

Matthew 6:19-34

Living Simply for Kingdom Gain

Introduction: If you're joining us for the first time - Welcome. We're currently teaching through Jesus' most famous teaching known as the Sermon on the mount.

Contrary to what some may think the Sermon on the Mount is not teaching us how to get into the kingdom of God- the Bible makes it clear that entrance to God's kingdom is only through grace - by the sacrificial work of Jesus.

The sermon is also not teaching us how we stay in the kingdom. Rather it is a description of the character and conduct of those who already belong to God's kingdom.

The Sermon is not a call to repentance, though that may be involved at times, it is a description of the expression and evidences of true repentance.

Though anyone can listen and learn from this sermon, and respond to it's offer of the fulness of life, it's primary audience and focus is the disciple of Jesus. It describes the life that necessarily results from genuine salvation; it describes what God is doing in us and wants to do in us. What he is making us into by the work of his spirit and grace upon us.

This sermon of Jesus has been used for centuries to shape and form God's people into the way of Jesus and we are believing that this is what God will do with us as well.

For the last few weeks we have been looking specifically at charity, prayer, and fasting - three spiritual disciplines of the Christian life and the way that they are to be practiced as followers of Jesus. In each of these teachings Jesus has taught us to do them for God, our Father, for his praise, for the reward he gives and not for praise or recognition from others.

The Spiritual Disciplines contained in the Sermon on the Mount - forgiveness, mercy, righteousness, justice, charity, prayer and fasting, etc. are absolutely vital for the Christian in order to renew our hope, refresh our faith and reorder our loves toward our king and his

kingdom. And absolutely necessary for shaping us into the people God intends us to be.

As we go into this next section we can really see once again that Jesus is after our hearts, he's after our desires - He sets before us two treasures, two eyes, two Lords or Masters and two anxieties.. and I believe the question he asks here is - What kind of people do we want to be? What kind of people should we be? Jesus says, What your passion is, where you invest your time money and emotion that is your god, that is who you are really.

1. What We Should Not Do

1. Jesus speaks of Two Treasures, Two Eyes, Two Lords and Two Anxieties. With each of these mini-teachings, Jesus seems to be making one great point. And that point is of allegiance, loyalty - what we live for or what our goal or aim in life is shapes who we are and who we become. Since we are his people, citizens of the Kingdom of God:
 1. We should quit, coveting, hoarding, and storing up treasures where moth, rust, and thieves can ruin it. Where you invest your time money and emotions, that's who you are..
 2. We should quit having a stingy eye - otherwise our whole life will be filled with darkness. In the original language the word "healthy" is also a word for generosity and the word "bad or evil" is a word for being stingy or greedy. Jesus is using play on words to get his point across. Greed fills your life with darkness and you won't be able to see the true path of life.
 3. You cannot serve two masters. Don't let money be your master, serving it is diametrically opposed to serving God.
2. Jesus is saying - make a good investment that can't be tainted. Who doesn't want to make a good investment?
 1. Most people throughout history have thought that fullness of life, security, flourishing comes through gathering as much you can. In the west we tend to measure success by how rich you are and possessions you have. But it doesn't matter if you are the wealthiest or the poorest - humans have the tendency to hoard - we see homeless in our city with two or three shopping carts filled with stuff, some of it completely broken and useless. Why do we do this?

2. It seems that a part of being human is the desire for reward.. we want to see a good return for our labor for our investments, we see accumulating things whether a lot or just nice things as a way of bringing security, comfort and ease to our lives... Jesus points out, however, that no matter how hard you work or how well you invest all things in this world are subject to decay to some degree...We all know this, we've all had this experience. We purchase something new only for it to fade or corrode over time, Things we greatly value and protect can be stolen from us. All earthly hoarding and investments are fleeting at best, and life shattering idols at worst. And yet, we still do it.
3. Listen to the words of the Master - **“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.””“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.” - Luke 12:15-21**
 1. **Life, flourishing, fullness, does not consist in an abundance or possessions.**
4. The rich man in the parable is not a fool because he’s rich and because he gathered, but because he thought by gathering he was secure he could take life easy, eat, drink and be merry and he never considered the absolute necessity of being rich toward God, being rich in righteousness.
 1. Please don’t miss the point here, Jesus isn’t down on the rich, we’ll talk about that in a moment, it doesn’t matter how much we have we are all prone to secure ourselves with possessions, with gathering things, rather than saving and spending for the Kingdom of God.
 2. Let’s talk about the elephant in the room - is the bible, and specifically Jesus, opposed to nice things, to money, to pleasure, to enjoying life, or even a savings account for school, for medical

