

SEEK THE KINGDOM

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: MATTHEW 6.16-34



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Sermon on the Mount: Seek the Kingdom: Matthew 6.16-34
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Matthew 6.6-34: Introduction

Jesus is working toward telling us that seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness must be the defining motif and driving force of our lives. It requires great discipline to live this way, and that includes prayer (vv. 1-10) and fasting, as well as training our hearts to desire heavenly treasures more than those we may accumulate on earth.

We must make our bodies work for inside-out righteousness, beginning with our eyes, but including all our senses. We want our bodily members to let the light of God into our souls, and to keep out the darkness of sin and unbelief. That way we will serve God only; we won't have to worry about any temporal needs, for we'll know He cares for us. And we can get on with the work of seeking His Kingdom and righteousness day by day.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Fasting

Pray Psalm 147.6-11.

The LORD lifts up the humble;
He casts the wicked down to the ground.
Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
Sing praises on the harp to our God,
Who covers the heavens with clouds,
Who prepares rain for the earth,
Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.
He gives to the beast its food,
And to the young ravens that cry.
He does not delight in the strength of the horse;
He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.
The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
In those who hope in His mercy.

Sing Psalm 147.6-11.

(St. Anne: [*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*](#))

The humble God exalts above; the wicked He casts down.
Sing thanks to this great God of love; let songs of praise abound.

He brings refreshing rain to earth and feeds the beasts so dear.
He puts in man's strength naught of worth, but loves those who God fear.

Read and meditate on Matthew 6.16-18.

Prepare.

1. What did Jesus warn about when we are fasting?
2. Why should we fast so that only God knows about it?

Meditate.

With respect to fasting, we notice in the first place that Jesus said “when”, not “if” you fast. There is an assumption that, in the Kingdom of God, where righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit are the defining attributes, fasting is a practice which citizens take up from time to time. Given the example of our King, this only makes sense.

In the background of Jesus’ teaching about fasting are God’s own words in Isaiah 58.6-9:

*“Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?”*

Then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I *am*.'"

Fasting, rightly practiced, entails more than simply abstaining from familiar food and drink for a period of time. And it certainly must not include any outward demonstrations to signal our piety or spirituality to others (Matt. 6.16). In times of fasting, believers must be especially energetic (v. 17) and active in caring for others. Thus, by denying both bodily needs and personal interests, we learn to draw on the spiritual power, active within us by God's Spirit, from which true righteousness comes.

When we fast in this way, we share in the sufferings of Jesus (as Paul might say, Phil. 3.10), Who denied His divine prerogatives and privileges, fasting from His heavenly throne, to come among us as our Servant. In Him the light of the new morning breaks upon us through the darkness of His suffering and death. We who are oppressed by sin are set free in His redemption. Our nakedness is covered by His righteousness; our flesh is healed in His resurrection; and His righteousness comes to us by His Word and Spirit. The glory of the Lord "has our back", and the Lord Himself stands ready to hear us when we cry to Him.

Jesus gave us not only a model of prayer, but a model for how to fast, so that we may fulfill all the righteousness of His Kingdom. The reward we may expect from our fasting comes not from the admiration of men, but the favor and glory of our heavenly Father (v. 18).

Reflect.

1. What are some ways that you might practice the discipline of fasting more consistently?
2. What should you expect to be doing during times when you are fasting? How might this season of accelerated serving take shape in your Personal Mission Field?
3. What must you be careful to guard against whenever you are fasting?

[Fasting] is pleasing to God, only so far as it is directed to another object: and that is, to train us to abstinence, to subdue the lust of the flesh, to excite us to earnestness in prayer, and to testify our repentance, when we are affected by the view of the tribunal of God. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Matthew 6.16-18)

Show me how to fast for Your glory, Lord, and help me do so as I...

Pray Psalm 147.12-20.

Praise God, Who meets the needs of all His creatures. Receive His Word today, and pray for someone with whom to share it.

