

Seek His Kingdom

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[0 : 00] I wouldn't say you can have a seat, but it looks like everybody's done that. So if y'all will join me in prayer this morning. Lord, what a privilege to come together as believers that we might lift our hearts up to you.

For Father, we do come to worship you. Father, you're worthy of our worship in a far greater way than we can ever imagine.

Your word declares your majesty and your power and your goodness and your glory and your grace and your mercy and your kindness.

Lord, it's you who provide all good things for us. You're the source of all good things according to your word. And so, Father, we lift up our eyes and we look to the heavens.

And it's the heavens that declare your majesty. And we look to you, Lord, because we desire to be led by you. We desire to live for you.

[1 : 11] God, we, as a church this morning, declare to you that we are weak, Father.

But we remember what Paul said is that when we are weak, then truly we're strong. Because it's when we're weak, we recognize our weakness that we turn to you and say, help me, God.

And so, Lord, this morning we turn to you and we say, help us, God. Help us to be faithful. God, keep us focused on things that truly matter.

Help us to live for your kingdom and your glory. Father, you alone deserve to be glorified. You alone deserve to be worshipped and lifted up. So, Father, in our weakness, I pray that you would make us strong.

You'd help us to live lives that honor you. To live lives that demonstrate that we trust you. To live lives that give a message to the lost and dying world that we can trust you.

[2 : 20] Father, a message of truth. A message of a Savior. A message of dependency. A message of worship.

That, Father, when the world around sees us, they would see something different. Not just another person. But they would see a person who's been changed and transformed. A person who's been indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

A person that has a joy. A joy that's hard to explain. That in the midst of storms and trials, that there's a joy that still bubbles out of us, God.

And that's supernatural. So, we ask, God, that you would do that in our lives. You would do that which is supernatural. That can't be explained. That even in the midst of hard times, God, that we rejoice.

I love how Paul says it, God. He says, rejoice. And again, I say, rejoice. In all things, rejoice.

[3 : 20] Because, God, in truth, this time we spend here is short. It's like a vapor that's here one day and gone tomorrow. And after that, Father, your children enter into eternity.

Enter into your glory. Enter into your presence. Enter into the heavenly realm. The kingdom that you're putting together, Father.

The kingdom that you're ruling over. The kingdom that we get to be a part of. The kingdom of heaven.

So, Father, we look forward. We turn our eyes to your kingdom. And we rejoice with great joy. Because of who you are and what you're doing. And what you've done in our lives.

That you would call us by your name. And, Father, you would grant us salvation through the shed blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Father, that's why we're here this morning. We gather here because you've done a work in each of our lives.

[4 : 25] And we gather here to worship you this morning. To lift up our hearts in thanks to you. To raise up our hands in worship to you. To celebrate together in fellowship as a body of believers.

As those who've been called by your name. So, God, we worship this morning. And, God, I pray that you would move us, stir us to share this incredible good news. With the people that live in our neighborhoods.

And with the people we work with. And with the people we sit in the bleachers with watching ball games. God, give us a burden. To share the message.

The greatest message of all. That Jesus has come. That we might have life. So, God, this morning as we open your word. As we look at Matthew chapter 6.

I pray that, God, you would open our hearts and our minds to hear and to understand. God, give us spiritual ears. That we would hear the truth.

[5 : 26] And that you would stir us deeply this morning. That we might live for you. And I pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. So, Jonathan has a calendar.

And on that calendar, he puts certain dates when I get to preach. And this happens to be one of those dates. And he did it to me again. He didn't give me a passage. So, that gives me the freedom to do whatever I want to do. Right?

I can pick any passage. And really, the way that I was led by the Lord to pick a passage this week was just based on the time of year it is. It's the new year.

Today is the first day of 2023. You know, it's common on the calendar when certain dates happen that our culture does certain things. And in our culture, it's common to have New Year's resolutions. It's something that you might have done yourself. You might have something that you've said, Okay, when January starts and I'm finished eating all that food for Thanksgiving and all that food for Christmas, I'm going to go on a diet in January.

[6 : 27] Because we don't want to miss out on the fun times with families and stuff. It might be that that's you. It might be that you're saying that this year I'm going to read through the Bible.

And so, I want to start this year and I want to do what I've hoped I would always do. That is, I want to read through the Bible because I know that it will bless my soul if I do that. It might be that you say, Yes, I want to do this thing or I want to go on these trips or I want to spend more time with my family or I want to work a little harder to put a little more money in the bank.

There's all these motives that we have. There's all these things that really ask for our time that draw our time. And so, my question this morning is, is that you?

Has this time of year been that for you? Have you considered a new beginning or a new start or a resolution? And it doesn't have to be January 1st.

You know, we do these things throughout the year. It might be that we say March is the month that I'm really going to do whatever. But that's the reason that the Lord led me to chapter 6 of Matthew.

