

Date : 18 August 2024
Theme : Kingdom living from the Sermon on the mount
Topic : We seek first God's kingdom and righteousness
Key passage : Matthew 6:19-34
Key verse : Matthew 6:33 – But seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Introduction:

In Matthew, we learned we have been appointed as salt and light by our Heavenly Father who cares for us. We in turn seek to glorify Him. We glorify the Father when we give first priority to His will.

Today, we will cover Matthew 6:19-34 in which Jesus taught about handling wealth and worry. The ultimate solution provided by the Lord focuses on setting the right priority. How do we apply Jesus' command to seek first God's Kingdom and righteousness?

1. Seek God's Kingdom first when handling wealth.

By storing up treasures in heaven and not on earth. v19,20

1.1. Storing up treasures for ourselves is a wise move when they help us achieve meaningful purposes.

- In 1 Chronicles 29:1-9, King David set out to build the first temple to the Lord.
 - He recognized that it had to be great in honor of God. So, he devoted his personal treasures of gold and silver estimated 330,000 kg to the Lord. He acknowledged that everything came from God and rightfully belonged to God.
 - He set such an example that his leaders also gave their treasures of gold and silver estimated 510,000kg. The people also gave joyfully and wholeheartedly to the Lord.
 - The people were not disadvantaged for their giving because the Lord prospered them greatly after that and David enjoyed long life, wealth and honor.
- Big projects require large amounts of money and resources which had to be accumulated over time, so that at the right time, they can be disbursed.
- When the wealth is used for the Lord, the Lord replenishes many times over. Luke 6:38.

1.2. Storing up treasures for ourselves on earth is short sighted. v19.

- Cash loses value due to inflation over time. Material things such as properties, cars, bags and watches will one day wear out and corrode. Precious metals such as gold, diamond, can be stolen by thieves and scammers.
- Ultimately, we cannot hold on to our wealth because our lives on earth are only temporal. Either our wealth leaves us or we leave our wealth; yet many still accumulate treasures on earth without investing in eternity.
- Jesus said "store up treasures for yourselves in heaven" v20. The Lord is not opposed to storing up wealth for ourselves, but He taught us where to store them – in heaven.
- Before the end of our lives on earth, we must transfer our treasures on earth to heaven by investing in projects of eternal value, such as the building of His church. Otherwise, all our treasures will be lost and our efforts will be wasted.

1.3. Why did Jesus wisely instruct us to store up treasures for ourselves in heaven? v20

- Treasures in heaven will not have any of the dangers faced on earth – destruction and theft (v20). Instead, they are the best, safest and eternal investments we can have.
- Jesus reveals the truth that a person's heart is where his treasure is at. Are our treasures on earth or in heaven? (v21) That is where our heart is. Jesus said that the one, who stores up treasures on earth, is not rich toward God. Luke 12:21.
- Jesus said about the eye being "healthy" or "unhealthy" (NIV), "single" or "evil" (NKJV) v22. Proverbs 28:22 says, "A man with an evil eye hastens after riches". The evil eye is the lust of the eyes and being covetous.
- This was highlighted in John 12:6, contrasting Mary's giving and Judas' coveting.

- Mary expressed her deep appreciation and worship for Christ by breaking an expensive gift of perfume, pouring it on Jesus' feet and wiping His feet with her hair. Mary's eye was single towards the Lord.
- Judas however criticised this waste that the value of the perfume could have fed many poor people. It was exposed that he wasn't genuinely caring for the poor, but hoping that the money be handed to him for safe keeping so that he could use it for himself. This was Judas' evil eye of covetousness.
- Jesus pointed out that it was a rare opportunity to honor Christ. The chance to honor Christ, as Mary did by her sacrificial giving, was something that could never come again! Jesus commended Mary for doing a beautiful thing to him at the right moment, and the result was that she would be honored and her work preserved in God's Word for all to know (Mark 14:6-11).
- Is this also a rare opportunity for us to honor Christ with sacrificial giving to build God's sanctuary in Tampines? Such opportunities do not come often.
- We cannot put God first when we try to serve 2 masters or 2 "Lords".
 - Jesus said that no one can serve both God and money (Mammon).
 - We serve Mammon as our god when the pursuit of earthly wealth rules us rather than God. Our eyes are not single towards God and our hearts are divided. We are always faced with the decision every day, whether to serve God or Mammon. v24.
 - When we serve Mammon, we break the first and second commandments. God does not accept second place.
 - Today, our mammon can be money, entertainment, luxury, pleasures, stomach (food), success in school or at work, when these precede God. Many are willing to serve God but only with left over time, i.e. "When I am free..."
 - God does not want merely our service. He wants to be first in our choices.