Sing Psalm 147.12-20.

Psalm 147.12-20 (St. Anne: [*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*](#))

O praise your God, Jerusalem, O Zion, praise the Lord!
He strengthens those who trust in Him with blessings from His Word.

Around us He has spread His peace; our borders are secure.
His bounty daily shall increase; His grace to us is sure!

His Word to earth runs to and fro to carry out His will;
He brings the rain, He sends the snow, and none can keep Him still.

His Word He to His Church bestows – His promises and Law.
No other nation God thus knows: praise Him with songs of awe!

2 Treasures in Heaven

Pray Psalm 63.1, 2.

O God, You are my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.
So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.

Sing Psalm 63.1, 2.

(Nun Danken: [*Now Thank We All Our God*](#))

O God, You are my God, and earnestly I seek You!
My soul thirsts and my flesh in weariness now greets You!
Thus I would see Your face, with glory and pow'r arrayed,
in this Your holy place – Your beauty here displayed.

Read Matthew 6.16-21; meditate on verses 19-21.

Prepare.

1. What does Jesus mean by “treasures on earth”?
2. What kind of treasures should we “lay up”?

Meditate.

We would expect that a lifestyle devoted to inside-out righteousness, a way of life that gives priority to the soul of man and Kingdom of God, would make material interests of strictly secondary concern. This is Jesus’ teaching here, and it will be His teaching throughout His earthly ministry.

The word translated “lay up” is, in the Greek, *θησαυρίζετε*, *thesaurizete*. Do you see the word *thesaurus* there? A thesaurus is a treasure-trove of synonyms, a resource helping us to learn a variety of ever-more precise ways of saying something. Jesus says we should not “treasure up” things that, by their very nature, perish with the using, or even without using them. Material things have a relatively short shelf-life, when compared with the eternity that stretches before us. When we treasure these above all, we devote our vision, attention, efforts, and energy to accumulating a trove of material things, because we think this is where happiness and security lie.

But of course, these things for which we accumulate material wealth do not come from such wealth. Happiness – blessedness – is found within the Kingdom of God, under the rule of King Jesus, and in the power of His Word and Spirit. The security of our souls comes from hearing and obeying the Word of the Lord. Within the Kingdom of God, treasures of true and spiritual life are available to us – righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Jesus counsels us to treasure-up these, and to make them our constant objective and delight.

But we will only do this when it is our heart’s desire to gain the life God has in store for us in Jesus. Is this where your heart is? Look around at the way you use your time, the things that occupy your mind, the stuff that gets your heart beating rapidly, and that you long to possess. What do these say

about the treasure you are seeking to lay up for yourself? If they're not the treasure of spiritual things, it may be that you've never truly seen the great value of these. Turn to Jesus, and consider Him (Heb. 3.1; 12.3); He will show you beauty, goodness, and truth that never fades, and can never be exhausted in this life or the next. They who are truly righteous seek the treasures of heaven to enrich their earthly lives.

Reflect.

1. What is involved in "laying up" treasures in heaven?
2. Why are heavenly treasures more to be desired than earthly ones?
3. How can believers help one another to set their hearts and minds on the treasures of heaven?

If someone does something with the intent of gaining earthly profit, that one's heart is upon the earth. How can a heart be clean while it is wallowing in the mud? On the other hand, if it be fastened upon heaven it will be clean, for whatever is heavenly is unpolluted. Augustine (354-430), Sermon on the Mount 2.13.44

Teach me to treasure heavenly treasures, O Lord, so that I...

Pray 63.3-11.

At the top of the list of heavenly treasures is the steadfast love of the Lord. Seek to know it more and more every day, and give God thanks and praise for the riches He has laid up for your soul.

Sing Psalm 63.3-11.

Psalm 63.3-11 (Nun Danken: [*Now Thank We All Our God*](#))

Your steadfast love, O Lord, than life is better to me.
So I will praise Your Name, and bless You, Lord, most truly.
My soul is richly blest; to You my hands I raise,
and open now my mouth to offer joyful praise.

