

## #178 “Seek First His Kingdom And His Righteousness”

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Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.” The first question before us is “How do we seek the kingdom of God?” First of all, we must understand what the kingdom of God is. The kingdom of God is everything that is opposed to the work of the devil. It is a carving out in our hearts of a spiritual wholeness through holiness gained through trusting in the redemptive work of the Savior. This work of justification is what we are to be spreading to the lives of others as we share the gospel and live out changed lives before them. In so doing, we advance the kingdom of God. The second question is “How do we seek His righteousness?” This is the oft-neglected part of emphasis from this verse. Granted, seeking the kingdom of God and the righteousness of Christ is a package deal. It is impossible to advance the gospel while living life as a total hypocrite, for example. But the problem for us as we read Matthew 6:33 is that often we think of advancing the kingdom in large, unusual, big picture kinds of ways while forgetting the little, ordinary ways. Advancing the kingdom might happen through a revival crusade or during the Sunday morning message, but it also happens at the breakfast table, at the grocery store, behind the desk at work, and on the bus to school. **God can advance His kingdom through us as He advances His righteousness in us.** Righteousness pertains to all the areas of life, not just teaching Sunday School or leading the choir. For example, making time to talk with our spouse constitutes righteousness as we honor our marriage bond. Not teasing our brother or sister advances the kingdom in that Christ is advancing His righteousness in us. Respecting our teacher at school, our boss at work, or our annoying neighbor are all ordinary ways that we can seek Christ’s righteousness. Sometimes we think that only “famous” Christians really advance the kingdom, say the ones who are on the radio, who host the conferences, and who run multi-million dollar organizations. But this is not so. The kingdom is not fought merely in dollars raised or broadcasts aired but in righteousness. The kingdom consists of those who pursue righteousness by not overlooking the good that is in their power to do. They care for those whom God has entrusted to their care. They love their family. They are loyal to their friends. They endure in their personal testimony. They open up God’s Word and study it eagerly. They feed their children and pick them up after school. They volunteer with what free time they have. These are all examples of ordinary things that advance the kingdom of God because it shows that we are seeking God’s kingdom first and His righteousness.

Moses talked to a rock and out came pure drinking water. Elijah called down fire from heaven and embarrassed the prophets of Baal. Paul was bitten by a poisonous viper and was miraculously healed. These extraordinary events were accomplished by ordinary men who serve an extraordinary God. We, too, are ordinary people with an extraordinary God. But lest we think that we, too, need to do extraordinary, miraculous things in order

to advance the kingdom of God, we need to remember just how the kingdom is advanced. It is advanced through people who seek first both the kingdom of Christ and His righteousness. People who have their priorities right will advance the kingdom, even if it is in ways that go unseen and unnoticed. We don't have to be in the spotlight to make a difference. We don't have to have a massive following in order to be a testimony. We only need to be a light of righteousness to a dark and dying world. This will open up opportunities to share the gospel, and the kingdom will advance. But this will only happen for those who seek first the kingdom and the righteousness of Christ.

The word "first" is of utmost importance in this passage. Its presence means that unless kingdom mandates and personal holiness are our top and central controlling priorities that we cannot and will not advance the kingdom. The kingdom does not advance just by doing token church service and doing some good things. Those who are double-minded are unstable, unfaithful, and unproductive. In order to advance the kingdom, we must be seeking to serve God, love God, share the good news, and walk uprightly more than we seek anything else. **God has to be first not just in mental ranking but in obedient practice.** Some people have God as one compartment of their lives, being on par with a variety of other interests and life purposes. God says that we must seek His kingdom first. In other words, God's will must trump our own selfish agendas and ideas of what we want to do with our lives, let alone with today. But the point that we need to remember is that putting God first does not mean that we neglect other ordinary areas of our lives as if they are not spiritual enough. We seek God first by honoring our marriages, spending time with our kids, and doing the little things right. Sometimes it can feel as if we are not accomplishing anything spiritual because all we are doing is changing diapers, taking the car in for repair, and so on. But if we do all things in a way honoring to God and while trying to be a testimony, we are seeking the kingdom first, and we are therefore advancing it as well (Colossians 3:17, 23).

Life is made up of lots of ordinary day to day kinds of events with a few extraordinary ones sprinkled in. **If we are faithful and seeking the righteousness of Christ first in the ordinary things, when God asks us to do something extraordinary, we will be ready.**