

Sunday January 28th, 2007

‘Seek First...’

1). Mt 6:31 *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"* 32 *"For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

a). As we look at our scripture here from Matthew Chapter 6 we will be especially familiar with verse 33 – ‘But seek first...’

b). In many ways this has become the watch word for the Kingdom believer – and rightly so.

c). However, I would like us to note the juxtaposition of worrying about the now – ‘what shall we eat?...’ and seeking in the present, that which is still to come, ‘seek first’.

i/ It is the Gentiles, the unsaved who are preoccupied with the things of this life, worrying about today and tomorrow. We have a far more important focus that we should not be distracted from – the root meaning of worrying.

d). And, I would like us to see that in the first half of verse 33 there are two things for us not to be distracted from – we are to seek first – the Kingdom of God – and His righteousness.

e). And I should like us to realize that seeking the Kingdom and seeking His righteousness should be synonymous, but they do not automatically go hand in hand.

f). And this really brings us back to something Cindy taught on during the conference - Jas 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

g). We could for our purposes today equate seeking the Kingdom with hearing the word, and seeking His righteousness with doing the word.

2). We can place the context for our scripture in Matthew within the framework of that which the Lord had said in the previous Chapter – Mt 5:20 *"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

a). The scribes and the Pharisees thrived within a legalistic system of dos and don'ts extracted from God's word, even burdening the people with regulations of their own invention - Mt 15:9 *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*"

b). As a consequence the righteousness that scribes and Pharisees produced was self-righteousness born out of adherence to the letter of the law rather than the Spirit - 2Co 3:6b..... *for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

c). Self-righteousness in any form is unacceptable to God, hence Christ tells the people that unless their righteousness goes beyond self-righteousness they would by no means enter the Kingdom - Isa 64:6 ¶ *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;*

d). Hence they are to seek first His Kingdom and – His righteousness – the righteousness that is to come from God.

3). This is the very thing Paul writes about in - Php 3:8 *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 ¶ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*

a). This is the righteousness that is from God by faith.

4). And to understand this righteousness from God by faith we need only revisit that written about the father of faith – Abraham.

a). We will remember this particular one, of a progressive number of promises that God had made to Abraham concerning his inheritance and his descendants – Ge 15:5 *Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*

b). And we will remember the test that came as a result of the promise Ge 22:1 ¶ *Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

c). And if we then go to God's own commentary on these two interrelated events we will see their significance

d). Heb 11:17 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*

e). Abraham's action in offering up Isaac was by faith. He believed what God had said in Genesis 15 concerning Isaac and the heavenly realm of the Kingdom and therefore in Genesis 22 fully expected God to bring about that which He had promised earlier even if that meant raising his son from the dead.

f). And this event is opened to us further in - Jas 2:21 *Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*

5). What we are seeing here is what we could refer to as a Divine exchange. Abraham believes God and acts upon that belief in faithful obedience. God takes Abraham's faithful obedience and puts it on account for him as righteousness – it is the righteousness that God gives, His righteousness, given to Abraham. And by this Abraham's faith, what he had believed is brought to a place of completion, or to its goal.

i/ A fact that is not insignificant for our purposes –

1Pe 1:9 *receiving the end [Goal] of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

ii/ A man is justified, in relation to the salvation of the soul, the reward of the inheritance, not by believing God alone, but through works that are done in connection with, that come out of, what he has believed – his faith.

a). The word accounted in Genesis 15:6 literally means to weave, as in weaving a fabric – an interesting thought when we look at - Re 19:7 *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

b). Now we understand that the wedding garment that Christ's wife will wear is made up of acts of righteousness – acts of righteousness that those comprising His wife will have performed in the same fashion as Abraham.

i/ Having believed what God has promised concerning our inheritance and then governing our lives accordingly, producing action, works in connection with our faith, bringing our faith – what we have believed to its goal, its completion – resulting in the salvation of our souls.

c). Our acts of faithful obedience in respect of what God has said will be translated into righteousness, the righteousness accounted to us by God. The righteousness that is from God by faith.

d). Ro 1:16 ¶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

(Teach this)

e). It is not enough for us just to increase in knowledge in relation to the Kingdom, even if it is mature knowledge. This must be a time even now when we determine to govern our lives – our actions, our thoughts, our speech, in accordance with the word.

f). In fact mature knowledge of itself must include both faith and works. This is exemplified for us in - 1Co 3:1 ¶ *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

g). In governing our lives, our actions, according to the word is our present protection from the enemy's deceptions, and our future hope of glory.

