

Priorities

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[0:00] Priorities. Priorities is my topic tonight. Priorities. How would you rate your priorities in your life?

! It's a big question isn't it? When I looked up the word priorities I came across some pictures on the internet. Here's a man who reckoned that his pets were a priority. There's a man here, others are carrying their goods and possessions and here's a man holding his couple of cats.

Is there any cat lovers here tonight? I won't tell you any cat jokes then. Some people love cats, I hate them, but some people love cats and they want to save their cats if there's a flood.

It's a priority to cat lovers to save their cats. Here's another picture of a ball game, a sports game. And there's someone here, if you look carefully, they're more interested in reading their book.

You know, someone's going to score a great shot here and someone's more interested in reading their book than watching the game that they've come to watch. It reminds me of a time when Julie and I were on a trip of a lifetime, the one and only likely that we went overseas.

[1:19] And we went to Israel and we were blessed to visit the land of Israel. And Julie and I were on this tour bus and we'd just taken in some of the sights.

There was Nazareth and Galilee and the tour guide was pointing out Mount Carmel over here and Mount Tabor and the Valley of Megiddo, the Armageddon where the end time battle will be.

And just amazing sights here, there and everywhere. And there was a man on the bus. He'd spent the same money to get on this tour bus and maybe thousands of dollars to go to Israel.

And here he was reading his book. And it just staggered me that he's, here's a man who's taken time to come to this wonderful place to see all these amazing sights. And he's more interested in reading this ordinary type of novel.

It must have been a very interesting novel because he was more interested in reading that than all the amazing sights and hearing the biblical historical information that that book must have been very interesting to him.

[2:19] His reading that book was a priority to him and looking at the wonderful sights that he paid little regard to. It showed his indifference really, just as this man at the ball game.

Here's another picture of priorities. Here's a woman who obviously is more interested in taking a photo of her child than saving the child from getting eaten by a camel.

Now it's about priorities, isn't it? Obviously a bit of a humorous way of thinking about it that here's someone more interested in taking a photo than saving their child from getting eaten by a camel.

It's all about priorities. Priorities, isn't it? It's all about the priorities that we set in our lives. And there's a big danger of misplaced priorities. Misplaced priorities.

It's been said that if we change our priorities, we would change our life. You know, this is what someone has said. I think it's a worldly quote. It just says, change your priorities and you'll change your life.

[3:23] It's that simple. Change your priorities and you change your life. So it's important. I think that we would all agree. It's important to consider what is our priority.

What is it that we reckon is first, second, third? Where do we set the priorities for our lives? And the Lord Jesus speaks to us in Matthew 6, 33.

Matthew 6, 33, that familiar text where it says, But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

He's talking in the context of people worried about tomorrow, of people worried about what they're going to wear, what they're going to eat, all the practicalities. And Jesus says, our Lord says, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

This tells us really dramatically how we are to put first things first. Of priorities, of the priorities that we set for our lives.

[4:30] You know, some will seek first work. Some will seek first income. Some will seek first their recreation. Some will seek first entertainment.

Some will seek first sports or whatever it be. Put whatever it is there. Whatever it is. They're putting that first. What will you put first in your life?

Now I'm glad you've put it first tonight to be here. That's something that is a good use of your time, I pray. I trust.

What are we to seek first in our lives as believers, as people who care about the things of God? Is God your number one? Is God your number one? Seek first, firstly seek first the kingdom of God. How do we seek first the kingdom of God? What is the kingdom of God? Now kingdom speaks of sovereignty. It speaks of royal power, of dominion, of reign.

[5:33] And the Lord Jesus is our King. If we are his subjects, he is our King, our Lord, our Master, our Monarch. And he is at the centre of our lives, or he ought to be.

And as we have regard for him, when it comes to the decisions of our life, you can see from this next picture here, there's a picture of, if you like, a wheel, with a hub and some spokes.

And if you could consider it, that really, if God is at the hub, at the centre of our lives, then everything else springs out of that, like spokes on a wheel.