[7 : 36] It is this concept of how we use our time. And so, I ask you, how are you using your time? What is it this coming year that you're going to invest your time in?

And what is it that lends itself to that decision? When you consider spending your time in a certain way, what is it that drives that decision?

What is it that motivates you to make that decision on spending your time? So, this morning, here's what I want you to hear. It is that we all make these considerations.

We all have things that we want to do, right? We all have things that we want to spend our time doing. But what I want to do this morning is I want to open the Scripture. And we want to ask this question, do the Scriptures direct us on how we should spend our time?

Does Matthew 6 point us in a certain direction on how we should spend our time? On how we should be motivated? And the answer to that, of course, is yes.

[8 : 46] And so, we turn to chapter 6 of Matthew. And you'll recognize this as being in the section of Scripture where Christ is teaching on the mountain.

It's called the Sermon on the Mount. And I think it's important for us to set up the time. What was happening before Christ went up on the mountain and He turned to teach?

And He shared these truths from the mountain. You will remember that Christ was baptized by John in the Jordan River. And you remember that after He was baptized and came out of the water, that the Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, drove Him into the wilderness.

And for 40 days He was in the wilderness and He was tempted by Satan. There was a war that took place, if you will, in the spiritual realm where the enemy was trying to get Christ to sin.

And He was using these temptations to get Him to sin, but Christ did not. Christ was victorious over Satan in that setting.

[9 : 54] Does that mean Satan never tempted again? No. For the rest of His life on earth He was tempted. For the rest of His time on earth Satan tried to kill Him.

But He comes down from this mountain of temptation and He goes into the region of Galilee and He begins calling His disciples. And He calls the twelve.

And He begins to minister. We know some of the stories. We would remember that He went to Cana of Galilee where His first miracle took place. And He began healing many.

And He went to the Sea of Galilee as He passed through Capernaum. And He went to the Sea of Galilee. And many followed Him. And He did miracles. And He fed them. He fed multitudes.

Miraculously they were fed. And the Scripture before the Sermon on the Mount says this, And He went throughout all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming.

[10 : 55] Notice what He's proclaiming. The gospel of the kingdom. And healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

So His fame spread throughout all of Syria. You will notice that Syria is not part of Israel. So not only was His fame in Galilee.

Not only was His fame in Jerusalem in the southern part of the kingdom. His fame also spread past the borders of Israel. His fame spread throughout all Syria.

And they brought Him all the sick and those afflicted with various diseases and pains. Those opposed by demons. Those having seizures and paralytics.

And He healed them. And great crowds followed Him from Galilee and Decapolis. From Jerusalem and Judea. And even beyond the Jordan. So you see this picture of the ministry of Christ.

[11 : 53] That once He was baptized. And once He was driven into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And once He came back and called His disciples. He stepped into ministry. And His name was spread abroad.

Because He taught them like no other one. He taught them like one having authority. Because He did. And then the scripture says here.

In chapter 5. It says, Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain. And when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And if we stopped there, we would think that only the 12 came to Him.

And so we could mistakenly think that the Sermon on the Mount was given to the 12. But if we look at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, here's what you'll hear. And when Jesus finished these sayings, that is the Sermon on the Mount.

The crowds were astonished at His teaching. I want you to notice it was the crowds that were astonished. He taught all of this incredible gathering by going up on the mountain.

[13 : 04] And as He taught them, He said these things were incredibly important. So He meets their needs by healing and by delivering from demonic oppression.

By feeding them. And then He teaches them the truth. You know that the teaching is just as important and maybe more so than the physical needs that He met.

The spiritual needs that we have are greater than the physical needs that we have. Do you all agree? Amen? But sometimes we forget that in this life.

In our humanity, in our humanness, we walk through life and we sometimes forget that the spiritual is greater than the physical. The spiritual is greater than the temporal.

And we let the temporal drive our decisions. You know the Scripture never tells us to do that? The Scripture indicates that the spiritual should drive our decision making, not the temporal.

[14 : 10] And so with that, we turn to chapter 6. And I'm going to cover more than just this section, but this is going to be for sake of time.

I can't read the whole Sermon on the Mount, so we're going to prioritize at least reading this section, starting in verse 19 and going through the end of the chapter in chapter 6 of Matthew. So I'd ask if you have your Scriptures to open up the Scriptures and read along with me.

I'm reading from the ESV. And I read starting in verse 19. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

[15 : 17] If then the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness. No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of much more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his lifespan? And why are you anxious about clothing?

Consider the lilies in the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

[16:23] But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat?

Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Let's pray. Lord, I pray that your word would penetrate to our hearts, and not just our ears.

Father, we pray that you would spiritually open our ears to hear. Father, you would spiritually open our eyes to see. And Father, you would stir our heart with affections for you.

[17:32] And I pray that your word this morning would be life. I pray that your word would direct us on the way that you would have us live. And I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So though I started in verse 19 in red, I want to back up to verse 1 of chapter 6. We just didn't have time to read it all. And I want you to notice this.