By night, Lord, fill my mind with pleasant meditation;
for You have been my help as 'neath Your wings I station.
My soul clings, Lord, to You; I rest in Your Right Hand.
May all who seek my life in Your displeasure stand.

Unto the sword's strong pow'r let our foes be delivered!
Pursue them to devour their mortal lives forever!
In God will we rejoice and glory in His grace;
but all who live by lies shall perish from His face.

3 Bad Eyes?

Pray Psalm 101.1, 2.

I will sing of steadfast love and justice;
to you, O LORD, I will make music.
I will ponder the way that is blameless.
Oh when will you come to me?
I will walk with integrity of heart
within my house...

Sing Psalm 101.1, 2.

(Jesus I Come)

I will of lovingkindness now sing – praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!
Justice and mercy, Lord, let me bring – praise to You, holy Lord!
I will the blameless way ever heed; no worthless thing my eyes shall impede.
When will You come and care for my need? Praise to You, holy Lord!

Read Matthew 6.16-23; meditate on verses 22, 23.

Prepare.

1. How does Jesus refer to the eye in these verses?
2. How does what we look at – or contemplate or think about – affect our body?

Meditate.

The human being is a whole person, body and soul. The secular campaign – carried on relentlessly by schools from kindergarten to PhD – to deny any spiritual essence to the world is doomed to fail. People know they have souls. They know their souls can be made bad, filled with dark and disturbing notions and inclinations, and corrupted unto wickedness. They also know that their souls can be enlightened with joy, hope, and love, and that they can do good for others.

The eye of the body provides an entrance to the soul. It also symbolizes all the other ways that images, sounds, ideas, and dispositions enter our soul. What we look at and what we entertain in our minds and hearts will affect our entire body. We need to watch over our souls, so that what God has set in us for righteousness does not become corrupt and hijacked for evil; and watching over the soul involves watching what you, well, watch. What you read. What you view on the Internet, watch on TV, see in films. If we are always watching bad people doing duplicitous, self-seeking things; or goofy people doing ridiculous, self-denigrating things; or pragmatic people doing whatever they think they can get away with, this will affect us.

But if we set our eyes – and the eye of our heart (Eph. 1.15-23) – on seeing the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Lord (cf. Col. 3.1-3), then the light of Christ will shine in our soul, shaping our thoughts and affections and setting our values on the Rock of salvation, so that we will be more likely to do good works for the glory of God.

The righteousness that characterizes the Kingdom of God does not simply happen in us the longer we are believers in Jesus. We must guard our hearts; think with the mind of Christ; and look to the Law of God for our basic values and ethical choices (Matt. 5.17-19), and bask always in the light of the glory of Jesus' face (2 Cor. 4.6).

Keep your eye healthy, and your soul will thrive as well, and lead your body into good works, rather than wickedness.

Reflect.

1. What's involved in keeping your "eye" healthy?
2. How are our senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell – connected to our soul? That is, how do they affect what we think about, desire, and value?
3. What are the consequences of failing to maintain healthy eyes?

For just as when the eyes are blinded, some of the ability of the other members is diminished, their light being quenched, so also when the mind is depraved, your life will be filled with countless evils. As therefore in the body it is our aim to keep the eye sound, so also it should be our aim to keep the mind sound in relation to the soul. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew 203*

Shine Your light into my soul, O Lord, so that today I will...

Pray Psalm 101.3-8.

Commit yourself throughout this day to seeing the Lord and following faithfully in the path of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit.

Sing Psalm 101.3-8.

Psalm 101.3-8 ([Jesus I Come](#))

I will the works of wicked men scorn – praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!
They will not grip me, evening or morn: Praise to You, holy Lord!
Separate every sin from my heart; slanderers all from me shall depart.
I will not suffer pride in my heart: Praise to You, holy Lord!

