

SDG

Matthew 6:24–34

THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMES FIRST

INI

Last week our family traveled to Eau Claire for Great Lakes Pastoral Conference. It is amazing how much planning goes along with even a short trip when you have three small children involved. Did we remember diapers, clothes, baby food, grown up food, snacks? Do we have a place to stay, a bed? When will we arrive? When will we depart? There are so many things we as grown ups can tend to “worry” about. What is in store for the future?

Now did any one of our three boys concern themselves with “how will I get there?” “What will I wear?” “Will I have food and water?” No – they just trusted their parents to provide. It is our job as parents to provide for our children. How much more is your Heavenly Father in charge of providing the things you need. Let us become as little children as we consider how THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMES FIRST. **[READ TEXT]**

In the name of our Good Shepherd, Provider, Comforter, Jesus Christ, Dear fellow servants of the kingdom, THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMES FIRST...

1. In your heavenly Father’s attitude toward you

Jesus reminds us of our heavenly Father’s perspective and His heavenly attitude toward you as His child.

v.26 — Well, how valued are you? In the nineteenth century, the hymn writer, Caroline Berg wrote, “*Children of the heavenly Father, safely in His bosom gather; nestling bird nor star in heaven such a refuge e’er was given.*”

We have a refuge of protection and care far beyond what the birds of the field enjoy. Romans 8:32 reads, **Romans 8:32 (NKJV) — 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**

— **all things!** God promises us all things. Recently we have had a geese gathering in our yard here at church. You may notice remnants of their presence from time to time. They don’t have a health care plan, they don’t have a 401K, they aren’t out searching for a job in this difficult economy, yet here they are – they sit, they eat, they honk, and they move on.

Yet God does not call Himself their father. He cares for the animals, but He hasn’t taken them into His spiritual family. You, on the other hand, He has chosen to call His dear children. He has bought you back from sin and death, redeemed you, by the death of

His true and only begotten Son, that you might be adopted into His eternal care. The Kingdom come first in everything God does for you and allows to happen to you.

v.33 — And I read again, “**all these things will be added to you.**” God promises to provide. This is because the kingdom comes first in God’s attitude toward you. The kingdom may best be defined as “*God’s ruling activity.*” And we know from other passages that God’s ruling activity is in the preaching of the gospel. This is how God rules our hearts and our lives, by forgiving us our sins and creating new life in our hearts to follow His will. God promises to provide. He knows that in order for His kingdom to continue His children must continue. That is in order for the preaching of the gospel to continue His children must continue.

The psalmist in Psalm 37 declares, **Psalm 37:25 (NKJV) — 25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.** Everything that is needed to preserve the preaching of the gospel as long as this world continues God will provide to you.

Now is this a blanket promise that you will never suffer hard times; that there will always be a four course meal on the table, a freezer full of meat, gas heating, an extra guest room down stairs, and the latest fashion on your shoulders? No where in our text does God say, eat, drink, and be merry; in fact, He warns against such an attitude that takes no care for tomorrow. He warns against us becoming so accustomed to the comforts of this world that we don’t ever want to leave. That complacency is what leads us to forget about God; to forget what is most important in this world; to stop seeking the kingdom. The kingdom of God comes first. Sometimes God knows that the best thing for our spiritual wellbeing, for our faith, is not to have the comfort we desire. Sometimes what drives us back to a reliance on our heavenly Father is when we lose that investment, when we lose that job we’ve had for ten years or more; when some tragedy strikes, or when we get bad news, our heavenly Father is the only source of stability. **His righteousness**, as v.33 says, is what calms our fears. That is because His righteousness is seen in Jesus – the satisfactory payment for all our sins and the source of eternal life. Sometimes the way in which our Father “adds all these things” to us is by taking His beloved children home to be with Him in heaven. Through victory over death, our Father ushers us out of this world of worry and into paradise where all things beyond our wildest dreams are added to us. The kingdom comes first in every decision your heavenly Father makes for you in your life – love is always behind His plan.