So things like, whether it be our finances, our relationships, our education, our job, our church, our community, our children, our spouse, all of these things spring out of that, which is the hub, that ought to be the hub, our Lord God.

And we put him at the centre of all of our decisions of our lives, of the things we do, the things we care about.

[6:35] The Kingdom of God. Seek it first. The Kingdom, especially the place or the people over whom the King rules.

When we become a Christian, we become part of the Kingdom of God. And God's Kingdom is his active rule over his creation. It's his rule, especially in saving his people from their sins.

He is the King. He wants to be our King, our Master, and we are his royal subjects. And even more so, part of the Royal Family. Get that. That we are sons and daughters of the King of Kings.

We're part of the Royal Family. God's Kingdom is contrasted in the context here in Matthew 6 with the needs of this life, which can so often preoccupy us and obsess us and distract us.

The things that people can get over-anxious about. And natural things, needy things, needful things. Not necessarily wrong things.

[7:40] But things, nevertheless, that can take away from seeking first the Kingdom of God. Seeking first the Kingdom of God. A question for all of us is, how do we make the Kingdom of God our first priority?

How do we make God our priority? Our top priority? How do we honour Him? How do we honour Him with our lives? For me, it's about placing a priority on what God counts as important.

You know, it's easy to get too busy for God. We can all get busy and too busy for God. When we're building our lives on the wrong foundation, on the wrong priorities.

Who is it that we put first? And how can we give our Lord our first allegiance, our only worship? In Exodus, as part of the Ten Commandments, the Lord said, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

No other gods before me. And when we think of our priorities, you can think of them as cards really, can't you? And you can think, well, I'm going to put this card on the top of the pile.

[8:54] This is what I'm going to do first. This is what I'm going to care about first. And all the other cards sit underneath. Well, the Lord says, don't have any other gods before me. He is the one that is the priority, that is first.

And we see in the Word of God that it says that our God is a jealous God. Now, some put their hobbies first. Some put what's on TV first when they think about whether they should fellowship. Or some put their convenience first or whatever it be. Other things can take His place. Is God calling us perhaps somewhere that means sacrifice?

Or stepping outside of the comfort zone? Some people got baptized this morning. That was stepping outside the comfort zone. That might have been a bit scary for some. It might have made them feel a bit anxious.

Taking that step. A public profession of their faith. And we thank God for those who were baptized today. That they stepped outside that comfort zone. They overcame that anxiety and maybe that fear.

[9:59] And they said, no, I'm going to be baptized. I'm going to show the world that I'm a believer in Christ. And sometimes it's about stepping outside that comfort zone of our lives.

Maybe God's prompting you to take on some new way of reaching out to others. A new ministry. Maybe He's encouraging you to volunteer.

And we're also here. There's someone this morning that came to Pastor Adam and me and said, we'd like to help out with the technology. That's been a long overdue need that we've needed someone to help with. And we thank God Adam's quite handy with the special new gadget that we've got.

We'll both try to learn how to be able to change things ourselves. But we always have these little odd jobs here and there. Just the jobs in the kitchen. The jobs tidying, sorting, helping in the Sunday school, in the youth ministry.

In so many manifold ways. There's so many ministries that if we just open our eyes and see what we can do for God. There's more than perhaps we've even thought about.

[11:03] And it's about thinking about how can I step outside that comfort zone. And overcome that fear that I might have. And just do it.

Younger people and older people, for all of us, when we decide who will marry. Marry for example. Then we think about how can we put God first?

How can we put God first? Someone telling me they're looking for a godly spouse. That's a very wise decision. Very wise decision. Young people, all of us, think about the one that you'll marry. Let it be a godly spouse. Someone who loves God. Put the king and his kingdom first. Put Christ first in your decisions. He is due our first love. It says in Deuteronomy 6 verses 4 through 5.

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might. The Lord Jesus, in referring to this in the gospels, he talked about with all thy mind, with all thy strength.

[12:10] There's a sense where we should put God first and our love for God as that which obsesses us. That drives us. That motivates us.