Let me with saints and faithful ones dwell – praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!
He Who is just shall care for me well: Praise to You, holy Lord!
Naught of deceit or falsehood shall be ever allowed a place within me.
Daily let sin and wickedness flee: Praise to You, holy Lord!

4 What You Serve

Pray Psalm 135.1-7.

Praise the LORD!
Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD!
You who stand in the house of the LORD,
In the courts of the house of our God,
Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant.
For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself,
Israel for His special treasure.
For I know that the LORD is great,
And our LORD is above all gods.
Whatever the LORD pleases He does,
In heaven and in earth,
In the seas and in all deep places.
He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain;
He brings the wind out of His treasuries.

Sing Psalm 135.1-7.

(St. Gertrude: [*Onward, Christian Soldiers*](#))
Praise the Savior, praise Him, for His Name is good.
Sing, for it is pleasant, to our glorious God!
All whom He has chosen and redeemed by grace,
praise His Name together, praise Him in this holy place!

Refrain v. 1

Praise the Name of Jesus, you who serve His Word!
Raise your voice and praise our good and glorious Lord!

Great and sovereign, Jesus rules o'er all above,
doing as He pleases, sovereign in His love.
Clouds and seas obey Him, lightning, too, and rain;
He the winds brings forth in pow'r and sends them back again.

Refrain

Read Matthew 6.16-24; meditate on verse 24.

Prepare.

1. According to Jesus, what can we *not* do?
2. What is the consequence of trying to do that?

Meditate.

I'm convinced that, for many believers, the reason their Christian life is not more exciting, emboldening, adventurous, challenging, satisfying, and joyful is that they have never learned how to serve the Lord *only*. They believe in Jesus. They're active in their church. But where is the joy? Where is the eager anticipation of seeing the Lord face to face? Where is the excitement and satisfaction that come from doing all things to the glory of God? Where is the ready witness for Christ at every

opportunity?

These things are missing because we don't think much about Jesus apart from our church activities. For the rest of our lives, we serve the god of making a living, or the god of just taking it easy, or the god of looking good to others, or the god of pursuing my own interests – all of which are just different manifestations of the one great god served by most people in our day: *Me*.

Me may take the form of money, as Jesus indicated. It may also take the form of fun, power, vain appearances, or any number of time-wasting self-indulgences. If we spend the bulk of our time trying to figure out how to satisfy the demands of *Me*, we won't have much room for Jesus in our lives. If your idea of a meaningful life is to serve *Me* with the best of your time, energy, and effort, then you will find yourself ultimately being disloyal to God.

Jesus insists that we will only find our true selves, our most fruitful and joyful selves, by being loyal to Him and serving Him in everything we do.

The inward life of righteousness is all-consuming. And it consumes us as we serve Jesus and experience the true meaning of "blessed".

Reflect.

1. How can you tell when you're paying more attention to *Me* than to Jesus?
2. What can you do to help ensure that you do everything in life unto the Lord and for His glory?
3. What can Christians do to help one another be more fully devoted to serving Jesus as Savior and Lord?

Therefore, whoever wishes to love God and to beware of offending him, let such a one cleanse the upright intention of his heart from all duplicity. In this way, he will "think of the Lord in goodness and seek him in simplicity of heart."
Augustine (354-430), *Sermon on the Mount 2.14.48*

Lord, show me the idols that I'm still serving in my life, and help me to...

Pray Psalm 135.13-21.

Today, commit to the Lord that you will serve Him, and only Him, in everything that is before you.

Sing Psalm 135.13-21.

Psalm 135.13-21 (St. Gertrude: [Onward, Christian Soldiers](#))

Evermore Your Name, O Savior, shall endure!

Your renown throughout all ages is secure.

For You have compassion, vindicating all
those who serve Your Name and on Your saving mercy call.

Refrain, v. 1

Praise the Name of Jesus, you who serve His Word!

Raise your voice and praise our good and glorious Lord!

Vain the nations serve the idols of their hands.