6). By way of warning let us take note of what we see in -

Re 2:4 *"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

a). Speaking of the church at Ephesus whose first love was the appearing of the King.

b). We have the church in Galatia - Ga 3:1 ¶ *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*

(Teach this)

c). In 2 Peter we find - 2Pe 3:8 ¶ *But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

(Teach this)

d). And in Hebrews - Heb 5:12 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.*

(Teach this)

e). In each of our examples here we find those who were hearers of the word, the word of the Kingdom, who for an unspecified reason ceased to be doers of the word, causing them to turn away from the truth.

f). The parable of the Sower would provide us with the reasons that this would happen. Please don't forget - Mt 13:19 *"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom,*

g). There are those sown by the wayside who do not understand the word, which would not apply to our examples here of course.

h). Then there are those sown in stony places who have no root

i). And those sown amongst the thorns and thistles – the cares of this world – ‘What shall we eat?’ and the deceitfulness of riches.

j). In some measure our examples would fall into the stony places or the thorns- and what should be abundantly clear is that the Christians being written about start out in faith and acting because of their faith, but at some point begin to back off from putting their faith into action. Resulting in their being unfruitful.

f). And this would inevitably lead to being overcome by the work of the Tares and the process of the Leaven.

g). Look at - 1Jo 3:10 *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.*

i/ The word for practice here literally means to perform continually – and this we must do - 2Th 3:13 *But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.*

ii/ And it is shocking to think that failing to practice righteousness, would make us ‘children of the devil’, as our lack of action in respect of faith, would place us in the flesh rather than the Spirit, aligning us more with the devil than with God.

iii/ Remember the rebuke Christ gives to the eternally saved religious leaders of His day - Joh 8:44 *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

7). Given the enormity of the blessing God has bestowed upon us here at Cornerstone there is always the danger that we can become complacent – being content because we hear the word of the kingdom every week, deceiving ourselves into believing that in itself is enough.

i/ Or allowing the organization of the ‘church’ to draw us back into a pre-kingdom ‘church’ mindset.

ii/ Seeking the Kingdom and His righteousness is not just one aspect of our life – it is our life. And if it is less than that we need to change.

a). None of us want to hear from heaven – ‘Oh foolish Cornerstoneians, who has bewitched you...’

b). Perhaps after so successful a conference we should apply Paul’s words all the more in - *Php 3:13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 ¶ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.*

(Teach this in respect of not rejecting what has gone before)

c). Now is not the time to rest on our laurels, now is the time to press on toward the goal.

d). By the very fact of the life change that has taken place because of God working through the time of our conference must mean that our enemy will not be best pleased.

e). It is now that we have to be even more diligent in our prayer, more diligent in our warfare, more diligent in our study, more diligent in our support of one another, more diligent to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

8). Perhaps also it would be helpful for us to remember the historical context in which we find ourselves as we come to the close of this dispensation.

a). We are in the time of the Laodecian church – this is our context.

b). And the words the Lord speaks to the Laodecian church in Revelation are words we need to hear.

c). *Re 3:14 ¶ "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

d). The lukewarmness seen here, as we know, does not relate to God in a general sense, but points to indifference to the message of the Kingdom,

and we should perhaps note that indifference and ignorance are not one and the same thing.

e). We could be well versed in the scriptures concerning the Kingdom, but at the same time indifferent to it because we don't seek to practice righteousness, rather allowing ourselves to be conformed to the things of this world.

9). The solution to indifference is clearly presented - Re 3:18 *"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.*

19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

a). We are to buy from Him Gold refined in the fire which is specifically a reference to our works – and we cannot help but remember the gold, silver and precious stones of - 1Co 3:12 *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

b). And this would have reference to - Eph 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

c). And we surely realize that there is of course a price to pay – 1Pe 4:12 ¶ *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*

d). 1Pe 1:6 ¶ *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,*

e). 1Pe 5:1 ¶ *The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being*

examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. 5 ¶ Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 8 ¶ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10 ¶ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
(Teach these)

10). The white garments now speak for themselves – faith in action in our lives, clothing us with the righteousness that is from God.

11). And of course the chastening – the child training that we are to allow to take place. The training that will produce sons for rulership - Heb 12:5 *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.".....11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.*

12). Re 3:20 *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

a). It is a shocking picture to see Christ outside of His Church, separated from the very ones He purchased with His own blood, seeking to make individual contact with anyone inside who would have ears to hear.

b). Yet this is exactly our experience, exactly why we are here today.

c). We have heard His voice and changed our minds about the King and His coming Kingdom.

d). We have heard what He has said about buying the gold, buying the white garments and applying the eye salve.

e). And we have heard His call to submit ourselves to the child training of sons.

f). And we changed our minds about what we used to do in order to respond to His call.

13). Let us therefore be resolute, be immovable and take what we have heard and put it into practice. Living our lives according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh - Ga 6:9 *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

14). We have always sought to place indifference to the Kingdom at the door of those who are not Kingdom seekers, but perhaps today we need to be more inclusive and include anyone of us who may seek His Kingdom first, but who seek it apart from seeking His righteousness also.

15). 1Co 4:20 *For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.*

a). The Kingdom of God is not just in knowing about it, and not just in talking about it, but in the life changing power of the metamorphosis that is to take place within us as we are faithfully obedient to God's word concerning it.

b). 2Co 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

c). Jas 1:21 *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

16). Let us pray for one another