There's a holy obsession with God and with pleasing him, with loving him, with all of our heart. And it drives our lives. So that we put Christ first in our habits.

We'll develop good habits. There are some people with good habits. There's someone here tonight who's going to go on a 10km jog. That's a good habit to go. I know Pastor Adam talks about going for jogs.

And some while back I was saying I was going for a jog, but it was short lived enthusiasm on my part. But sometimes we can get those good habits that'll do our body good, that'll do our physical health good.

What about our spiritual health? Those habits of maybe developing a habit of reading our Bibles. The habit of praying. Of putting him first in our lives.

[13:09] Is God first in our use of money that we consider such things? How can we use it wisely? Have we got a good study Bible? Are we encouraging the ministry of the church?

Are we wise in how we invest our lives, our time, our dollar? You know sometimes the dollar can look so much when we give it at church. But when we spend that same dollar down at the shop or maybe buying a meal, we can think little of how much we're spending.

And really it's about priorities isn't it? Priorities. What about our use of time? We've all got that tick, tick, tick, that limited commodity, that precious commodity of our time.

How do we schedule our time? How do we prioritize our time? In what ways do we choose the study options that we choose for life? Some are still considering, what will I go and study?

What will my career be? Choose a study to study something that will make you useful for the kingdom of God. Choose wisely in your choice of study, in your choice of music.

[14:20] Let it be a priority that you want to honor God in every department, in your choice of friends, in your choice of a career, in how you best employ your talents and your abilities.

Do you consider God's best for your life? And how you manage your relationships? You know, really, ministry as well.

And I've heard it said, which is very true, and I haven't got it written down here, but really it's God first, then it's our family. It's our spouse.

Because our spouse is our primary ministry. We want to serve well at home. And then it can be ministry and church and other things flow down, flow from there.

The world will take our time. And we can make unwise allocation of our priorities. We can make unwise decisions.

[15:21] Some will spend their whole lives, their whole energy chasing after material things, as if it's all about amassing such things. We should consider our priorities I'll put to you tonight.

Colossians 1.18, it says that the Lord Jesus is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. That in all things he might have the preeminence.

Preeminence, it speaks of that which is the foremost and the first and the absolute, the highest.

That Christ should have the preeminence in everything in our lives.

That Christ should have the preeminence as the centre of our home, of our lives. That eternal things will count more than just the passing things of this world. And so, attending worship is something important.

And as a family, we'll not miss that. Except for illness. And of course, there's times when there's needful rest, as with my dear wife. There's times when we need to take a break for our health's sake and encourage ourselves in the Lord.

[16:25] But wherever possible, let's not neglect worship. It says in Psalm 84, verse 10, that the Psalmist said, For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.

I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. There's that massive comparison there, isn't there? A day in thy house and a thousand somewhere else. And it goes on, verse 11, For the Lord God is a sun and a shield. The Lord God will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. So, let's make it our priority to consider this, Seek ye first the, what does it say?

The kingdom of God. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. Now let's look at the second half of this text. It says, seek his righteousness.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. So what is righteousness? Someone has put it like this, that righteousness is the rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men.

[17:37] Righteousness. The righteousness of God could be put as all that he commands, all that he demands, all that he approves, and all that he approves through faith in Christ.

Notice it says, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. His righteousness. His righteousness. It does not say, seek ye first the kingdom of God and your righteousness, but his righteousness.

God's righteousness. Now, righteousness is the opposite of sin. Righteousness is the rightness of God. It's the quality of God. It's the quality of God. How are we to pursue God's righteousness?

It says in 1 Corinthians 1.30 that the Lord Jesus is our righteousness. It says that our righteousness comes from him, but of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

We are to seek after the righteousness of God. What is the righteousness of God? It's by faith. That's how we realize it. We realize his righteousness by faith as we receive it from his hand.

[18:55] Romans 3.22. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith.

God's righteousness is his character. It's perfect. It's perfect. And I was talking this morning about that perfect standard, much more beyond our possibility of attaining it.