Hold on. Sorry, I have a cold. I might do that more than once. I want you to notice this. He says this word, beware. Christ, who loves them enough to care for these physical needs of theirs, when he teaches them, he says, I want you to beware of something.

Beware. And he's talking about motivations that direct us on how we use our time and how we make our decisions.

We'll talk more about that in a minute. Let me just share a story when I was young. So when I was a kid, 10 years old, I was introduced to the game of golf.

[18:48] My parents went for the first time, and I went with them. Perhaps my dad had gone once before and figured out how to do it all, and then I went with him very soon after that. And I started playing golf.

And it was fun to be together with family. And I noticed within me this desire to be better at golf. And so over the next several years, I started playing tournaments, and I started spending a lot of time playing golf, a lot of time.

So if I look forward into my middle school years and into my high school years, you would have found me on the golf course very early in the morning when I was able to drive.

Before I was able to drive during the summers, my parents would drop me off at the country club. Small town, USA, Lake City, South Carolina. Drop me off at the golf course, and there was a swimming pool there.

If I wanted to, I could go swimming. There was a tennis court, which I never touched. And there was a golf course, and that's where I spent all my time. And I started, my dad had a golf cart he had bought, and I could drive that golf cart all day long, and it was just fun.

[19:51] And on top of that, I wanted to be better. And so I began spending hours upon hours upon hours upon hours playing golf. And it begs this question. The question is this, why?

Why would I spend so much time to play golf? You know, if you would have asked me when I was a kid, if you would have asked me when I was in high school, and I was investing untold hours into the game of golf, and by the way, I did get better.

If you would have asked me why I was doing that, I would have told you, and I did. I had many people ask me that. Why are you doing this, or why are you spending so much? I want to be on the PGA Tour. I want to be a professional golfer.

That was my motivation. But you know there's another question that I should also ask, and I would not have known the answer to it when I was young, but I know it now. So if someone asked me the question, why are you playing golf?

Because I want to be on the PGA Tour. But I would also ask this question, why do you want to be on the PGA Tour? This is when it becomes very revealing that the self is incredibly involved in our decision making.

[20 : 57] Because the answer to that question is because I wanted people to notice me. I wanted people to applaud for me. I wanted people to look at me with respect. I wanted to be the best because I wanted to be significant.

I wanted to be important. It was driven by pride. The real motive behind my decision to spend time on the golf course is because I wanted to be important.

I wanted to be lifted up. I wanted to be the best. I wanted to be able to look at everybody and say, I'm better than you. I'm better than you. I'm better than you. I'm better than you. I'm better than you. I must be important. I must be important.

And so I ask the question of us, what drives our decision making? What is it that motivates the way we spend our time? Is it temporal? Is it spiritual?

So Christ, as he's teaching them, I'm going to go back actually to chapter 5 real quick, and this is going to be a very brief overview of chapter 5. But you know what he starts with? He says, let me tell you what it is to really truly be blessed.

[22 : 08] It's not a big house. It's not a big car. It's not a big name. It's not a big job. It's not a big bank account. Let me tell you what it really means to be blessed. Blessed are those who are poor in spirit.

Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who are meek. Blessed are those who are hungry for righteousness. See, Christ is teaching them something that's radically different than anything they had heard others teach.

He's saying, no, no, no. The way to be blessed is not that way. It's this way. It's this way of humility. It's this way of surrender. It's this way of service.

It's this way that illustrates that you're saved. You know, true blessing comes as we're saved, as we bow the knee to the Lord. And then this is a sequential list.

It's just beautiful to look at what happens in the life of one who turns their eyes on Christ. And when we realize we can't bring ourselves into the kingdom, you know what that's called? That's called poor in spirit.

[23 : 10] I don't have anything to offer to you. I come. And God, I mourn over my sins because you've made me aware of it. So let me just say this in chapter 5. Christ starts out with something incredibly important.

As he climbs on the mountain, as he turns to teach the people, he says, listen, you need salvation. You need to recognize that apart from me, Christ is saying, apart from me, the Savior, you'll never have life.

You're truly blessed when you understand that you can't earn your own salvation. Then not by doing the law will you ever come into the kingdom. The kingdom is based on the gospel.

Remember chapter 5? I said he came preaching about or proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. What is the gospel? That you need Jesus. And so he's talking to this multitude of people that are hungry and that are hurting and that want their needs addressed.

And he says, you know, the greatest need you have, you need to be saved. You need that which is spiritual. And so he teaches them. And if I summarize the rest of chapter 5, listen to what he says six times.

[24 : 17] He says this, you have heard that it was said. But I say, you have heard that it's been said. The things that you've been taught, I want to teach you something different.

Instead of having physical eyes and law-filled eyes, eyes that you're trying to accomplish the law, what I want you to see is there's something different. The Pharisees and the Sadducees and the teachers of the law are saying this, but I say something different.