expenses, for retirement - short answer - absolutely not. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the creator of all things - all beauty, joy, and pleasure. All that we see and enjoy was made by him, for our joy and his glory.. The Bible also teaches about financial responsibility - good stewardship of the resources he has given us.

3. What Jesus and the Bible are opposed to is selfishness, self-preservation, self seeking, building and securing our little kingdoms, GREED, covetousness and specifically here I believe what we call keeping up with the Joneses - God does not value the things that our world and our culture value - worldly success, power for the sake of power, popularity, financial security, the American dream, etc. God's values, God's view of greatness and success is so opposite of our world and our culture.
 1. Sadly we often fail to live out God's way, We live very similarly to the world if not exactly the same. There is *"A low spiritual state of the church, a lukewarm love for Christ, a sickly worldliness, and a lack of vital prayer. The reason? Self-satisfaction that comes from comfort, compromise with capitalism, and accommodation to the consumeristic spirit of our age"* - Michael Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*
 2. *This is antithetical to the life of the Kingdom*

2. What We Should Do

1. We should seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

1. Instead of using money for self, for ease and comfort in this life use, store, save money for investing in God's kingdom, trusting that your Father in heaven who is such a great care taker will also take care of you.
2. What does that look like?
 1. Jesus' parables seem to be the most insightful way to understand his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. In Luke 16 Jesus tells a story of a dishonest Manager. This man was doing shady things and when his master found out he told him to close all his accounts - basically said he was fired. So, this manager went to all his masters debtors and cut them deals, cut their bill in half, putting them in debt to the manager...when the master found out, **"The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world**

are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"

1. Jesus commends this man's shrewdness, why? **Because he used his position and resources to secure himself for the next stage of life.. This is precisely what Jesus is calling his people to do**
2. To seek first the kingdom means that all of the resources, abilities, influence, all our earthly wealth should be used to do God's kingdom work. This should be our single focus and aim.
3. **What is God's Kingdom work?** - Living out the character and principles of his kingdom;
 1. Righteousness - Right doing, right relationships, acts of kindness and generosity, faithfulness, goodness, gentleness.
 2. *Justice - "Mercy or Justice" is inconveniencing yourself for the sake of the "worthless person" especially the widow, orphan, stranger and poor. Injustice is keeping my stuff for my own comfort." - Dr. Gerry Breshears*
 3. *Shalom - bringing reconciliation and peace to the broken world around us through the message and cruciform posture of the Gospel.*
4. To seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness is then to look at the world around us and wherever we see the world out of relationship with God, the brokenness of sin, the injustice of greed and selfishness to diffuse the Gospel in both word and deed.
 1. *Seeking the Kingdom or "Witness will mean embodying God's renewing power in politics and citizenship, economics, and business, education and scholarship, family and neighborhood, media and art, leisure and play. It is not just that we carry out evangelism in these*

areas of life. This is important but not enough. It means that the way we live as citizens, consumers, students, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and friends witnesses to the restoring power of God.” - Michael Goheen, The Drama of Scripture

2. Listen to Paul, **“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” - 1 Timothy 6:17-19**

5. Practically speaking, you can't do everything, but what is one thing you can do - what comfort could you sacrifice for the kingdom's advancement?

6. As Jesus' people he is calling us to make this our aim, our goal, the central focus of our lives.

3. But why should we do this?

1. This is how God created us to live, this is how life works best, this brings true freedom to life, and true flourishing.

