

BUT SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM
(The Sermon on the Mount II)

Matthew 6:1-34
Key Verse: 6:33

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

As we know well, human beings are noble because they are made in the image of God. At the same time, human beings are ignoble because they are clumps of desires. They have holy desire to be like Jesus, and at the same time they have worldly desires: The desire to store up earthly treasures, the desire to show off to others, and the desire to experience sinful pleasures. What is worse, sinful human beings have the habit of worrying for nothing. The disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. Still they had a multiplicity of hidden worldly desires and worries about the future. In this chapter Jesus taught them what they must seek first as his disciples instead of worrying and crying. In verses 1-8, Jesus teaches them that whatever they do they must do in the sight of God and for the glory of God, not before men, for their own glory. In verses 9-15, Jesus teaches them [the Lord's prayer](#) as a standard, for they must seek God's help [in prayer](#). In verses 16-34, Jesus teaches his disciples to seek God for their future security instead of worrying endlessly.

I. The way to live for God's glory (1-8)

First, giving to the needy (1-4). Look at verse 1. "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." Here, Jesus sternly warns that his disciples should not practice hypocrisy, because hypocrisy does not please God; it is self-glory seeking. In verse 1, "acts of righteousness" means the life of faith, especially doing good deeds. In this chapter, Jesus mentions three acts of righteousness: giving to the needy, praying and fasting. Giving to the needy is an essential quality in our lives of faith. God gave his one and only Son to save us from our sins. How much more we must give something to the needy. Giving to the needy is really good. Those who give to the needy have a noble faith. Paul says in Acts 20:35b, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Giving to the needy is the imitation of Jesus, who gave his life for us. Prayer is the measure of faith in God Almighty. Jesus prayed to God before and after doing the work of God. But these acts of faith should not be done before the eyes of men, for the sake of seeking self-glory. If a person does so, he becomes a hypocrite, meaning "actor." He pretends to be happy when he is not, or he pretends to be righteous when he is not. We must practice acts of faith for God's glory. Look at verse 2. "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." Jesus tells us that when we give to the needy, we must give to the needy for the glory of God; we must not give to the needy to blow our own trumpet and show off to men. Those who give to the needy for the purpose of seeking self-glory cannot please God because they have already received their reward from men.

What should be our attitude in giving to the needy? Look at verse 3. "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." We must not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing, so that our giving may be before God and for the glory of God. Usually fallen men want to blow trumpets to draw people's attention when they do something for the needy. Hands are the parts of a body for coordination and cooperation. So it is impossible for the left hand to do something secretly from the right hand. Here Jesus tells his people to do good secretly for the glory of God, not for their own honor. In this allegory, Jesus emphasizes that we must give to the needy with the compassion which springs up from the compassion of Jesus because Jesus gave his life for the sin of the world. There is a beautiful story about a man who served the needy for the glory of God. Dr. Codington, the director of a Christian hospital, gave away so much of the foodstuffs of the hospital to the needy that meal service to the patients in his hospital was almost impossible. He was compelled to do so out of Jesus' shepherd heart. Humanly speaking, Dr. Codington was a pointless person. But from God's point of view, he was giving to the needy selflessly, knowing that he was pleasing to God. He was a man whose left hand did not know what his right hand was doing. In short, he was a spiritual man who was eager to feed the needy children of God. Here we learn that we should not be selfish or hypocritical: We must be merciful as God is merciful.

Second, the attitude of prayer (5-8). Prayer is the most potent weapon for Christians. By virtue of prayer, sinful men can come to God. With prayer we can fight against the evil one. Sometimes we find that we are helpless to do anything for our sheep. But we can pray to God for them. Samuel learned through his life-long shepherd life that his supreme responsibility was to pray for his people more than anything else. 1 Samuel 12:23 says, "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right."

If our attitude of prayer is wrong, we become hypocrites or self-righteous people. Those who pray before men are hypocrites. Those who pray too loudly to draw people's attention are hypocrites and magic artists who want people's praise and attention (5). Look at verse 7. "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words." What is the right attitude of prayer? We must pray before God. We must pray quietly as if we are talking to God. We must pray with clear and unselfish prayer topics. Then God will answer our prayers (6).