Yet he gives it. He gives it freely. He is our righteousness. In Jeremiah 23.6, it tells of him as speaking prophetically of our Lord Jesus.

In his days, Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is his name whereby he shall be called the Lord or Jehovah, the Lord, our righteousness.

And so one of the names of our Lord Jesus is Jehovah, God, the Lord, our righteousness. And so righteousness is given to us as we draw closer to him.

[19:59] It speaks of our Lord Jesus. A transaction happens. It takes place. This transfer takes place. You know, if you imagine in an analogy of your bank account.

I suppose in the old days when you had a bank book or you would look up your account status and it's in the red.

You're in debt. And then suddenly a transfer takes place. And there's a credit to your account. You know, the Lord speaks of that in his word where there's a reckoning.

There's a transfer. There's an accountancy transaction happens. Whatever the technical word is. There's a credit to the account.

When we're in debt to God and he gives us his wealth, his free gift of his greatness. And it replaces our debt with his abundance.

[21:00] And so a transfer, a transaction happens when we save. In 2 Corinthians 5.21 it says, For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

He transfers his righteousness to our account.

And he debits our sin debt to his account. And we exchange our fault with his perfection. He exchanges his righteousness with our rags.

In Isaiah 61.10 it reads, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God. For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments. And as a bride adorneth herself with jewels. What a wonderful dramatic change. It's saying there that there's a change of clothing.

[22:05] From rags to riches if you like. From rags to a robe of righteousness. He takes away the rags of a beggar. And he gives us the robe of a king's son.

A king's daughter. What a wonderful dramatic change happens. Those great riches he gives to us freely. And for no reason of our own doing.

But because of his great mercy. It says in Psalm 37.16 A little that a righteous man hath. Is better than the riches of many wicked. This is where true wealth is found.

A little that a righteous man hath. Is better than the riches of many wicked. We know in our world today. There's many who get wealthy and rich by ill-gotten gain.

And they think that's making it in life. But this is where true wealth is found. Now this says here. What do I value most? What are my priorities? It's good to just take a stop take. And think of this question.

[23:10] What do I value most? It's as if we need to press the reset button. And stop considering what the world counts as valuable. And the world wants to chase after. And press that reset button. What is it that I truly value most in my life?

And how does it show? You know our actions really display where our lives are.

And how does it show? And how does it show? You know our actions really display where our priorities lie.

What we do shows what we count as a priority doesn't it? You know you counted it a priority here tonight. Or whatever might have been on the TV back at home.

Or whatever else you could have been doing tonight. You've put a priority on that tonight. And our actions display where our priorities lie. It shows what we do and what we don't do.

[24:15] Show our priorities. You know there was a very rich man who had run after the things of the world all of his life. And he came to that place that we will all come to.

He lay dying. And he was visited by someone who he had been aware of as a young man.

And this man had left their profitable business to serve Christ. And he too was dying. But this man in the other bed had the great peace of mind.

And the joy in Christ that this rich man lacked. And the rich man said this. He says, you may wonder why I cannot be as happy and joyful as he.

It's about the difference between us. He is going to his treasure. And I must leave mine.

[25:20] You know, the rich man had spent all his life amassing wealth and treasure. He had everything money could buy and money to spare.

But this other man had the peace of God. He had that joyful knowledge of salvation. He had that assurance of the saving grace of God. He had that peace with God that passes all understanding. And it's about priorities, isn't it? When it comes down to it. When it comes to that closing chapter of our lives. What will really matter? What do I value the most?

A life is not successful when it's lived outside of the will of God. And friends, I put to you tonight that God's righteousness is something we should long for. We should value it the most.

The most. We should seek that first. His righteousness. That Christ will have the highest place. That he will have the highest loyalty.

[26:21] Our commitment will be to him. First and foremost. And it will show by what we do. For example, we'll delight in his word. Psalm 119 verse 97.

Oh how love I thy Lord, it is my meditation all the day. Oh how I love thy Lord, it is my meditation all the day.