You need to change the way you think. You know that's true for you and me? Do you all know we need to change the way you think? You know how the scripture talks about it? We need to be renewed in our mind.

Our mind needs to be renewed. What does that mean? We need to think differently. We don't need to think like we used to think before we were in the kingdom. You know that's the tendency for us? We tend to think like we used to think. And we're gradually learning that we need to change the way we think. But it's going slow, isn't it? You know what Paul says when he was talking to the church at

Corinth?

[25 : 27] He says this. He said, take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Every single thought that flows through your mind, you recognize what it says.

And if it's not in surrender to Christ, you say, no. I will not accept that thought. Because you know the enemy puts thoughts in your mind. You know that's the battleground for this spiritual battle that we're in?

The battles in the mind? It's a battle of making decisions. You know what the decisions we're called to make? That's what we're looking at. What is it that he's calling us to do? How is he calling us to live?

How does he want us to make decisions? That's what we're looking at this morning. And it's interesting to me that he says in chapter 5, you need to change the way you think. Number one, you can't come to Christ on your own.

You need me, the Savior. That's why I've come. Number two, you need to change the way you think. And number three, he says, beware. Chapter 6, verse 1, he says, beware.

[26 : 29] What does he say beware of? Isn't it interesting? He loves these people, doesn't he? He's taking care of needs. He's on the mountain. He says, now you're ready to hear the message that's so important you need to hear.

And he says this, beware. Beware of what? But here's what I would say about us, and here's what I'd say about them. You know we're motivated by the wrong things?

Do you find that to be true in your life? Do you find yourselves motivated by the wrong things?

That's what he's warning them about. Notice what he says.

Beware of practicing your righteousness. Let me just stop there for a second. Do you think that apart from Christ we have any righteousness? You know what it's called when the word yours before righteousness?

You know what it's called self? It's called self-righteousness. Beware of self-righteousness. Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order that you might be seen by them.

[27 : 32] Is anybody tempted to do that? Do you find that to be real in your life? Hey, when you became a Christian, that just left, didn't it?

Unfortunately, no. That's been the biggest animal in my life. I love applause. I always have. And yet that is the wrong motive.

And that is leading me away from the lordship of Christ. And he gives them a warning and says, Beware that the normal human way of things is that you want to impress.

And if you were to read the next 20 verses or so, 18 verses or so, it would say this, Beware of doing things, of living in such a way that you may be praised by others, is what it says in verse 2.

It says that you may be seen by others in verse 5. That you may be heard by others in verse 7. Do you hear the message? Beware of wanting to be praised and wanting to be seen and wanting to be heard.

[28 : 45] Beware. Now, church, this isn't intended to be easy. What I'm sharing with you is not my opinion.

What I'm sharing with you is the very word of God. It's the warning that Christ gives to the people. And it's for us today. And I think it still affects us.

Do you ever find in your life that you want to receive the praise of men? You know what's called? Pride. You know how deep pride runs?

In my life, I hadn't found the bottom yet. I'm serious. I've asked God to show me my selfishness. And I didn't know it was so deep.

And yet, He keeps showing it to me. He's gracious enough to do it a small segment at a time. But we hadn't gotten to the bottom yet. I keep finding myself wanting the praise of men.

[29 : 41] I keep finding myself wanting the pat on the back or wanting to impress. I keep finding myself wanting to compete in order that I can win, in order that I can think that I'm significant.

You hear the lie in it? There's nothing that makes us significant except for the blood of Jesus. Everything else is temporal and worldly and it means nothing. And yet, we can find ourselves wanting that, which means nothing.

And so Christ says, beware of that. Beware of that. Living for other people. Being motivated for the applause of men. You know what else He says?

If we look at verse 19. He really kind of summarizes in verse 19 what He's talking about. This beware of that thing. That is, living so that others would notice you and be impressed. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth. Another warning, right? He's on the mountain. He says, don't lay up treasures on earth.

[30 : 44] Don't try to accumulate stuff. Don't fill your barns up with stuff. Don't work for all this money to get a bag full of it so that you can go spend it on your selfish indulgence.

Don't do that. He says this, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. It begs the question, what in the world is that? What is treasure in heaven?

At least we can say that it's not temporal, correct? It's spiritual. He's saying that be focused on spiritual things and not temporal things.

Don't lay up for yourselves temporal things. Lay up for yourselves spiritual things. Because spiritual things have the value. Temporal things will all burn up.

Isn't that how it says it here? Listen. It says, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal.

[31 : 45] Do you notice that temporal things fit that category? That all of them are, in a sense, they have an expiration date on them. They don't amount to anything.

They'll be burned up. You know what I mean when I say they'll be burned up, right? It's the judgment of the world. When the world is judged, temporal things don't make it to the other side. He says instead, focus your life and your heart on spiritual things. And so, we go on in verse 21. It says, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. And I ask this question of you and me.

Where's our treasure? What is it that you treasure? You know what I treasure?