Mouths and ears they have but cannot understand.

Every idol vain is, lacking life or breath.

All who serve them, like them, shall be lost to lasting death.

Refrain

Bless the Lord you people, all who love the Lord!
Bless Him, you who trust His sovereign, holy Word!
Bless the Lord from Zion, Him Who in it dwells.
Praise Him! Lift your voices, all His grace and glory tell!

Refrain

5 Don't Worry

Pray Psalm 104.1-5.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, You are very great:
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
Who cover *Yourself* with light as *with* a garment,
Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.
He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters,
Who makes the clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,
Who makes His angels spirits,
His ministers a flame of fire.
You who laid the foundations of the earth,
So *that* it should not be moved forever...

Sing Psalm 104.1-5.

(Creation: [*Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim*](#))

Bless God, my soul! How great are You, Lord,
with majesty and splendor adorned.
The heav'ns He stretches like a tent,
and lays His chambers in the firmament.
He rides the wings of winds on high
and makes His messengers flaming fly.
The earth on its foundation stands,
established forever by His hands.

Read Matthew 6.16-32; meditate on verse 25-32.

Prepare.

1. This long passage has “bookends”. What are they?
2. How many different things did Jesus mention to cue us not to worry?

Meditate.

Worry robs you of joy. Destroys concentration. Makes you lose sleep. Distracts you when you should be paying attention. And makes you not a very pleasant person to be around.

Other than that, worry's not such a big deal.

But Jesus thinks it is. This is one of the longest *pericopes* in this sermon. Jesus knows what's in us. He knows what we're like. And in these verses, He shows us how to deal with one of most common and most pressing problems every human must confront: worry.

Jesus says, “Don't worry.” Easy for Him to say. But what is worry? Worry is a state of upset that fills our minds with worst case scenarios and our hearts with fear. Worry comes about because we realize that we aren't sovereign. Stuff happens, bad stuff sometimes; and there's nothing we can do to control it. We aren't sovereign.

And that's precisely Jesus' point. We aren't sovereign, but God is. God loves all His creation. And if He loves birds and lilies and grass, He surely loves those for whom Jesus came to die. And just as He provides everything all creation needs to exist and flourish, so He will provide for those He loves. Everywhere we look throughout the creation, we see evidence of God's providing grace. So instead of worrying, we should let creation remind us of the words of Jesus, and rest in the sovereignty of God.

Worry fomented anxiety and fear. The antidote to worry is to seek Jesus and His Kingdom and righteousness (v. 33). When seeking like this is the overarching and all-defining priority and motif of our lives, worry won't stand a chance. Day by day, in all our activities, focused on Christ and His coming-on-earth Kingdom, we will know hope, confidence, and joy; nothing can make us afraid or cause us to worry when our focus is as it should be. Each day will have its unique challenges and struggles. But if we are seeking the Kingdom that is coming on earth as it is in heaven, nothing will keep us from realizing everything the Lord has in store for us.

A friend reminded me once that a penny is a very small thing, unless you hold it right up to your eye. Then it's all you can see. This is what we do when we worry.

Put your worries in a proper perspective; bring Jesus right up next to your eye. See Him in His sovereign beauty, power, and love. Then keep focused on Him, come what may. You won't worry for long.

Reflect.

1. What kinds of things typically cause people to worry? What are some ways we try to deal with worry?
2. Whenever we feel like we're starting to worry about something, what should we do (cf. Phil. 4.6, 7)?
3. How can the things of creation help us keep our proper focus in the face of each day's challenges?

*Do you see how Jesus clarifies what has been obscure by comparing it to what is self-evident? Can you add one cubit, or even the slightest measure, to your bodily life span by worrying about it? Can you by being anxious about food add moments to your life? Hence it is clear that it is not our diligence but the providence of God, even where we seem to be active, that finally accompanies everything. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 21.3**

Lord, today, whenever I feel myself starting to worry, help me to...

Pray Psalm 104.24-35.