2. Seek God's Kingdom first to overcome your worries. v25

2.1. Putting God first allows Him to rule and reign. (Rather than allowing fear and anxiety to consume us).

Jesus' conclusion on the solution to our fretting and worrying is our Heavenly Father. v31,32. Jesus speaks directly to the heart of anxiety. He knows anxiety is an emotion, so He teaches us to attack that emotion with:

A. Facts (Truths, promises about who God is)

- God is our Heavenly Father (v26,32). He is only Creator to the birds and lilies.
- God ranks us highest in value above all His creation. v26
 - We are made in His image, filled with His breath of life. Genesis 1:27, 2:7.
 - God has given us His most precious – His only Son. It is not difficult for Him to give us anything else. Romans 8:32.
- God, who feeds the birds, dresses the lilies, cares much more for us. v30
- God knows our needs and does not disregard them but works His sovereign will to meet all our needs (when we make Him the King) in that area of our life. v32

B. Faith.

When we choose to believe God's promises instead of succumbing to our fears, freedom is found. Jesus knows that pointing us back to God's promises will change our perspective on our problem.

C. Feelings

We are released from our struggles granting us freedom. Jesus wants us to experience the thrill of seeking the Kingdom of God first in every affair and moment of life – the thrill of experiencing ... all these things will be added to you as well ... v33

2.2. What happens if we do not put God first?

- In Haggai 1, during the rule of the Persian empire around 520 BC, the Israelites were busy trying to earn a living, but they struggled to have sufficient food, water and clothing.
 - The Lord revealed through prophet Haggai that it was because they had chosen to delay the rebuilding of His temple which was in ruins. Therefore, God withheld the rain, the fruit of their crops, their livestock and caused them to be unproductive. The people came to their senses, repented and resumed the work of rebuilding the temple. Haggai 1:14.
 - The Israelites delayed the completion of the temple by about 15 years, due to their enemies' discouragement, causing them fear and slowing down their work. This finally came to a complete stop, then they got busy with their own lives. Ezra 4:24
 - After the Israelites obeyed God through Haggai's words, the enemies again returned. But this time, the Israelites were not intimidated. King Darius issued a non-interference decree for the enemies who had to provide all the rebuilding expenses from their royal treasury. In addition, all who defied King Darius' edict would have their houses destroyed. The Israelites prospered and completed the rebuilding after 5 years. Ezra 6:14-15.
 - Even though there are challenges, when God's work is deprioritized and neglected, God stops His blessing and provision. But He restores the situation when we obey and prioritize His works.
- Worrying shows that we have little faith in our Heavenly Father.
 - Go to our Heavenly Father first instead of looking to human solutions.

2.3. Take time to consider the following carefully

I believe what Jesus said:

- God is my Heavenly Father. He values me highly and will take care of me.
- I shall not worry but choose to seek Him FIRST as my solution.

3. How do we seek God first? v33

- Firstly, choose whom I will serve – God or Mammon.
 - Repent and renounce of any Mammon in my life.
- Secondly, set my heart to store up treasures in heaven.
 - By setting out to glorify the Father with God-given resources: time, wealth, talents.
 - By prioritizing God's Kingdom matters over other needs as food and shelter, and over conflicting demands in my daily life.
- Thirdly, by learning Jesus' Kingdom laws, practicing them and teaching others to obey.
 - Practicing God's laws for myself is discipleship.
 - Teaching others to obey is disciple making.
 - Doing this is considered great in the Kingdom of God. Matthew 5:19
 - This is also Jesus' Great Commission, to make disciples of all peoples and teaching them to obey everything the Lord has commanded. Matthew 28:19-20
- Lastly, by surrendering my worries to our Heavenly Father and seeking Him first as my solution.

Application

In addition to point 3 above, I choose to seek first God's Kingdom and His Righteousness by:

- Uniting with fellow travellers in BC to reach the community at Tampines St 86.
- Using the resources God has given me (time, wealth and skills) to support our church building project.
- Aligning my studies, marriage partner and career in a way that will glorify my Heavenly Father.
- Commit my current worry of _____ to the Lord and to seek His solution.