I treasure to be on the PGA Tour. I wanted to be, I literally thought this and believed this and pursued this. I wanted to be the best golfer in the world. I wanted to be number one in the world. I wanted to be the one that won more tournaments than anybody else.

[32 : 44] I was motivated so much that I would get up before the sun rises and I would stay until after the sun goes down. I was working so hard at that because I wanted to be the best. You know that's temporal?

It has nothing to do that would honor God. It has nothing to do that has any value that's lasting. It's all temporal. It's all sin-filled. I've come to see it now.

I didn't see it then. But he says, here's what I want you to do. You picture him on the mountain, right? He's talking to this multitude of people, this crowd of people. He's saying, desire spiritual things.

Where your treasure is, the things you desire are going to drive the way you spend your time. Do you believe that? The things you desire is where you're going to spend your time.

Now, I know we have to work and sometimes we work because we've got to make a paycheck. We've got to pay the bills and stuff. And we might not like it. Now, if you're blessed enough to like what you do, keep doing it. What a blessed place.

[33 : 43] What I do is just like making money. Now, it's good because God calls me to connect with people. I'm in sales and stuff. But I don't do it because I'm so happy to be in sales. I do it because God's planted me there and he's opened this job for me and he's taught me a lot.

He's shown me my sin a lot through the sales. He's shown me my weakness a lot in this sales job. And he's put me in front of people that don't know Jesus. So there's a reason he planted me there. But I didn't see it all when I first started. I was kicking and screaming. I didn't want to be there. But I've come to realize God blessed me a lot in ways I didn't see with that job. But how do we spend our free time?

What do we focus on? You know that this life is short. And if we're going to spend our time focused on temporal things and we're all going to burn up and then we get to heaven, we're going to be sad. We're going to be sick in a sense. Because look at the time we wasted that we could have invested in his kingdom. You know, that's where we're going, right? Y'all did hear the key verses.

[34 : 43] Verse 33 talks about his kingdom. So he warns us not to be looking for applause and he warns us not to be focused on temporal things. And you know what else he warns us about?

If we turn to verse 25, he says this, Don't be anxious. I think I can stop here.

I think we all struggle with that, don't we? Anybody would say last week they weren't anxious at all? Yesterday?

20 minutes ago? So you see what I'm saying? It's hard to live this way. But you hear what he's saying. He's saying really to us, Christians, Christian, live this way.

And he doesn't just say it once. Isn't it amazing he says it three times? In verse 25, don't be anxious. In verse 31, don't be anxious. And in verse 34, don't be anxious.

[35 : 45] And is there therefore in front of it every time? You know what the first therefore is in verse 25? Therefore, don't be anxious.

We have to go backwards to see what it's there for. Why is it there? He said you can't serve two masters. So he said, because you can't serve two masters, don't be anxious. What is he saying? He said, what are you really truly serving? Are you serving me? Are you serving self? Why are you anxious? What are you trying to control? Are you trying to be your own God and your own Lord? Are you trying to do it all? My voice is changing because I got a cold. Can you delete that part on that thing? I don't want that high pitching. Yeah, sorry about that.

Yeah, I'm going to try to keep it a little bit on the lowdown. He's saying, don't be anxious because I'm your Lord. You can't serve two masters.

[36 : 45] Serve me. Trust me. And he goes on. He says, therefore, again. And before this, therefore, you know what he said? He says, I want you to consider the animal kingdom and I want you to consider the plant kingdom.

I want you to take a wide angle view at this truth that I'm about to share you. And understand that Jesus is on the mountain. He's teaching the people. And as he's teaching the people, you know what he says?

He says, I want you to look at the birds. Look at them. Tell me how many birds are sowing seeds and reaping the seeds and going and going to harvest and cutting them down.

There's not a bird alive that's doing that. But yet, I serve them. I mean, excuse me, I provide for them. They don't sow.

They don't reap. And yet, they don't gather in barns. They don't prepare for the future. They live moment by moment by moment by moment. They live in the present. And I provide for them. Are you not much greater than they?

[37 : 47] Church, you know, this is, I want to say this is so incredibly, radically hard to live like this. In order to live like this, we actually have to believe that God will do what he said he'd do.

Let me say that again. We actually have to believe that he's going to do what he said he's going to do. Do you believe it? If you're worrying, you don't.

That's what makes this tough because every one of us experience worry. And so, it begs the question, why do we worry? You know why? So, we don't trust him. That's why we don't worry. We don't really think he's as good as he says he is. In our humanness, we want to do it ourselves. We want to put it in the barn so we don't have to worry about it later.

We want to make sure that we've got something set aside. That's a whole other sermon. I know exactly what you just thought. But that's another sermon for another day. My point today is this.

[38 : 52] There is this life that Christ is calling us to that's free of anxiety. It's real. It's not some figment of the imagination of Jesus on the mountain saying these goody things.