Put before the Lord everything that you might worry about today, and anything that might cause you to be anxious. Then praise Him that He has made all this, rules all this, and is working all things according to the counsel of His will, and for good.

Sing Psalm 104.24-35.

Psalm 104.24-35 (Creation: [*Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim*](#))

How many are Your works, O Lord,
which You have created by Your Word!
The earth and sea with creatures teem –
they look to You to care and feed.
You give to them, they gather all;

You hide Your face, they fail and fall.
You take their breath, they gasp and die;
You send Your Spirit, they revive.

Lord, let Your glory long endure;
rejoice! His works are ever sure!
He looks on earth, it quails and quakes,
as we our songs of praises make.
Lord, let our meditation rise
and bring great pleasure in Your eyes.
Consumed shall sinners ever be;
O, bless and praise the Lord with me!

6 First, Always, and in Everything

Pray Psalm 72.1-8.

Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's Son.
He will judge Your people with righteousness,
And Your poor with justice.
The mountains will bring peace to the people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.
He will bring justice to the poor of the people;
He will save the children of the needy,
And will break in pieces the oppressor.
They shall fear You
As long as the sun and moon endure,
Throughout all generations.
He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing,
Like showers *that* water the earth.
In His days the righteous shall flourish,
And abundance of peace,
Until the moon is no more.
He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.

Sing Psalm 72.1-8.

(Martyrdom: *Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed*)

O give the King Your judgment, Lord, and righteousness Your Son;
and let Him judge by Your good Word the need of every one.

Let now the mountains ring with peace, the hills in righteousness.
Let justice rise, oppression cease, and all the needy bless.

Let nations fear You while the sun and moon endure on high;
refresh, renew us, every one, like sweet rain falling from the sky.

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures;
Let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

Read Matthew 6.16-34; meditate on verses 33, 34.

Prepare.

1. How are we to seek the Kingdom and righteousness of God?
2. How does seeking the Kingdom relate to worry?

Meditate.

We recall that Jesus came to announce that the Kingdom of God was at hand (Matt. 4.17). It was very near. He was its Proclamation and Prototype, its Teacher and Template. What does the Kingdom teach and require? Listen to Jesus. What is it like to enter and dwell in God's Kingdom? Look at Jesus. Jesus set up the world for the coming of His Kingdom, and here we find Him insisting

on it as the defining priority of our lives.

Seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Seek these first, always, and in everything. Seeking the Kingdom is not something we do only when we're involved in "church activities". We are called to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12) as the framework, focus, and future of our lives in Christ. To seek the Kingdom is to devote ourselves, in everything we do, to increasing righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit on earth as in heaven (Rom. 14.17, 18; Matt. 6.10). We won't have anything to worry about if we devote ourselves, day by day, to seeking God's Kingdom.

The Kingdom which Jesus brought near actually burst into time on the first Christian Pentecost, when the Spirit of God came to bring and empower it. It has been increasing like a growing stone since then, and nothing can prevent its ultimate victory when Jesus returns (Dan. 2.44, 45).

If we will give ourselves, every day, to seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, we will find the way and power to persevere through any trials or hardships, any setbacks or disappointments, and all opposition or adversity to realize more of the Presence, promise, and power of Him Who promised to be with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28.20).

Reflect.

1. What is involved in seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?
2. Why must we see this as the all-defining motif and priority of our lives? Is there anything in our lives which is outside the interests of God's Kingdom?
3. Why is seeking the Kingdom an effective antidote to worry and anxiousness?

When he said that the one is to be sought first, Jesus clearly intimates that the other is to be sought later—not that it is to be sought at a later time but that it is to be sought as a thing of secondary importance. He showed that the one is to be sought as our good, that the other is to be sought as something needful for us, but that the needful is to be sought for the sake of the good. Augustine (354-430), Sermon on the Mount 2.16.53

Forgive my sins, O Lord, and grant me mercy and grace to help as I...

Pray Psalm 72.12-20.