II. The [Lord's prayer](#) (9-15)

First, "Our Father in heaven." The Lord's prayer consists of six prayer topics. The first three are for God's glory, and the second three are for man's needs. "Our Father in heaven." This one phrase explains the relationship between God and his children. Jesus tells us to call on "Our Father..." using the vocative case. It is like a child calling his father, "Daddy, Daddy," with jubilant and glad emotion. Our God is the Creator God who made us with a clear purpose. The Creator God is our Father, and we are his children with his great purpose and high calling. This one phrase, "Our Father in heaven," gives a great

solution for broken human relationships. There are all kinds of people in the world. In the USA more than 100 different nationalities live together. Because of national and cultural differences, people cannot maintain proper human relationships. Rather, they live in enmity, antagonism and animosity. What is worse, on account of the devil's prank, innumerable families are broken and children from broken families are crying endlessly. But there is a way we can heal the broken relationship problem. If all peoples call God, "Our Father," they can think of others as "our brothers" and "our sisters." If we call God, "Our Father," we cannot misuse others. Rather, we see them as precious brothers and sisters in God. When we call God, "Our Father," the broken relationship problem will be healed and restored in God.

Second, "hallowed be your name." "Hallowed be your name," means that God's name is properly respected and honored among men. God's children must expect that God's name be respected or honored by all the people of the world. This aspiration should be our master passion. God's children's happiness should lie not in our success or achievements, as it does for pagans. Our happiness should be determined by the degree to which God's name is honored and respected in our societies. Paul's motto, "for his name's sake," and John Calvin's motto, "For the glory of God alone," explain the meaning of "hallowed be your name." Therefore, when God's name is properly respected and honored we must be happy. On the other hand, when our God's name is not properly respected and honored, then we must be furious toward the enemies of God.

Third, "your kingdom come." What does "your kingdom come" mean? It has the same meaning as "your rule come." Therefore God's people's inmost desire is to see that God rules each individual person as well as the peoples of all nations. We must let our King Jesus rule every sphere of human life: in education, government, commerce, industry, science, entertainment, and especially family lives. We must pray especially that the education field may recognize God as Sovereign Ruler.

The kingdom of God also implies God's righteousness (Ro 14:17), a righteousness both imputed and imparted to men. The world is still under the rule of Satan, and Jesus' people are groaning, living under the rule of unjust and cruel systems and structures of the world. The root problem of any nation is not a system, but godlessness. When God's rule is not fully accepted, God's children must pray earnestly that God's kingdom come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. But there is a problem: God's will is quite contrary to our wishes. Vulgar people want to satisfy their own desires. But God wants us to pray for the USA to be a kingdom of priests.

Fourth, "Give us today our daily bread." The fourth, fifth and sixth prayer topics concern our human needs. Mankind has a slave mentality. There is no one who says, "I have enough money." Fallen men's greediness is bottomless. This was the reason God gave his chosen people Israel daily bread training for forty years in the wilderness before they went into the promised land. Proverbs 30:8b,9a makes us think about "daily bread:" "...but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you."

"Give us today our daily bread." Jesus does not teach us to say, "Give 'me' today 'my' daily bread." Instead, he tells us to say, "give

'us' today 'our' daily bread." Fallen men are eager to get more bread for themselves and their children. But they are indifferent to other people's daily bread. If we ignore our hungry brethren, we are hypocrites. We cannot call God, "Our Father." There was a rich man who enjoyed a luxurious and selfish life. But he was indifferent to his neighbor named Lazarus, who was covered with sores, longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. That rich man went to hell because he did not care for his neighbor's daily bread (Lk 16:19-24). God wants us to pray for daily bread for all people of the world.

Fifth, "Forgive us our debts." Read verse 12. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." In this verse, the word "debt" has the same meaning as "sin." The bread problem is serious. But the sin problem is more serious than the bread problem. Therefore, we must ask God's forgiveness of sin; otherwise, we are still in sin. The way to ask God's forgiveness of sin is to repent of our own sins first, and next, forgive others who have sinned against us.