This is real. This is the life that he's provided for us and he's called us to live in. And he said, also, I want you to consider the plant kingdom. I want you, have you ever seen a lily?

Have y'all ever walked on the mountainside in the Smoky Mountains and you're walking on this trail in the middle of nowhere and you think, I don't know if anybody's ever been here before. Or it's overgrown, you're getting wet because you're walking by and it's just water pouring down your boots.

And you're looking around, you don't hear a soul, you don't see a soul. It's you and God in the mountain. And you look up on the mountain and trilliums are lining the whole side of the mountain. You ever seen a trillium? Oh, it's beautiful.

It's amazing to look at the side of the mountain. The whole side of the mountain is awash in trillium. Or to go at a certain time of year. Have you ever seen the mountain laurel or the rhododendron in full bloom?

[39 : 54] Oh, my goodness. I could just sit in my chair and watch the sun just work its way through the limbs with all the beautiful flowers. I mean, it's amazing to see them. It's just the most brilliant color.

They're huge. Mountain laurels are kind of dainty, but there's tons of them. And they're white with this red rim. It's like, how did you get so creative? And you know what he says about this? He said, you look at that, and guess what? A lot of those flowers last one day. He mentions lilies by name. You ever seen road lilies? Lilies that grow on the side of the road? Wild. They come up and they flower and they're beautiful.

The flowers are beautiful. Next day you go by, that flower's gone. And he says, listen, that beauty is greater than Solomon ever experienced. That's how much I'm able to do in your life.

Why do you worry about what you put on when I put on this incredible beauty for the grass that is here today and gone tomorrow? Church, do you hear what he's saying?

[40 : 56] Beware lest you serve the opinion of people. Beware lest you live for temporal things. Beware lest you try to control your world and not serve the Lord Jesus.

He's given us these warnings. He's telling us there's something greater. There's a life that's much greater. There's a life that when you're yoked with me, it's easy and the burden is light.

There's this life that is full of joy and full of peace, full of contentment, full of meaning, full of purpose, full of fellowship.

And you can enjoy it right now. For those of us that are born again, for those of us that are truly Christians, he said, why are you waiting? Jesus says, here it is.

You know the beautiful thing he leads us to is this. He leads us to verse 33. This verse has struck me from the first time I ever read it.

[42 : 06] You know, I thought I read my Bible when I was a kid, but I never understood a word and not one verse ever stuck. I wasn't a Christian. I could have still memorized it even though I wasn't a Christian, but it just never impacted me.

When I first started reading the Bible for real after I became a Christian, I circled that verse quick because it spoke to me. Because it gave me direction. Here's what you need to do.

I had one person that kind of led me into the kingdom and they gave me some direction. When I read that verse, oh, that's the way I'm supposed to live. What does that mean? And I've been in pursuit of trying to figure out what that means for a long, long time.

And it is so deep and it's so rich that I hope you'll hear it. And it's worth us spending a couple of minutes to understand what's being said here. Here's what Christ says. Beware, beware, beware, but do this.

What is he saying to you? Seek first the kingdom of God. Seek first the kingdom of God. Make it your highest priority, the kingdom of God.

[43 : 08] Before you do any of this other stuff, seek the kingdom of God. And if you seek the kingdom of God, you don't have to worry about the other stuff.

How many people want to be free of anxiety? Free of worry? Not have to deal with it again? He says, here it is. He's not saying from a human perspective this is easy.

He's not even saying from a human perspective you can do it. Let me say that again. From a human perspective you can't do this. But you know what?

There's something supernatural in the life of Christians. You know what it is? It's the indwelling Holy Spirit. He said, I've given you everything you need for life and godliness. It's the very God of the universe and the person of the Holy Spirit has come to dwell within us.

And he says, I will take care of it all. He said, if you'll depend on me and you'll be led by me and you'll walk in step with me, your burden will be light. My yoke is easy.

[44 : 11] I take care of you and I lead you and I guide you and I bless you. And I cause my spirit to go crazy inside of you with joy. And so here it is.

He's saying this right here. Seek first the kingdom of God. So let me ask this question. What is the kingdom of God? Do you realize Christ talked about it all the time? I got a cough again.

I got a microphone there so I have to... He talked about the kingdom of God all the time. And you know most Christians don't have any idea what it is. We think it's heaven.

We think it's that place that we go to after we die. You know that's not what it is? Now that... It's not that that's apart from it. It's different. It's not.

The kingdom of God is bigger than just this faraway place that happens after we die. I don't have time to do a full sermon on the kingdom because it would take multiple days.

[45 : 07] I don't even have time to hardly wet the whistle on the kingdom. But I am going to read a few verses and I want you to hear some of the truths about the kingdom. And then we'll come back

and we'll see exactly what we've been told to do here when he says seek the kingdom.

Seek first the kingdom of God. In Mark 1 it says this about the kingdom. As Jesus begins his ministry he says this. The time is fulfilled.