Praise God for His King and His Kingdom, and commit yourself before Him to seek His Kingdom and righteousness in everything you do today.

Sing Psalm 72.12-20.

Psalm 72.12-20 (Martyrdom: [*Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed*](#))

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace;
all they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

Let Christ be praised and all the gold of Sheba be His right;
let blessings to His Name be told, and prayers made both day and night.

And let the earth abound with grain, let fields His fame proclaim;
and may our King forever reign and nations bless His great Name.

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.

And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forevermore!

7 The Focus and Framework for Righteousness

Pray Psalm 15.1, 2.

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart...

Sing Psalm 15.1, 2.

(Arlington: [*This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*](#))

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,
forever in God's house shall be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Read and meditate on Matthew 6.16-34.

Prepare.

1. We must discipline ourselves for righteousness. How is that seen in these verses?
2. How does Jesus show us in this passage that true righteousness begins within?

Meditate.

We do not become righteous citizens of the Kingdom of God by the mere passage of time. If the seed of the Kingdom has taken root in our heart, it will bear the fruit of the Kingdom, which is righteousness. But this doesn't just happen.

Our tendency in life is, like flowing water, to follow paths of least resistance. But that will not bring forth the righteousness latent in the Kingdom seed which Christ has sown into the soil of our soul. Disciplines like prayer, fasting, and submitting to God's Word are essential. Those disciplines will come more easily to us if we treasure Christ and His Kingdom more than the things that typically occupy our minds. We lay up treasures in heaven by focusing on Jesus and, within the framework of His Kingdom and righteousness, taking up the disciplines essential for the Lord to bring forth the fruit of righteousness in us.

Let our eyes focus on Christ and on the life to which He calls us, and let us not allow them to become clouded by lesser things. Thus what we focus on will be what bears fruit in our soul.

So we should stop worrying and fretting about material things, and seek the Kingdom and righteousness of Christ first, always, and in everything we do. We need material things – food, clothing, work, and so forth – but we don't *need* to worry about them, because our Father in heaven knows we need such things. Spiritually then, if we discipline ourselves, and invest all our time and energy in seeking the Kingdom, Jesus will clothe us increasingly with His righteousness, and our Father will supply everything we need to keep on the Kingdom path.

Reflect.

1. Why is it necessary to take up certain disciplines in order to increase in righteousness?

2. Where do you need to improve in your use of the disciplines that lead to righteousness?

3. What does it mean for you to seek the Kingdom of God first, always, and in everything?

With a single heart, therefore, and exclusively for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, we ought to do good to all. And in this well-doing we ought not to think about temporal rewards, either exclusively or conjointly with the kingdom of God. Augustine (354-430), Sermon on the Mount 2.17.56

Help me, Lord, to be more disciplined in seeking Your Kingdom, so that...

Pray Psalm 15.1-5.

For the day ahead, what can you do to bring more of the disciplines of the Kingdom to bear on your activities? Bring this to the Lord in prayer, and follow as He leads.

Sing Psalm 15.1-5.

Psalm 15.1-5 (Arlington: [*This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*](#))

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,
Forever in God's house shall be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Let truth from every heart proceed, and slander disappear:
Thus shall we know God's grace indeed and feel His presence near.

No evil to your neighbor speak, nor turn against your friend:
Thus shall you know the end you seek – God's presence without end.

Let every sinner be despised; but those who fear the Lord
Shall honor have before our eyes, according to God's Word.

All they who keep their word in faith, though suffering may ensue,
Shall know the favor of God's grace, His presence ever true.

No greed and no injustice shall they do who seek the Lord;
But on His mercy ever call and stand upon His Word.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why does living the Kingdom life require a new raft of disciplines?
2. How do the verses in this study increase our understanding of righteousness as an inside-out matter?
3. How can we deal with the day-to-day temptations to be distracted by worldly things?
4. In what ways is seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God an effective antidote to worry?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 6.16-34? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.