

**Matthew 6: 19-34** Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. <sup>22</sup>“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, <sup>23</sup>but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. <sup>25</sup>“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup>“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

What will be the greatest priority in your life in 2022? If we had the opportunity to ask the physical Jesus this question, how do you think he would answer? It is highly likely that his answer would be ‘Seek **first** the kingdom of God and his righteousness’ (**vv33** above). Jesus is telling us that the greatest priority for our life in 2022 and for all our time on this earth is

**the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God.**

What does it take priority over? In **vv25 and 31** (above), Jesus commands us not to be worried about what we will eat, drink or wear. In the culture of the time, that would have sounded reckless. Food and drink were not always to hand as they are now. It was not a culture like ours where luxuries and greed were taken for granted. Then, if you had simple clothing, food and drink, you were relieved. The priority was what was necessary for survival.

Yet Jesus speaks into that culture and into ours (**vv 31,33**), saying that:

**The kingdom of God and the righteousness of God have a greater priority  
than the things that are necessary for life on earth.**

**Before** we consider

- What we are going to eat, drink and wear
- Where we are going to go on holiday, or where our children will be educated
- How we will invest our money or what car we will buy

**We need first to consider the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God.**

This is not how we live our lives currently. Most of us don’t even know what the kingdom of God is! We know about all the material things, but if we were asked to define the kingdom of God, we would not be able to. This is because it is not the priority in our life.

The kingdom of God is not primarily about a physical place on earth. **It is primarily about the King who rules.**

It is about the rule of God over the lives of his people as we submit to him. That rule will one day be made visible when Jesus returns to this earth to reign. We like to think we are the master of our own life, but we are not.

- God is the master of our life. Whether we live or die this year belongs to God, not us.
- God rules our life. As believers, we come to see that God is a good King and we will gladly submit to his rule.

The rule of God is to be the priority in our marriage, our family, church, work and social life. It is to come before everything, even the necessities of life.

Alongside the rule of God sits the righteousness of God. When you get up in the morning, rather than thinking about food, drink and what you will wear, are you seeking to be filled and clothed with Christ? Are you seeking to be holy? Jesus tells us why this matters (**Matt 5:20** see p4).

The Pharisees were considered to be the highest standard of righteousness, but Jesus tells us it is not enough if you want to be in God's kingdom. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount (**Matt Ch 5-7** please read in your Bible), Jesus shows us that the standard of our righteousness needs to be as high as God's righteousness.

- That is why we need Jesus – none of us are righteous in ourselves

God has sent his Son into the world to live a righteous life for us. Jesus lived in perfect obedience to his Father and through faith in him, Jesus' righteousness is credited to us so that we are considered righteous by God. **If we are Christians, Christ has made us righteous**, and that righteousness needs to be worked out in our life.

**Our priority this year needs to be to seek God's rule in our life and to seek his righteousness so that we become more and more like Jesus.**

This will show itself in four aspects of glorifying God.

- 1. Seeking the King for the glory of God** – God's kingdom is primarily concerned with the King so **we will be concerned to seek God himself**

Ahead of all our concerns over the practicalities of life, our priority must be to

- Know God in all his fulness
- See the glory of God especially as it is seen in Jesus Christ
- Grow in our knowledge and love of God

When we lose something precious to us, we will earnestly seek for it. How much more then should we take to heart the call of the writer to the Hebrews to earnestly seek God (**Hebrews 11:6** see p4)? Yet we are more concerned with the things that make up our life on earth (both necessities and luxuries) than we are with seeking God.

**To seek first the kingdom of God is to seek God first**

It is for this that you were created by God and saved from your sin, and it is where your ultimate joy lies. Nothing that God has given us for our life on earth will bring you lasting joy. Food, drink, clothing etc are all given to enable you to know God better and that is why he gives them to us.

The goal of salvation in Christ is that we get to see God (**Matt 5:8** see p4) and to see him in all his glory, delighting in him. There is no greater goal for your life this year than to see more of the glory of God and to delight more in him than you did last year. To aim for this as a church will make 2022 the happiest year of our life together.

