

Seek First His Kingdom

Jake | The Resting Place Apostolic Family | Matthew 6:30–34

THE KINGDOM BELONGS TO A KING

Our opening verse today is Matthew 6:33. Read it with me:

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

If you have been in church for any length of time, you may have heard this passage — but it is typically miscued. A lot of people stop at "seek first his kingdom" and gloss past the next phrase. But notice what it says: *his* righteousness. We are going to talk more about that, but first let's look at the full context of what Jesus is saying.

"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will he not much more clothe you, you of little faith? Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? Or what will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:30–34, NASB)

Right off the bat, let's get a holistic perspective. I have always read this passage in relation solely to provision — almost like it is a survival text. And you can absolutely apply it there. But I would argue that it is also speaking to a really unhealthy part of American culture. We have a greedy measure of consumerism in us. You can read this through that lens too. What will I eat? What will I drink? What will I wear? We do not need to worry about where the path is leading us. We just need to seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, and the rest of these things will be added to us.

But what we have to understand is that "kingdom" may not be foreign to some of you, though I would say it is foreign to most of us — and for a couple of reasons. Number one: we do not live in a kingdom here in the United States. We live in a republic. And even if you lived in a historical kingdom, that kingdom would be so radically different from the kingdom of heaven that it would still be a foreign concept.

Here is what a kingdom is: you have a monarchy, typically a king, and that king is dominating. There is a domain that king rules over, and that domain includes physical territory and people and culture. If the king allows something, it influences the culture. If the king says it is not, it will not touch the culture. His word becomes law. If the king decrees something, it is enforced throughout his kingdom as law.

Now, that can be great if you have a goodhearted, righteous ruler who desires the prospering of his people. But if you have an evil king, it is probably the worst form of government — because his word is absolute. But praise God that our King is the righteous one. He is righteousness itself. He is the eternal one. His throne is established upon justice and righteousness. So the negative attributes of kingdom should not intimidate us, because our King is good, he is pure, and he is true.

Here is the bottom line: there is no kingdom without a king. So if the concept of the kingdom of heaven is foreign to you, here is your gateway. Get to know the King. Relationally get to know the King. And as you spend time with the King, you begin to understand the ways of the kingdom of heaven.

This is why we have to be reborn. You have to be reborn because you have a new nature placed inside of you. You have the life of Christ. You have his Spirit filling you. And like a baby learning to walk and speak, we have to grow in our knowledge of the King. As we obey and walk with the King, his righteousness begins to become tangible on our lives. Simply put: there is man's way of doing things — and even the best of man's way is like filthy rags before the Lord, as the Bible says. And then there is God's way, heaven's way, the kingdom way.

There is a reason Jesus had to distinguish that we must be born again. You are being brought into a kingdom realm that is initially foreign to you, but it is actually your eternal home. You have an opportunity right now, through relationship with the King, to grow in kingdom mindset and to release kingdom into the earth even now.

NOT A TICKET — A KINGDOM LIFESTYLE

I love this picture. I heard it, I believe from Dr. Myles Munroe — who has gone on to be with the Lord. He used this analogy: a lot of us in Christianity, we get saved and our salvation experience is exciting, and then it just stops right there. And then it is just a downward trend of white-knuckling it, holding on until the end. But that is not kingdom. That is not what the Lord told us to do.

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

If you are a little kid and Disney World is your thing, and your parents give you a ticket to Disney World — you are not excited about the physical paper. You are excited about what the paper gives you access to. You hand them the paper at the gate, and you get to enter in.

Salvation is amazing and we will never get over it. We will always be looking at the cross with wonder that the God of the universe became one of us and died for our benefit. I am not saying we have graduated beyond it. It is our foundation. But there is more to be built on that foundation. There is a kingdom lifestyle that we get the opportunity to walk in, to live in, to breathe. It makes us otherworldly. It makes us stand out in a society that does not understand our King.

It is the righteousness of God that is needed in this hour. Not more legislation. The kingdom — we need the King and we need his kingdom present in our cities, in our homes, in our governmental systems. You cannot separate the King and his kingdom.

That is why this passage says: seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and the rest of these things will be added. The Lord will add greatness to your life. He will add prosperity in every measure — including financial. He wants you to be wealthy in accordance with your purpose and your assignment. What Peter might need is more than what I need, but I do not get caught up in comparison. What I know is that he is going to give me more than enough to do what he has called me to do — and he is going to do the same for Peter. If we are both seeking him first and his kingdom, we get the benefit of his righteousness and the rest of these things get added to us.

We have an incredible government system here in the United States. It is probably the best that will exist until the Lord comes and fully establishes his kingdom. But it is not top tier. It is not perfection. It has its flaws. We are seeing those flaws, and we have to understand there is a superior

government that you and I abide by. We do our best to live by the laws of the land, but when they come into conflict with the laws of the kingdom, we are going to adhere to a superior kingdom that is eternal. You are not an American citizen first. You are a kingdom citizen first who has been birthed and planted into the United States.

ESTHER: A PROPHETIC PICTURE OF SEEKING THE KING

I think the story of Esther is such an incredible historical story and an incredible prophetic symbolic key. There is so much you can receive from the book of Esther.

Let me give you some quick context. At that time, the nation of Israel had been disobedient to the Lord for hundreds of years and had been pushed into exile. At this point, the Jews are in Persia. There is a Jewish woman named Esther who is in the capital city of Susa. King Xerxes had a wife named Vashti who openly embarrassed him and rejected his rule — so she was removed from the picture. Now the king was looking for a new queen.

