

Let The Bible Speak Series

First Things First

Matt.6:33

One of the great challenges of life, is the task of arranging our lives according to those things most important to us. Learning to prioritize is a very difficult and often time consuming task. Things that really matter, are often neglected. (Ex. care body, neglect of soul)

In spiritual matters, man and God do not always see alike.

Isa.55:8-9 "For my ways are not your ways...."

The purpose of our study is to discover some of the things that are of superlative importance to God, and should be to us as well.

I. The First Thing To Seek---The Kingdom of God Mt.6:33

In the preceding verses Jesus talks about the anxiety the Jews had for the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter. He points out how God cares for the birds, grasses and flowers, etc. That being the case, he will surely care for His people. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were seeking after these things without knowledge of God or the revelation of his will.

Rom.1:21-22 teaches that they were vain in their reasoning, their understandings were darkened and in their professions of wisdom they became steeped in the follies of heathenism.

For the Jews to manifest this kind of misgiving concerning the overall providence of God would be a reflection of Gentile influence upon them and cast serious doubts as to their ability to function and fulfill their mission as members of the new kingdom upon the threshold of which they stood. Yet Christ so found them. Could it be that we are no better today? Of prime importance to the disciple are the principles of the Kingdom of God. It must be first in our life.

His righteousness: The righteousness men should seek, is of Christ, not their own.

God's righteousness is His plan for the justification of sinners, which exceeds in kind the asserted righteousness of Pharisaical self-justification.

Rom.10:1-3 "Brethren my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved..." The Jews were ignorant of God's plan for the redemption of man.

"And all these things shall be added..." The kingdom looming in the not too far distant future was to be prized above all else. Seeking it and accepting God's command was the important thing. Secondary to that were food, shelter, clothing etc. These would be added as an estate to His children.

There is no security to be had equal to the security offered by the kingdom of God.

The church must be first--everything else is secondary.

"Seek" means to "covet earnestly or strive after."

If the kingdom is first, my attendance at church services will be of prime importance to me.

No vacations, trips (fishing, hunting etc) will cause me to miss.

No jobs, ball games, outings etc.

In order to put the kingdom first, I may have to forego some pleasures, activities, and even some relationships.

Note Mt.19:3-12 "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." i.e. These are men who become eunuchs by choice. This would include those who refuse to marry in the first place (Paul) or those who, for spiritual reasons, do not marry because they themselves are ineligible for marriage as a result of a previous unscriptural divorce.

Vocation---will it interfere with my being a Christian?

Education---will it weaken me?

Marriage---will he/she help or hinder me?

Vacation---can I worship?

Money---the Lord gets His first.

Recreation---will it hurt my influence?

A principle is a fundamental truth upon which other truths are based:

Underlying principle: The Kingdom or Church must have first place in the life of all believers. When this is so, God will take care of our needs.

II. The First Thing To Remove. "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, then shalt thou see clearly to cast mote out of thy brothers eye." Mt. 7:5

We are all sinners before God, and none can pass judicial sentence upon another, all alike being guilty.

The Pharisees were ignoring the fact that they were themselves the subjects of judgment by the same yard stick.

The Lord is teaching that man cannot assess judgment which in the nature of it inheres in the law that has been violated. i.e. I cannot judge and condemn a man when I do the same thing.

The teaching has no reference to judging wrong teaching and wrong actions.

In fact we are taught to do that in (Jno.7:24) "judge righteous judgment."

"Judge not..." means that I do not have the right to judge another's motives.

The first thing we must do is correct our own mistakes, then we can help correct others.

From the teaching of Jesus here, we have several proverbs:

"He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones"

"The pot should not call the kettle black" and

"there is so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us, that it hardly behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us."

No one is permitted by Jesus to hunt moles in this brothers eye, or faults in his brothers walk or character. while his own life is full of much greater sins.

"Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?...thou who gloriest in the law, through thy

transgression of the law dishonorest thou God?" Rom. 2:21-23.

The first thing we need to do is make sure that we are living right, before we try to correct someone else.

Underlying principle: We cannot judge another's motives. When we do, and we are guilty of the same sin, we actually condemn ourselves.

III. The First Thing To Remember. Mt.5:23 "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother has ought against thee, leave there thy gift, first be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift."

When one's conscience is aware of sins committed against a brother, the first duty is to make it right with the brother, a duty more imperative, even, than that of worship, and which takes precedence over it.

The place of worship should be a place of remembrance.

Prayer and worship are often hindered by the remembrance of sin.

God will not accept our worship when we are at odds with our brother. We must do all we can to resolve these difficulties.

God's plan is simple "Go"

1. when a brother has ought against such a one as this passage describes, "GO"
2. when such a one has been wronged by a brother Mt.18:15-17 "GO"
3. If any man be overtaken in a fault Gal.6:1 "GO"

This is God's procedure. When followed the odds are that we can resolve the issue. When not followed the odds are that we will complicate the issue.

Underlying principle: We cannot worship acceptably, if we are at odds with our brethren.

V. The First Thing To Give.

2Cor.8:5 "And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God."

These brethren from Macedonia had sent a donation to the needy saints in Jerusalem far above what Paul had accepted, and far above their ability to give.

The key to their liberal giving is explained in the phrase "first gave their own selves to the Lord."

Giving oneself to the Lord begins at baptism. And if truly an act of total commitment, every requirement of God will come without hesitation or bitterness from that point forward.

The reason people have such difficulty serving the Lord is because they haven't given themselves to the Lord.

Giving--it is not hard to give your time, talents, money when you belong to the Lord.

Moral living-One can abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, when he/she belongs to the Lord.

1 Cor. 6:19-20 "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's"

Immodest dress is not temptation to one who has "first given himself or herself to the Lord.

Obedying Paul's instructions about the hair in 1 Cor. 11 will not be a stumbling block to one who has given themselves to the Lord.

Coming to church services will come easy for the same reason.

Giving yourself "first" to the Lord is a must. It is the key to successful and dedicated living for Jesus.

Underlying principle: The secret to acceptable service is for one to first give themselves to Christ. Obedience to commands will come naturally after this.

VI. The First Step In Winning The Lost.

Is to tell someone else.

John 1:40-42 "One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrews Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. YOU shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

John 11:28 "And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying "The teacher as come and calleth for you" As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came t Him."

The woman of Samaria at Jacob's well.

"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified. "He told me all that I ever did."

Tell someone else about Jesus.

This is personal evangelism. Personal evangelism is the life blood of the church.

There is no substitute for every saved person trying to save someone else.

In Mark 5 the demoniac of Gadarea, was healed by Jesus. The demon was cast out. This man who dwelt among the tombs. This man who cut himself and broke the chains that bound him.

When healed by Jesus he was told "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you. And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled."

When the Godly mother of Sam Hadley died, Sam was a drunken vagabond. His brother Harry was not. Harry kept on trying to get Sam to change. And one day, he did. He turned his life around. When Harry came to die, he said one of the greatest joys he expected to find in heaven was the joy of taking his brother up to his mother and saying "Mother, here is Sam."

Underlying principle: In bringing others to Christ, we should first seek those whom we love, those closest to us.

Note Acts 10:24 Cornelius called together his family and close friends.