2. In your attitude toward your heavenly Father

We have seen how the kingdom of God comes first in our Lord’s attitude toward us, now how can the kingdom come first also in your attitude toward your heavenly Father.

v.24 — How can worrying amount to serving mammon? “Mammon” is a term the Bible uses to refer to “earthly wealth and security”. How does worrying about money, clothes, house, etc. lead us to “despise” our Lord? An ungodly attachment to our possessions leads us to a detachment from the lasting possessions of faith in God

and heaven. This is where we begin serving our earthly needs, worrying about mammon, and withdraw our service to God's kingdom. In Galatians 6 from our Scripture text we read, **Galatians 6:8 (NKJV) — 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**

v.25, 27; The English Standard Version translates v.27, "**Matthew 6:27 (ESV) — 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?**" This translation seems to get at the meaning of what Jesus says. By worrying, by being consumed with what will happen tomorrow, or in ten years, or at retirement, so on; by worrying, can you add even one day on to your life? No – in fact the opposite is probably true; how often do hairs turn gray or even disappear during those stressful years. Stress is associated with all kinds of health issues. So as Jesus says, (v.25b).

Prior to our text in v.19 Jesus has in a way introduced this concept when He says, (6:19). If we invest our trust, our security, our time, our concern only in earthly treasures then what happens when "thieves break in and steal," when "moth and rust destroy"? We think then "God doesn't love me." "God is punishing me."

Think of it in financial terms. We find ourselves so invested in our anxieties about this world that we withdraw our investment in our Lord. We stack up so many "dollars of concern" in what needs to be done to make my earthly stay a happy and satisfying one that our "interest" in what needs to be done for the kingdom plummet.

This last week while I was at Great Lakes Pastoral Conference I heard a striking devotion from one of the brethren. In his devotion he was contrasting his home on earth with his home in heaven. He spoke of how things were actually going fine in his home life – children were doing well, finances o.k., things were good. He then went on to actually pray to God that if it were necessary He take some of these comforts away. He prayed that these comforts would not lead him to forget about His heavenly home; that he would not become so used to living in this world that he would never want to leave.

His text was Hebrews 13:14, **Hebrews 13:14 (NKJV) — 14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.** This city, this home, this world we live in will not continue forever. We seek the one to come.

What we think we need and what we really need are sometimes two different things. Consider someone from a country like Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya where drought and famine have caused poverty levels to be among the highest in the world. If we were to ask the question, "what do you need?" – would they answer in the same way that I would?

v.32 — The greatest way we could prepare for harder times ahead would not be to worry or spend every moment trying to secure our earthly future. We prepare for harder times by turning to our heavenly Father in His word NOW. (v.33) While times are comfortable we should be ever more zealous to focus on the needs of the kingdom

NOW. We should be seeking His righteousness NOW. This means growing to a deeper understanding of how Christ has secured all things needed for our welfare. We should immerse ourselves in texts such as Romans 8, which says, (**See Romans 8:31-39**).

Let us be as the widow in our Old Testament reading, who was not afraid to give Elijah her last handful of flour and last bit of oil, because she knew it was for the good of the kingdom; she knew the Lord would provide what was best for her and her son.

There is nothing in our text that says we shouldn't plan for the future, it simply says we shouldn't worry about it, be anxious about it, get distracted by it. Seeking the kingdom of God includes providing for yourself and those who depend on you; it includes using your goods wisely, saving, and not wasting. But in all this we do it in the name of the kingdom; we seek God's righteousness and not our own.

v.34 — The troubles of today are enough for us to deal with. We do not need to be worried about what will happen tomorrow. God will provide. As it says in **Psalm 91**, — **1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ... 9 Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place, 10 No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; 11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.**

Let us be like little children; Our three boys rarely think in terms of tomorrow, let alone worry about it. They trust their parents to provide. Compared to us, earthly parents, how much more reliable is our Father in heaven? **Matthew 24:35 (NKJV) — 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.** As the last verse of that hymn by Caroline Berg sings, *“Though He giveth or He taketh, God His children ne'er forsaketh; His the loving purpose solely to preserve them pure and holy.”* Amen.