Emissaries went out from the royal court into all of Persia and brought back the most beautiful women to Susa. They prepared them, and each one would have an introduction to the king. If they impressed him, they would be placed in a favorable situation. If they did not, they would still be in the court but largely forgotten. He was looking for one who would be his queen.

When these young women who had been selected came before the king, they could pick any type of clothing or adornment they desired. They could choose the finest things available. Then they would go before the king and hope that he would choose them. But Esther did something different. Look at Esther 2:13:

"Then in this way the maiden came to the king. Whatever she desired was given to her to take with her from the harem into the king's palace."

But a couple of verses later, in Esther 2:15:

"Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, had come to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what

Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, suggested. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her."

A lot of us have probably read this and moved past it — but this is a prophetic picture right here. The attendant, the king's servant Hegai, had probably known King Xerxes from the time he was very young. He knew what the king liked. He knew the type of clothing. He knew the instrument and the songs the king enjoyed. He knew what pleased the king.

And Esther, in wisdom, went to the attendant and said, "What does the king like?" She did not ask, "What do I like?" and then hope she would get picked. She went to the attendant first.

That attendant — Hegai — is a prophetic picture of the Holy Spirit. Xerxes in this picture is Jesus. The attendant is the Holy Spirit, and you and I are Esther. There are a lot of people who come before Jesus with a preconceived notion of what they think he wants. Their works, their striving — they fill in the blank. But he might want something very different. Would it not be wisdom for us to go to the Holy Spirit and say, "Holy Spirit, what does King Jesus want? What should I be adorned with? Will you provide for me what I need to be pleasing to the King?"

Because of this, look at what happens in Esther 2:17:

"And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti."

Because she was selfless rather than selfish, she obtained the very thing that all the other women were trying to obtain through selfishness. By being selfless, she got what she wanted anyway.

And later, Esther had to come before Xerxes unannounced — which was taboo. It was not acceptable. If you did this, it was by the mercy of the king alone that you survived. At one point, Esther realizes that God has placed her in this position to protect her people. This is what she says in Esther 4:16:

"Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

She understood the will of God. She understood the real threat. And she said, "Regardless, I am going to go — because I know this is what I have been made for and called to." And when she actually goes before the king, this is what he says in Esther 5:3:

"Then the king said to her, 'What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you.'"

Again, it is emphasizing the point: by not being selfish and choosing to love the king and find out what he desired, she obtained everything she could ever possibly dream of — including the salvation of her people.

SEEKING THE HEART OF THE KING WITH SINGULAR DEVOTION

So what is this all funneling into? Here is how I would say it in the spiritual application to Jesus: seeking the heart of the King with singular devotion is the key to bringing the kingdom and his righteousness to the earth.

It is a singular devotion to the King and what the King desires. It is an abandonment of what I think my life needs to look like. It is saying, "You, Jesus, are the Son of God. You have lavished upon me great mercy. I love you for that. And with singular devotion, in the same way you gave your life to me, I give mine to you. Lead me in the path you have called me to."

This is so important because so much of Christianity today has become self-help — how can you apply spiritual principles to make your life better? And you can apply those things and your life will probably get a little better. But it is so much richer when those spiritual blessings come in the context of pursuing the King and letting him show you how to walk in the path he has called you to.

Jesus said it in Matthew 22:37–38:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment."

David said in Psalm 25: "Make me know your ways, O Lord. Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day."

Jesus said in John 14: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Meaning: if you fall in love with me, you will be empowered to keep my commandments.

JESUS: THE PERFECT MODEL OF KINGDOM DEVOTION

Esther is a great introductory example. But the better example is Jesus. He modeled this for us perfectly.

Matthew 6:9–11:

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.'"

John 5:19:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself, unless it is something he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

John 5:30:

"I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me."

John 8:28–29:

"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

The irony in all of this is that God knows the desires of your heart better than even you do. He knows what he created you for. He knows what return he wanted when he invested your life in the earth — far better than you do. And it would do you good to potentially endure temporary suffering to follow his path, which leads you not only to joy and glory and everlasting love in this life, but in the one to come in a much greater measure.

He made us a promise with a warning in Matthew 16:24–27:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.'"

Here is the promise: it is not a promise of a life of ease. It is not a promise of a life without suffering. It is actually a promise of suffering — but suffering unto eternal glory. Suffering unto his beautiful life being revealed to you in a greater measure, and revealed through you to those around you.

Psalm 37:4: "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."

HE KNEW BEFORE YOU DID

I want to close with this. This is a Lego magazine from July 2004. I was nine years old. God was preparing me for my destiny before I even knew him. I have loved Africa my entire life. I have loved Lego my entire life. Eleven years ago, I chose to give my life to the Lord. And he has taken me in unorthodox paths — paths that did cause great temporary suffering — but they have prepared me to now be walking in what he called me to.

I have an incredible Lego business that not only provides for my family but provides an abundance to be a blessing here, to build schools in Africa, to do these beautiful things. I would not have chosen that path. I did not know it lay before me. But he did.

And when that journey started eleven years ago, I said, "Lord, help me to seek your kingdom and your righteousness. And you bring to me what it is you have called me to." And that is exactly what he did.

Transcript of a message delivered at The Resting Place Apostolic Family — Tampa Bay, FL — trpfamily.org