There's a delighting within. Psalm 37 verse 4. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. There's a delight, there's a desire, there's a seeking of something more precious than what otherwise can take our energies and time and devotion.

Matthew 5 verse 6 it says, Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled. Blessed, joyful, glad, happy, blessed.

[27:33] Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. So I urge you tonight to find God's righteousness in seeking his will, in submitting to his will. Yield yourselves, the word says, to God as instruments of righteousness.

Romans 6 verse 13 it says, Neither yield yourselves, your members, in other words your body, your person, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.

But, yield yourselves unto God. As those that are alive from the dead. And your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Yield yourselves unto God. It's really putting up that white flag of surrender. And saying, I yield to God. I'm going to stop fighting his will and start submitting to his will.

Surrendering to his will. Surrendering to his best for my life. It says, yield yourselves to God. Our Lord calls us to this step, this place, this moment, this decision of surrender.

[28:37] This decision, I will surrender all. I will yield myself to God. I will reset that reset button.

And I'm going to decide now that my priorities are going to change. And as we talked about that saying, if we change our priorities, our life will change.

I believe God can help us reconsider and reset our priorities. Press that reset button. Let's consider what it is that we value the most.

That really matters. That really counts. The real values of our life and eternity and of God and his will. The real values that matter and reorder our lives accordingly.

And what's important for us? Is it important for us being in a good church? In a church for us and our family where we can grow, where we can learn, where we can receive sound doctrine, where we can encourage our soul.

[29:47] Is it important to us to be where we can serve the Lord with gladness and encourage our hearts and give glory to him? Is it important to us to be where we and our family can set that priority, set that trajectory that this matters?

That's why we're here. That's why we're here. And our children see us fellowshiping. We're setting a pattern for them and their lives.

That they will put first things first. We'll lead by example. We'll place him in the highest place.

Whether they follow is up to them. They'll answer to God.

But we will set the priority. And we'll set the example. And we'll honour God first. And place him in the highest place. And here true fulfilment is found.

Here is true fulfilment. Psalm 64 10. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord and shall trust in him. And all the upright in heart shall glory.

[30:54] The righteous. Seek ye first the righteousness of God. How can we make it personal now? I'm talking to you. I pray God is speaking to you through me.

Where is our heart today? Where do our priorities lie? How will we reorder the priorities of our life if we had to go one, two, three?

This is what I'm going to do. This is pressing that reset button. This is what I'm going to decide to do from here on. The priorities that are going to matter for me.

Will it be to seek first the kingdom of God? Will it be to seek first the righteousness of God? Will it be that you will make that decision?

That you'll spend your life wisely? We've all got limited time. Some would say some are more busy than others.

[31:54] But we've all got the same amount of time. And so it's about what we invest our time in, isn't it? And what do we spend most of our time doing?

That will show our priorities, won't it? Of course, there's needful occupations. There's a family to feed. There's needful practical things of life.

But what about that spare time? That spare time. I know there's some that go out giving out trunks. They find the time to go and give out leaflets, to invite people to know the Saviour.

There's people who make time to make contact with others, to make that phone call, to send that card, to show that love, that care, that willingness to reach out to workmates.

I know there's some here tonight that God's moved on their hearts. They want to witness for Christ. They want to be a bold witness for Christ. They've asked for some ideas and suggestions and ways that they can witness.

[32:58] Thank God for you. Thank God for you tonight. It's about those priorities, isn't it? You could use your time in all kinds of ways. You can fritter it away. Where did that day go?

Where did that year go? Where did that life go? Before we know it, it's gone. And what are the priorities that we've set? What are the ways we've invested, we spent that time?

How do we invest our energy? What is it that we put our energy into? What do we think about the most? How do we use our money?

These are all questions that will help us to think about the priorities that we set for our lives. It's not to condemn anyone. It's not to discourage you, but to encourage you.

To say, I'm going to reset that reset button tonight. I'm going to say now, I'm going to decide about this one, two, three, what I'm going to do for the rest of my life. What am I going to do to please God, to serve God, to do the will of God, to seek His will?