The kingdom of God is at hand. So when Christ comes up out of the water and he goes into the wilderness to be tempted and he comes back out of the wilderness to start his ministry.

He made this statement. The time is at hand. The kingdom of God is now. It's not in the future. It was back in the first century he's talking about.

1 John says this. The reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. Do you realize that the God of this world is Satan?

[46 : 09] Do you realize that he was thrown down to earth and he was given in a sense given powers to be able to affect this world?

He's the God of this age. He tempts. He's the father of lies. We know. I don't have to go over all that. But here's what it says. The reason the son of God appeared is not the only reason.

But it certainly is one of the reasons. The reason he appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. What are the works of the devil? What are the works of the devil in your life?

What does he do in your life? Does he ever tempt you to pride? Does he ever tempt you to turn your back on God? Does he ever tempt you? I could go on and on and on.

In our lives, there's sin, right? You know we used to be ruled by it. You know we used to be servants of Satan. You know we were delivered from the dominion of darkness. That is servitude to Satan.

[47 : 11] We were delivered from the dominion of darkness. We were translated into the kingdom of his dear son. And what does it look like to be in the kingdom of his dear son?

Well, eventually it looks like full glory, doesn't it? You know that when we're in glory, you know that Brantley is not sinning right now? You know there's going to be no more tears, no more weeping, no more crying.

He's going to be, at some point, when the end happens, his spirit's going to be reunited with his body and he's going to be fully glorified. But right now, he's not sinning. You know what?

That is what's happening in our life. You know what's called sanctification? You know that Christ is doing a work of sanctification in each of our lives? He's changing us into the image of Christ. He's destroying the works of the devil that have plagued us.

He's destroying the sin that we are continuing to walk in. He's saying, hey, Treg, do you realize the reason you just did that? It's because you wanted that guy to clap for you.

[48 : 15] Oh, no, not again. Oh, God, I'm sorry. God, do something in me where I don't walk that way anymore. He says, I am. I am.

I'm doing it one day at a time, one step at a time. I'm destroying the works of the devil because that's the motivation behind all of that. And I'm helping you to live for me and walk in my ways. To let me direct you.

That you would depend fully on me. I'm doing that work in your life, Treg. And in John 12, it says this. This is Christ when he's talking about his ascension, his resurrection and ascension.

He's talking to the disciples about it. He says this. Now, in other words, it was just right around the corner. This is the last week of his life he's talking to his disciples. He says now, right now. And this would have been right before he's arrested.

Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. This concept of Satan having the privilege to be accusing us before God.

[49 : 23] When Christ is resurrected and ceding the power of authority, guess what place the enemy has to accuse us afterwards? Zero. Why?

Because the blood of Jesus paid for my sin. So what's Satan going to do? See, that guy sinned.

The blood paid for it. He's forgiven. He's mine. The works of Satan in that life have been destroyed because my blood has covered him.

Because he's my child. He says he will be cast out. Boy, Revelation chapter 12, if y'all been in Sunday school.

By the way, there's sheets out there for chapter 15 and 60 if y'all want to grab them on the way out. If y'all been in Sunday school, we've been talking about Revelation. And this point in Revelation chapter 12 says this. And the great dragon, that is Satan, was thrown down.

Same concept. Cast out and thrown down in the original language is the same. He's thrown down. That ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to earth.

[50 : 25] He no longer has access to heaven. He can't accuse us anymore. And his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now, the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come.

When? When Jesus was resurrected and placed at the right hand of God in all power. The kingdom came. The reign of Christ came. His kingdom.

So Luke says this. And I hope you're not getting confused. You know this is all about the kingdom. I'm trying to talk. There's two kingdoms, you know. There's the kingdom of this world and there's the kingdom of heaven. Or the kingdom of God. And we are a part of the kingdom of this world until we're translated to the kingdom of his dear son.

Now we're a part of the heavenly kingdom. And so he's telling us to seek first his kingdom. What is he saying? That's what we're trying to figure out. That's why I'm talking about this kingdom.

This kingdom that started when Christ was on earth, he says it's now. And when he was resurrected and seated at the power of authority, he said the kingdom is now in full swing. It's fully operational.

[51 : 37] And then it begs the question, well, what is the kingdom? Okay, if I'm going to seek it, what am I seeking? Well, listen to this. It says, being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, the kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed.

Nor will they say, oh, look here, here it is. Or, oh, there it is. For behold, the kingdom of God is within you. Oh, here is the key for us to be able to understand what we've been called to do.

Do you realize the kingdom of God is within you? So when he says, seek the kingdom of God, he's not saying go to this place and find it. He's saying the kingdom of God is this thing that's beautifully talked about in Romans 14.

Listen, it says, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking. Okay, what is it a matter of? He says, this is Paul speaking to the Romans.

He said, the kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking, but about righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God is about righteousness.

[52 : 57] It's about peace. It's about joy in the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God is about the relationship we have with the Holy Spirit. Goodness, there's so much more.