Historically, however, to forgive others' sin has been a most difficult problem for all men. We must forgive others who have sinned against us, not conditionally but unconditionally. Then we shall be called the children of God, and we shall be called forgiven sinners. Forgiveness is so important that Jesus repeats the same story again. Read verses 14 and 15. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Sixth, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Here, "the evil one" is the devil. There are many who say, "I am not afraid of the devil." These days there is a strong impression that young women are not afraid of the devil at all. They think they can enjoy the devil for a while and dump him anytime. That is a great mistake. The devil's prank is a sugared poison of sin. No one can run away from the devil's prank or his pursuit. We must acknowledge that we are totally helpless, and we must pray earnestly that God may protect us from the devil. If we don't pray for this, soon we will become the prisoners of the devil.

III. Seek first his kingdom and righteousness (19-34)

First, "Do not store up treasures on earth" (19-21). Generally, men want to overcome worries about the future by storing up for themselves treasures on earth. But abundant material things only make men worry; and next, they burden them until they cannot but sigh every five minutes. Men worry until they suffer from many kinds of phobias. So most rich men are men of great worries. We must know that things of the world all perish, spoil and fade away. Those who have stored up treasures on earth, ignoring God and others, will discover in the future that they were not wise, but most foolish. 1 John 2:17 says, "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." Look at verse 20a. "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...." To store up treasures in heaven means to store up for ourselves something valuable in God's eyes. 1 Timothy 6:18,19 says, "Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they

may take hold of the life that is truly life."

Second, "You cannot serve both God and Money" (22-32). As the eye is the lamp of the body, so our spiritual eye is the lamp of our spiritual body (22,23). We must see with our spiritual eyes treasures which please God. Earthly treasure is money. In contrast, heavenly treasure is God himself and his kingdom. Jesus says in verse 21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Verse 24b says, "You cannot serve both God and Money." According to this passage, storing up treasure in heaven is the way to overcome worries. If we are attached to things of the world, including our children, we are idol worshipers (Col 3:5).

Fallen men have the strong habit of worrying for nothing. So Jesus says in verse 25, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life..." What to eat or what to wear is unnecessary worry, because God provides all our necessary things. "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (27) That is true. By worrying we cannot add a single hour to our lives. Once Abraham worried about his future security, so he went to Egypt to make some money. It was his sin of unbelief. Later, he repented of his anxiety about material things. Finally, he learned a spiritual lesson in his heart: "The Lord will provide" (Ge 22:14). We must depend on God for our material provisions. If we do not depend on God for material things, we cannot depend on God for anything at all.

Third, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (33,34). Look at verse 33. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." This is God's precious promise to each of us. Those who have obeyed this promise have been prosperous and successful in whatever they have done. How can we seek his kingdom and his righteousness? When we become worried about our future security, we should not seek the way we can make much money. But we must seek God first until we find him, and until we find the way to solve our future security. In making our decisions, we must include God always. We must learn to depend on God for our future security.

There are many things to learn in the world. But we must surely learn how to seek first his kingdom and righteousness. One young man learned that his people must seek God instead of seeking the favor of the US government. The man decided to teach college students the Bible so as to root out the beggar mentality and plant independent spirit in the psyche of young Koreans. The man began to teach the Bible to young students. In the matter of time, he was demoted from church pastor to student evangelist. He had three children, but his pay was less than \$100 a month. But the man did not worry about his children's hospital bills and future security. In order to teach students to seek first his kingdom and righteousness he had to fast as frequently as he ate. In short, the man held on to the promise of God, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." God blessed his student evangelism abundantly. Thus, many students learned the spirit of independence through Bible study. Later many of them became chapter directors and most of them put up tall buildings for their Bible houses. In addition God made his student evangelism work into the biggest and richest in the world. The man learned that the promise of God is true.

When American forefathers came to this land, they could hardly eat. In addition, the persecution of England was so intensive and American Indians were constantly near. Still, they wanted to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Sometimes some American families had to eat only five kernels of corn as their daily ration. Still they kept seeking God first above all other things. And look, God blessed them so abundantly that they could feed all peoples of all nations both spiritually and materially.

Still, we cannot escape worrying about many things. Jesus says in verse 34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." We must accept today's sufferings with a thankful mind. When suffering comes again tomorrow, we must accept it with joy (Ro 5:3). But we don't have to worry about tomorrow's sufferings in advance. Don't worry, seek Jesus, is Jesus' people's basic faith. Of course, God's people have a money problem. But we do not worry. We seek God first.

In this chapter we learn that we must seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, so that God can help us. We must seek God's kingdom and his righteousness until we learn that God's promise is true. Let's read verse 33 again.