1. If we go back to the beginning of the Bible, we see what kind of people God is calling us to be. In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth he placed the first humans in the Garden of Eden - He commanded them to work and till the ground (The same term God will use to describe the priestly temple work of the Levites... work is a form of worship) .. to cultivate the garden. He tells them to have dominion over all the land and the creatures.. Now often when we think of having dominion we think in violent or negative terms - submission through mastery - wrestling, victory in war.
2. But God is the one who is commanding this work of mastery and submission of the earth. The Psalmist will later describe God's provision for all things like this - The earth is filled with the Hešed of Yahweh or The earth's natural resources are proof of Yahweh's covenant faithfulness and love.

3. See Adam and Eve are called to take the natural resources that God has put into the earth and to cultivate them in such a way that they will produce an abundance for many. God is saying in essence 'Rule in the same way that I rule over you' - he has richly provided this garden with fruit trees and vegetables, water.. etc. God's great rule is seen in his service and generosity toward humanity not in his exploitation of it. Rule in this same way he says.. Now when we think of the rest of the narrative of the scripture God is constantly indicting peoples, nations, kings and rulers for not ruling justly, not ruling like him. Neglecting to cultivate their resources in order to provide for those in need. Every nation that is denounced and judged in scripture is done so because of gross unrighteousness - a lack of right doing and care for our common man, injustice - usury, slavery, abuse, unfair judges who take bribes..and finally extreme immorality. (See Job 31, also the Prophets)
4. *The Scripture is full of these commands to do justly to love mercy to remember the poor, to do righteousness and justice.. this is what it means to live the way God lives, to rule or have dominion the way God does...What God values in great leaders is service. This is part of what it means to be fully human and in the image of God, and when we live this way we are most free. Jesus is calling his kingdom people back to this image bearing and original intent for humanity laid out for in Genesis 2.*

2. God seeks your welfare

1. As we seek first God's kingdom he promises to take care of our needs. Jesus calls us to look at the world around us.. look at the birds and the flowers.. they are not anxious for their provisions because the Father takes very good care of them. HOW MUCH MORE WILL HE TAKE CARE OF YOU?? His people, his children, he sees you, he knows your needs, he cares for you, he loves you. We can see his tender loving care for us from the creation to the cross, to this day..
2. Years ago I spoke with a man who did not have a good paying job and had a large family, he was constantly stressed about money - it took up much of his thoughts. He was sharing his anxiety with me and having nothing else to say, I simply said, well, God has brought you this far I'm sure he's not going to

give up on you now. Not the most sensitive response I admit, but it was like a light bulb went off in his head.. For all the amount that we worry, fret and stress about life and yet here we are, God has been so faithful, and will continue to be faithful.. will you please trust your Father, his loving care for you, his provision and do the one thing he is asking you to do? - to seek his kingdom and his righteousness.. He promises to take care of everything else.

3. The Gospel

1. Lastly, This is what Jesus did for you. Jesus is the eternal God who dwelt in glory and riches unimaginable but as Philippians 2 tells us Jesus did not hold onto any of this, he did not use this for his own gain or comfort but he used his position and resources in order to save us. or as Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 8:9 **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”**
2. This is what our King did for us, therefore this is what we should do for others. To live for ourselves and for our own comfort, to live according to the goals and values of the world is not just spiritual immaturity it is a denial of the very Gospel that has saved us, and in direct opposition to the character of Jesus that we are being formed and shaped into.

Conclusion: God is not calling his people to live in poverty but I do believe he is asking us to live simply in order that we might set our time, money, energy and focus on his kingdom and his righteousness. (You can't do everything, what is one thing you can do?)

Of course I do believe that when we do this - the world will take notice of our countercultural way of life, that it will be salt and light, but it is also, and first and foremost to be done because it changes our hearts, our minds, our bodies, our values and goals and shapes us into Jesus' kingdom flourishing people.