I wish I had time to go dig deeper into this concept of the kingdom. So what is he saying to us when he's giving us this incredible direction? I really fully believe this is the central point of the Sermon on the Mount.

Seek the kingdom of God. What does that mean? What is the kingdom of God? With the kingdom, you've got a king. And with the kingdom, you've got those who are in the kingdom, right?

The people. And if the king is reigning, what do the people do? They bow to the king. They honor the king.

You know what we're being called to do? We're being called to bow our knee to the king. We're being called to recognize the reign of the king. So I would define the kingdom of God in this way.

[54 : 02] It's the reign of Christ the king in the lives of his kingdom people. When is it true that Christ is reigning in your heart?

Listen, he's not reigning if we say no. When he prompts us to live in a certain way, we say no, no, no, no. I'm scared of that. I don't want that. I'm not ready for that. Hey, catch me in two years.

I'll think about it. He's not reigning. You know when he's reigning, when we say yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord.

Yes, Lord. No, Lord don't go together. Those two words don't go together. No, Lord means he's not your Lord. I'm my own Lord when I tell him no.

If he's reigning, if I'm seeking his kingdom, you know what I'm seeking? I'm seeking his reign in my life. You know what Christ is saying to the people? Surrender yourself fully to the reign of God in your life.

[55 : 00] As we look forward to this coming year, as we, whether it's January the 1st today, whether it's March the 1st, whether it's June the 5th, whatever time it is that you're considering how to spend your time, listen to the word of God.

The word of God says this, you focus your heart and your time on the reign of Christ in your heart. The result of that will be his glory and your good.

You will begin to enjoy this life where you don't have to worry about a thing. Y'all did say you didn't want to worry about something.

I ask you. You know the way to not ever worry about anything more again is to not trust in your human ability, but it's to trust in his sovereign ability. And guess what?

It might not turn out the way you want because sometimes what you want is not what he wants. But he's calling us this life of joy and peace, and the pathway there is to surrender to him, is to seek his reign in your heart.

[56 : 14] When he's reigning, you're saying, yes, Lord. Are you saying, yes, Lord, to him? When you read the word and he says, live like this, are you living like that? When he says, don't let an unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth, but only a type of word that's good for the edification of others.

Is that true for you? That's just one of hundreds of directional words in Scripture. Are we saying, yes, Lord?

Are you surrendered? Is there any sin in your life that you're aware of? Any sin? Even one? Right now, this day, this moment, is there even one sin?

And there might be more than one that you're aware of. Let me say, if you're going to seek the kingdom of God, you know what you're going to do? You're going to come up here, and you're going to bow on your knee as we sing to him, and you're going to say, forgive me, God.

Forgive me. I'm not allowing you to reign in that area. I've sinned. Forgive me, God. You changed my life, and you changed my desires, and you helped me to live for you.

[57 : 17] Because you can't do it in your human strength. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to live in this way. You know what he's calling us all to do is live by the power of the Holy Spirit. If there's any sin in your life that you're aware of, and by the way, you'll never get to the bottom.

If there's any sin you're aware of, please, I beg you to get in your closet and ask God to forgive you. Not to just cauterize it. Not just a token.

I'm going to just throw up this token and hope he hears it. It's a genuine life change. Repent means I'm turning away. I'm turning the opposite way with an intention to never go there again. True repentance is a true change.

We're stepping into the new year. How are we going to change? What are we going to change? How are we going to live? What's going to motivate you? Where's your treasure?

Let's pray. Father, it's hard to believe that there's such a thing as a life that's free of anxiety and free of worry.

[58 : 21] God, it's totally hard to believe that for me. God, I confess that I've struggled through the years with fear of the future and fear of finance and fear of opinion of men and fear of a lot of things, God.

I thank you that in part you've delivered me from some of that stuff. And God, I just ask that as right now, as a church, right now, this church, right now, God, as you're speaking to each heart, I pray that you'd give us the courage to ask for forgiveness and the courage to bow our knee and the courage to serve you as Lord and the courage to really believe that you're good.

And you'll take care of our needs, what we eat and what we wear. God, you'll take care of all those things. God, you say there's this life.

I see it in your word. It's so beautiful to look at. There's this life that's free of anxiety because we're absolutely dependent on you. And God, I just confess I had the hardest time trying to get there, God.

I've for years desired that, this life where I don't walk in sin anymore, where I don't go down these roads that are obviously sinful, God.

[59 : 33] And I just confess that apart from your power, I'll walk down the same road again. And I'm sure it's true for all of us, God. And so I'm asking you to do a supernatural work in our life.

And I'm asking you to help us to be aware of the faults that cascade through our mind and to turn away from anything that's not surrendered to you. God, show us our sin that we might repent of it and turn away from it.

And show us your light that we might walk toward it. For God, we desire to serve you. We really, truly desire to serve you as Lord. I pray that you'd help us to do it. And I pray in your name.

Amen. Amen.