Seeking first the kingdom of God also means seeking God's rule in your life as an overflow of salvation, leading to

- 2. Life lived for the glory of God** – In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows us what kingdom righteousness looks like (**Matt 5:21-6:4** see p4). We see:

- a) Right use of anger (**5:21-26**); b) faithfulness in marriage (**5:27-32**); c) keeping your word (**5:33-37**); d) not retaliating when someone has hurt you (**5:38-42**); e) loving your enemies (**5:43-48**); f) giving to the needy (**6:1-4**).

Supremely we see this life in God. When Jesus, the Son of God, was on earth, this is the life he lived and it is the life he calls us to. **As we live like Jesus on earth, so people glorify God (Matt 5:13-16** see p4)

3. **Prayer offered for the glory of God** – In a culture where food, drink and clothing were in short supply, as in Jesus' day, it might seem obvious that prayer for the necessities of life would be the first priority.

**Yet Jesus taught us to ask first for those things that relate to God's rule -**

**your kingdom come, your will be done (Matt 6:9-13 see p4).**

- Before we ask for food, we ask that God will establish his rule in our heart
- Before we ask for forgiveness, we ask for an obedient heart to do God's will on earth

Our praying in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not like that. We start with our needs! Jesus tells us that we can go on to ask for our physical needs to be met, and to ask for forgiveness, and God is indeed glorified in meeting our needs, but

**in our praying, concern for God's kingdom and God's will should come first**

When we pray with more concern for God's kingdom than for our needs, God is glorified. By putting God's concerns before ours, we honour him as being supremely more valuable than our next meal, and even than life itself.

4. **Money used for the glory of God** – for Jesus, putting the kingdom of God first means using our money for Gospel work (**vv19-21, 24** above). It means investing in mission and the proclamation of the Gospel, perhaps by funding Bibles for church leaders in poor countries, rather than using it for fine food and wine or other luxuries. Those who do that cannot lose. To send a Bible to a church leader who then is better equipped to share the Gospel, leading to people being saved is **an investment that will last for eternity.**

Jesus promises that as we seek his kingdom first, by using our money for the Gospel,

**His Father will take care of all our needs.**

We see from the end of **v33** (above) that our Father knows what we need before we ask, and he is going to provide everything we need through this coming year. As we really trust him to do that, we are freed to use our wealth and our time for the sake of the kingdom. Thus God is glorified in two ways:

- He is glorified in being the God who provided for us. As we give, he gives back in greater abundance and we praise him in amazement
- He is glorified in being the God who is worth more than food, drink and everything else. When we say no to a material possession because we want to say yes to providing something for God's kingdom, then God is seen to be worth more than things.

This year, we all have a choice about what our priority will be. We can make our practical needs and wants our priority **or** we can make God's rule and righteousness our priority. No matter how we choose,

**we will never impoverish God.**

**However, what we choose will either impoverish our souls or enrich them.**

**If we choose to make material things our priority**, then our souls will be impoverished but **if we choose to make God's rule and righteousness our priority then:**

- We will have treasure in heaven
- We will see the Lord providing for our needs
- We will be glorifying God
- We will have souls that are happy in him

**What is going to be your priority in 2022?**

**Matt 5:20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Hebrews 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

**Matt 5:8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God

**Matt 5:21-6:4** “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’<sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother<sup>[a]</sup> will be liable to judgment; whoever insults<sup>[a]</sup> his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell<sup>[a]</sup> of fire.<sup>23</sup> So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.<sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.<sup>26</sup> Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.<sup>[f]</sup>

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’<sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.<sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.<sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

<sup>31</sup> “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’<sup>32</sup> But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’<sup>34</sup> But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,<sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.<sup>36</sup> And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.<sup>37</sup> Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.<sup>[g]</sup>

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’<sup>39</sup> But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.<sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic,<sup>[h]</sup> let him have your cloak as well.<sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.<sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,<sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.<sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?<sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

<sup>6</sup> “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.<sup>2</sup> “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.<sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,<sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

**Matt 5:13-16** <sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.<sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that<sup>[b]</sup> they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

**Matt 6:9-13** <sup>9</sup> Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread,<sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.