[34:06] Change priorities. Set your affection on things above. Seek God first and foremost, His kingdom, His righteousness.

Make that honest self-evaluation today. As the saying goes, I said it before, I don't know where the quote came from, but as we change our priorities, we change our lives.

There's people serving God on mission fields. There's people doing things, amazing things for God. What's stopping you? What's stopping me? What's stopping us thinking, how can I be used of God?

What can I do for the rest of my life, for the time I have left? God helping me to wisely use, to wisely prepare, to wisely decide, to seek His face, to put eternal things first.

There's still the practicalities of life, but we can still prepare and serve in so many abundant ways. We'll just open our eyes and see the opportunities that lie around us.

[35:15] Seek His face. Do we have our priorities in order? Or maybe they need to be reordered. Are we finding time each day to spend with the

Lord?

To pray, to read His word? Are we leading our family? Are we encouraging others in spiritual truth? Let's make Him our top priority.

And make His kingdom our overriding concern. But be encouraged tonight to think, wow, I'm going to make that decision. I'm going to press that reset button. I'm going to say, yes, Lord.

I surrender. I'm going to wave that flag and say, I surrender, Lord. I'm going to yield myself, my instruments, my body, my members as an instrument of righteousness, for His glory.

I'm going to yield my life, my will, my mind, my intellect, my talents, my ability. I'm going to seek after God's calling, God's will for my life. And God helping me, I'm going to make some decisions to step outside of the comfort zone.

[36:18] To make His kingdom my overriding priority and concern. To make God's will, God's word, that which drives me, that motivates me, that gets me out of bed in the morning.

That I want to serve Him and make each day count for eternity. Knowing that the Lord Jesus is the one I place the most value on. He is the one that I place my value on.

And it reflects in how I live. In the decisions day by day by day that I make. The decisions that I make Monday are going to be because of my decision.

That He will have my top priority. The decisions that I'll make Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday. Until we meet again, that He will have the most highest place.

It's about change priorities tonight. Change priorities. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you are the one who is to have the pre-eminence. The first and foremost place.

[37:19] The chiefest place. The highest place. And you seek that for us, for our lives. That we would place you in the highest place. Help us Lord to seek first the Kingdom of God.

To seek first your righteousness. To seek your face. To seek your will. To seek your way for our lives. Help us Lord if it be that we need to make some change.

Make that change in us Lord. Prompt us by your Spirit. Convict us. Draw us closer Lord. Help us to find your strength. To find your strength. To make those decisions of those ones that you are prompting us to witness to.

In our workplaces. In our home place. In our study. Wherever we be. Use us as your instruments of righteousness Lord. Use us as those instruments that are in your hand.

Use us to reach others. Help us Lord to put those habits in place. That are going to help us spiritually. Help us Lord to be your people.

[38:21] That will place your Kingdom. And you our King. In the highest place. In the highest place. We pray if there is any here tonight. That have yet to trust you. For the very first time.

You are not their King yet Lord. That they have been prompted and stirred tonight. To consider where they will place their loyalty. To whom they will place their allegiance.

Whether it be to another King. Another God. Or to you. The only wise God. Our Saviour. The great God and King. The King of Kings. The Lord of Lords.

Lord we pray each one who know. That place of surrender tonight. To yield ourselves to you. And if it be. Even for the first time. Some will cry out. And say Lord Jesus.

Thank you for dying on the cross for my sin. Thank you for paying for it there. And paying that penalty. That was due to me. So that I could have. That free gift. And that credit.

[39:20] Of your righteousness. To my account. That you could pay my sin debt. And give me. The abundant. Eternal. New life. That you promise. In your word.

We pray for each believer here. As we take. Those steps forward. From this point. That will be. As it were. A pressing of that reset button. That the past can be behind.

And we can press towards the mark. Press towards the mark. For the price. Of the high calling of God. In Christ Jesus. And we'll find. Your strength. To run. Each step of the way.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. To ending. Thank you.