when we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then "all these things will be given to you."
- The Gentiles or not-yet-believers today greatly worry about food, shelter and clothing, because they don't yet have a relationship with God, who will provide for us.

Matthew 6:33 (KJV), But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 6:33 (ICB), The thing you should want most is God's kingdom and doing what God wants. Then all these other things you need will be given to you.

Matthew 6:33 (CEV), But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well.

Matthew 6:33 (AMP), But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.

- This seeking or striving is not like we're going to jump on the treadmill to constantly work and strive and toil to achieve righteousness.
- No, it's about a relation with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- So, the striving is to make sure we make room for Jesus in our lives in that daily relationship.

Matthew 6:33 (Phillips), Set your heart on the kingdom and his goodness, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course.

Matthew 6:33 (TLB), and he will give them to you if you give him first place in your life and live as he wants you to.

- It's amazing that God's Son Jesus, emptied Himself of His riches and joined us through the incarnation here on the planet earth and went through the trials he went through and then ultimately died, but then was resurrected and ascended back to the Father.
- Is it too much for God the Father to want our love in return for all of this?

Matthew 6:33 (NIV), But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33 (MSG), Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

- This is so good to know that we don't have to concern ourselves with our physical needs and desires.
- Now, when we read in scripture an imperative or command or something God is asking us to do, He always first places an indicative about our relationship with Him, because it's out of that relationship that we can provide the imperatives, which become blessings to us.
- It's out of God's love that he encourages us to seek first and to continually seek the kingdom by having a relationship with His Son Jesus in prayer, in study, in meditation, in conversation, and in contemplation.

Seeking the Kingdom has a lot to do with Church

[Source of the following material: GCI – "We Believe" – Adult Edition]

- 5.1 What is the kingdom of God?

In the broadest sense, the kingdom of God is God's supreme sovereignty – his reign over all the world through the operation of the Holy Spirit based on the completed work of Jesus Christ. That reign is now partially and provisionally manifest in the Church and in the life of each believer as they submit to God's Word and will.

- So, when we talk about the kingdom of God, we're talking about what the church, today, is carrying out here on earth.

The kingdom of God will be fully manifest over the whole world after the return of Jesus Christ when he delivers all things to the Father and all are either willingly or unwillingly in submission to his rule and reign. (Luke 17:20-21; Rom. 8:12-17; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Gal. 4:7; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6; 11:15; 21:3, 22-27; 22:1-5)

- 5.4 How do Christians live now in God's kingdom?

As Christians, our kingdom life now consists of living with faith, joy, hope and peace as children of God, citizens of heaven and faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- So, once again, we are occupants and citizens here on earth, but God also considers us to be citizens in heaven.
- And there's also the heavenly church, as we'll see in a moment.

We become glad worshipers of God and witnesses to the coming kingdom by embodying in our lives now temporary, partial and provisional signs or parables of the kingdom that is coming in its fullness when Christ returns. (Rom. 14:17; Eph. 4:6; Col. 1:13-14; 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:11)

- 9.1 What is the Church?

It is the whole community of faithful Christians in heaven and on earth who are incorporated into Jesus Christ by the personal and particular ministry of the Holy Spirit. On earth, the Church gathers in local congregations to worship God in Word and sacrament, and to witness to God by serving and obeying God in faith and according to the Holy Scriptures, thus fulfilling the mission Christ gave to it under the leadership of those God appoints in the Church for that purpose. (Acts 1:8; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 2:9)

- So, coming together for church is not like attending the Rotary Club on Tuesday afternoon.
- The church represents so much more than just being a family group, which we are, because it has heavenly implications.
- It has implications about what scriptures say about God's mission; it has implications as to how we are to love each other and treat each other and then go out into the community to love others.
- So, gathering together in church is not just about coming here, but it's about a greater concept.
- The church today is a representation of God's kingdom, which is carrying out God's wishes from the beginning of time.
- And that's what we are a part of.

- 9.2 What is the mission of the Church?

Before ascending, Jesus commanded his followers to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you." This "Great Commission" is for the Church in all times. (Matt. 28:16-20)

- If church was not unlike a social service club, we might be comfortable just with ourselves.
- But in fact, from the very beginning, God established the mission of the church to reach out and encourage others into that family process.
- So, when we reach out to friends, family or those who live within our influence, we are perpetuating God's mission.

- Now, if we just stay together as a family and not invite anyone to join us in worship, we are not fulfilling God's desires.
- One of the things we can be asking every morning when we get up is to say, "Father, through your Spirit, I know you are working in people's lives that I will meet today. Help me to recognize this and see it and then reach out to them."
- We need to want to see our church family grow as new believers respond to the Holy Spirit.
- We need to realize that this is the work of the Holy Spirit and not our job – we just merely participate with the Holy Spirit.
- But, it's our job to show love and concern and light to those whom the Holy Spirit is working with.

- 9.13 How are the Church on earth and the Church in heaven joined?

The worship of the Church on earth is a participation in the eternal worship of the Church in heaven.

- Scripture tells us that there is a church in heaven that's also worshipping right now.
- Now, there are angels in heaven and departed believers in heaven that are part of the church in heaven.

One day we will be able to experience this unity. When we worship here on earth we are joining in with the eternal worship that is already and forever taking place. (Heb. 12:22-24)

- Now, in a spiritual sense, there is something greater going on in heaven than here on earth.
- And scripture also tells us that miraculously, we, who are on earth today, are also seated in heaven with Jesus because of what he accomplished by His incarnation and ascension.
- And Pastor Craig realizes that this is hard to comprehend.

- 9.10 How are we as members of the Church to view each other?

In union with Christ, we are united to each other within the body of Christ, the Church.

- All of us, despite our face masks, are united in one body, as one family.
- We love each other, we embrace each other.
- And when one is suffering, the other suffers, and we are also here to help one another.
- As a family, we have learned to say, "I'm sorry" when we're wrong or say "thank you" to those who help us or say "please" when we ask for help..

As Jesus by his death removed our separation from God, so by his Spirit he removes all that divides us from each other. The ties that bind us together in Christ are deeper than any other human relationships and are more fundamental

than what distinguishes us from one another. (Eph. 2:19-20; 2:14; 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:4-7, 12-13, 27; Gal. 3:2

Ephesians 4:1-16 (this week's RCL on GCI's website)

Ephesians 4:1 (NASB), (Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3) being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- Can we be humble, can we be patient with those in the church? Yes, through the Spirit.

4) There is one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; 5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6) one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

7) But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8) Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive the captives, And He gave gifts to people." 9) (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10) He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

- Now, some day, Jesus will return His kingdom to His Father and tell Him, "Father, I've not lost one that you've given me."
- And because of Jesus' ascension, all things will be fulfilled.

11) And He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, 12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ;

- In the past, the pastor did everything. But the model today is pastoral team based.
- It was a team effort of many to make all this technically worked out today.
- But the "equipping of the saints" means that all of us come together and share our individual gifts that we've been given, which are not interchangeable.
- This is a model of unity.

13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14) As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

15) but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is, Christ, 16) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

- That's why we are here today – we are here to represent the church in heaven as the church on earth.

- We're here to build God's kingdom; we're here to seek first that building process and that comes by knowing and engaging in the righteous One and following Him in that relationship.
- Then the Father, Son and Spirit will work with us to share His love.
- It's so good to be back together.

Closing prayer by worship leader, Redida Edwards: