

Seek the Kingdom of God First Message to Women

by Annie Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in our lives. It discusses the longing to understand God's Kingdom, the need to prioritize God's Kingdom above earthly concerns, and the simplicity of entering God's Kingdom through faith and humility. The sermon highlights the characteristics of God's Kingdom such as righteousness, peace, and joy, and encourages living by the values of the heavenly kingdom while on earth. It concludes with a call to surrender to God's kingship, prepare for His return, and strive to embody the love and principles of God's Kingdom in daily life.

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:3, Luke 12:32, Romans 14:17, Hebrews 11:15, Philippians 4:4, John 18:36, Matthew 5:3, Luke 12:31

Topics: "Prioritizing God's Kingdom", "Living by Kingdom Values"

Description

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Transcript

Last month, at the end of the meeting, one of the sisters asked me this question. This question is, how can we as sisters apply this verse, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. And how can we as sisters apply it in our lives? So I told her that maybe I'll talk about it the next time.

So I kept it in mind and I thought we can meditate on that. The talk about God's Kingdom, I feel most unworthy. Most unworthy and that's the longing of my heart to understand.

And I feel as long as we are on this earth, we'll have such a longing and a searching to know more about God's Kingdom. But one day I know it will be there in God's Kingdom and we'll see Jesus face to face and we'll understand things more clearly. Now it's like we are seeing through a glass, like a frosted glass.

But still there are, Jesus who came down from heaven, from God's Kingdom has taught us so much. If we read the words of Jesus, we can understand a little bit, just a glimpse of God's Kingdom. I was just thinking, many of us have migrated from other countries and come here.

And I was just thinking, suppose there's some land much better than here and the king of that country comes and tells us, you have a chance to migrate to that other country. It's more comfortable and much easier. There's no sickness there.

And you don't have all these restrictions which you have here. And food will be in plenty, all your needs will be met. You don't have to worry about a thing.

And I've got a passport for that. It's free. I'll give it to you.

And he gives us the chance to go to that country. Now that country is the Kingdom of God. And Jesus is the one, the king who came from there to give us a chance to get into that kingdom.

And it must be so awesome to get into that kingdom. And we with our finite minds can never understand all the truths that are implied in that. But Jesus used simple illustrations.

And for each one of us, he comes to us at our level. When Nicodemus was a teacher and he knew everything about the law which Moses had given. But when he wanted to talk to Jesus, he was so afraid that people would see him.

So he came to him at night secretly and he asked Jesus, how can I get eternal life? That means how can I get into God's kingdom? And Jesus told him, a man with such a good mental capacity, he told him, you have to forget about all the things you've learned. You have to be born again. So even then Nicodemus couldn't understand, should I get into my mother's womb and get born again? Jesus said, no, it's not like that.

You have to unlearn all the ideas that you had. And you have to come like a little child, like a newborn baby. And then only you can get into God's kingdom.

And before that, when Jesus started his teaching ministry, he came with the same words that John the Baptist said, repent, repent for the kingdom of God is near. Sometimes he'd say, repent, the kingdom of God is near, is at hand. And sometimes he would say the kingdom of God is within you.

And it's good for us to meditate on all these, open our Bibles and look up the verses where it says about the kingdom of God. And he says in that kingdom, if you have to have a taste of that kingdom, you have to start now. We have to be born again, come like a little child and start living as if we are living in that kingdom.

We are living on earth, but the same rules of that kingdom, that eternal heavenly kingdom, we have to obey those. Now in this earth, when we live, we are in different countries and we have to obey the laws of that land. That's good.

Like now we have these three W's, wear your mask, watch out for safe distance and wash your hands. Those are the rules and it's good for us to obey those rules. And many other rules, which are for our good, for our safety, we have to obey.

But sometimes those rules may be contrary to God's laws. Because you know what I mean, rules about marriage and things like that. There we have God's word and our conscience.

Our conscience is like a compass, very delicate, but it moves and shows very clearly this is not the same as what God's word teaches. And God has given us the choice. We can say, yes, we want to choose to obey God's law and God will give us wisdom and strength to keep the laws of God's kingdom.

And when we think of this verse, seeking first the kingdom of God, I was thinking how wrongly we can think of that. You know, when I was a student, that verse used to come to me, seek first God's kingdom. And many of us thought that if we keep God's kingdom and pray and be active in Christian work and be involved in all that, it's like paying some money, some bribe for us to pass our exams or we don't have to worry about anything.

But we understood very soon, it's not like that. We have to do our studies, we have to work hard. But deep down in our heart, the central part of our life, the very, very center, the pith of the tree, the very central part of our life, our backbone, the innermost part of our heart should be in God's kingdom.

That's what I understood. Now some of us, some mothers I've seen after they get married or those who are having jobs say before you get married, if you have a job, you think like, oh, I'm a Christian. I have to seek God's kingdom.

All I need is to pay some money and forget about my earthly job. And they slip short in their work. That's a bad testimony.

Some mothers when they get married or the wives, they think, oh, God's kingdom comes first. So I need to read my Bible and meditate and pray. It doesn't matter what happens to my husband and my children, breakfast can be delayed, but God's kingdom can be first.

Those are all the wrong ways we can look at that. We have to say, Lord, when I want to be in your kingdom, I want to live by your laws. You show me what I should do.

And the Lord says, you take care of your children, take care of your husband, do your work. And while you're doing your work, you can keep thinking of me. You can send up, you can pray to me.

You can implement the values that I have taught you, the rules that I have taught you, and still be in my kingdom and do your earthly job. When I think of that verse, seek first the kingdom of God, it starts with the word but. But seek first.

And in the end, it says, therefore, the end of that, that's in Matthew 6, verse 33, 34. Why does it start with but? Because Jesus says, don't be anxious. Don't be anxious about earthly things, what you shall eat, what you shall wear.

Because he knows all of us, we are focusing on those earthly things. What we shall eat, is this food the best food? Is this old? And then we get so taken up with our diet and with our healthy health conscious and all that. And that comes to such a like a big giant in our life.

We get focused on that. And the Lord says, put that aside. You first think of my kingdom and all these things will be added to you.

Don't think even about the future, what will happen. We can be anxious about our life, our children's lives, our jobs. So many things we can be so taken up, just like Jesus told Martha.

Martha, you're anxious about too many things. Only one thing is needful, that Mary has chosen that to sit at my feet and listen to my word. Martha's continued to serve the Lord.

We read in John chapter 12. She still served the Lord, but it was a different Martha. She had come to rest.

All that anxiety had gone. She had learned to depend on Jesus. And she had learned to take the first things, keep first things first, to spend time and listen to his word.

That's what the Lord wants to teach us. And the Lord says, don't be anxious about all these things. Now, in these days, we are tempted to be anxious about so many things.

I have heard about even children, school children being anxious about this COVID and their future. They can't play with their friends. We have to help them to deal with that.

We have to say, my child, don't be anxious. We have Jesus. He's with us.

He'll hold our hand and he'll lead us. Our real kingdom is in heaven and he's preparing us to be there. And while we are on earth, as I said, we can still have those values of that kingdom.

And I was telling you about Nicodemus. Different people, Jesus showed different examples. He said, value God's kingdom like the most valuable thing.

Like a man who was collecting pearls and then he saw the most precious pearl and he sold all the other things just to buy that precious pearl. God's kingdom is like that. God's kingdom is like a man who got a map and he saw a particular field where there was treasure.

So he sold all his belongings and he bought that field because there was a treasure in it. That treasure is God's kingdom. And he said, God's kingdom is like a man, a king who put out, who had a big feast for his son, wedding feast.

And he called a lot of people, called everyone. But so many people had excuses. I have this thing to do.

I have that thing to do. And you know that parable. I'm married and I have to take care of my family.

I bought a cow. I've got a field. I've got my business.

And none of them, those people who had those excuses couldn't come. So the king said, go to the streets and call all the poor people, all the lame people, let them come into my kingdom so that there won't be any lack of guests. So God, Jesus used illustrations like that, which are so simple to understand, because the truth of God's kingdom is so awesome, so much that our minds can't grasp it.

But when you take it like this, a person to value it like the pearl of great price, a field which is worth more than all the other fields. And sometimes he said, it's like salt. Just a little bit is needed.

But if it's not there, the food is tasteless. It's worth for nothing. It's not even worth to pour in the compost because it's of no value.

So God, the Lord used all those simple illustrations to tell us how God's kingdom is. And that's how, and I want to read some of the verses that came to me. In Hebrews 11, 15, 16, it says about people who had an opportunity to hear about God's kingdom.

He said, if they had been thinking of the land which they left, they would have returned. They desire a better country, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God.

He has preserved for them a city which cannot be shaken. So if we think of God's kingdom, and we want to think of the earthly things also, and taken up with earthly things, and we are double-minded and we want to go back, then we are not fit for God's kingdom. But once we have seen the beauty of God's kingdom, then we leave everything behind.

And we have no desire to go back. And then God is not ashamed to call us his God. And he has prepared a city for us.

Those verses are in Hebrews 11, 15, and 16. They spoke to me so much. Now, God's kingdom is so easily accessible.

You think of the dying thief. He just said, Lord, remember me when you come to your kingdom. And Jesus said, today you'll be with me in my kingdom.

No delay at all. Jesus said, in another instance, he said, I am the door. I am the way to God's kingdom.

Nobody can come to God's kingdom but by me. All those who came in other ways are thieves and robbers. But if you come through me, you can come into my kingdom.

You get to know me. You come as a little child with all humility. Jesus said in Matthew 3, if you're poor in spirit, if you feel that you're really poor, you have nothing, then the kingdom of God belongs to you.

So many wonderful ways God, Jesus used, words Jesus used to show us the awesomeness and the wonderful kingdom that is there waiting for us. But there are these conditions. We cannot go as rich people as if we know everything.

We cannot go as if we have some goodness to show and say, Lord, here's my ticket. Can I get into your kingdom? We come empty and say, Lord, I have no goodness. I have nothing to boast about.

It's only you. I want to come through you. And after we get into God's kingdom, after he shows us the way, then there are laws.

It's different laws from this earthly kingdom. In this earth, people have said like there's a justice. If somebody hits you, you can hit them back.

Don't just stand back. You can hit them back. If somebody robs you, you have a right to take some of this.

But Jesus' kingdom is different. Even if you suffer loss, let them take what they want. My reward is from you.

Forgive people. If people have harmed you or robbed you or been nasty to you, just forgive them. Don't speak ill of them.

Be ready to do good in return for the evil that they have done. So those are the laws of some of the laws of God's kingdom. In Romans 14, this is about the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. So what is righteousness? I was just thinking of that word righteousness. It's a different type of righteousness.

The Pharisees had a righteousness of their own. That was the outward righteousness. They felt like they should give a tenth of everything.

They should dress in a certain way. Their outward life should be very good. They should fast and they should do so many things.

Observe the Sabbath and do so many things to have that righteousness. But Jesus came to show us a different righteousness. He said, my righteousness is within.

You have to be righteous inside. Your righteousness should be seen by God. God sees, are we forgiving others? Are we keeping a grudge against others? And that's the righteousness we have to teach our children, dear sisters.

We have to teach our children to, like for instance, if they do chores, I was just thinking, you tell them you have to do such and such, such and such, and I'll pay you so much for every hour that you do. That's a good way for them to learn to earn money and to save money. But if you tell them things like whoever spilled that water, that person must wipe it.

Then they become good legalists and we say, I didn't spill it. It's my brother who spilled it. Let him wipe it.

But if they see us doing things like, okay, whoever wiped it, whoever spilled it, who will be the first one to go and wipe it? I'll give a reward for that. Then we teach them the laws of Jesus' kingdom. If somebody is hurt, who's the first one to go and help them and comfort them? If somebody is sick, who's the first one to find out? Do you need anything to take a cup of water for them? Not think that the children should not think it's mommy's duty to take the water.

We teach our children, whoever it is, you get a chance, do good. You know, when Pilate was trying Jesus, Jesus was on trial and Pilate was there and Jesus told him, my kingdom is not of this world. Pilate didn't understand.

He asked him, are you a king? He said, yes. But which kingdom, which is your kingdom? He said, my kingdom is not of this world. Pilate just couldn't understand anything about that kingdom.

Jesus just said, if my kingdom were of this world, my people would fight. My citizens would fight. That shows that Jesus was saying, my kingdom is a kingdom of peace.

There won't be any fighting there. It's a kingdom of peace. As I said in Romans, righteousness, peace and joy.

We'll be people who look for peace. If there's strife among others or strife in the family, we'll be the ones to make peace. Try and be the peacemaker.

Pilate wrote on Jesus' cross, this is Jesus, the king of the Jews. I was just thinking, what a chance he had. He could only write the king of the Jews to please the people.

I wish he could have written Jesus Christ. He's my king. And say, Lord, when I see you, I want to say, Lord, you're my king.

I want you to be the king of my life. I want to be part of your kingdom. Dear sisters, every day we can say that prayer.

Like it says in the Lord's prayer, thy kingdom come. Lord, I want you to be the king of my life. Begin the day like that.

Lord, be the king of my life today. I submit to your lordship. Whatever you want me to do, I'll do.

Even if it's difficult. Even if I have to go out of my comfort zone. Even if it's not my duty to do it.

Even if I'm not appreciated or acknowledged for doing that. But I'm doing it for you. Whatever you want me to say, I'll say, Lord.

If you want me to apologize, I'll do it readily, Lord. Because I want you to be the king and your laws are the ones I want to follow. Dear sisters, if we can begin each day of our life like that.

Lord, be my king. I surrender my whole life to you. And all my plans, Lord, I put aside.

I want your plans for my life. It'll be so wonderful when our children also see that and submit to the kingship of Jesus. Jesus is coming back very soon.

And he's going to take us and we'll be actually seeing that kingdom. Right now, he has put the kingdom in our hearts, in each one of us. And there are pockets of that kingdom all over the world.

And one day he's going to gather all these people who have that passport in their hearts. Of that kingdom of God. He's going to gather all of us together and make an earthly kingdom.

It's really going to happen where all the laws will be of his kingdom. There'll be kindness. There'll be peace.

There'll be righteousness. Everything a person could ever wish for. When there won't be any anxiety there.

There'll be joy and peace. The kingdom of God is joy. Jesus said, my joy I give unto you.

Even just before he went to the cross, he was saying, I have joy. I'll give you my joy. And Paul, who followed Jesus, the apostle of Jesus, when he was put in prison, he said in Philippians 4, many times, rejoice in the Lord.

Make my joy complete. Rejoice. Again, I say rejoice.

Only those who are part of that heavenly kingdom can have the joy in suffering. Others will only have complaining. But if we are in belonging to part of God's kingdom, that heavenly kingdom, there'll always be a joy.

We don't have to produce it. Jesus will give us that joy. He says, my joy I give to you.

We don't have to work up any emotions or do any chanting or anything. He'll give us that joy in our hearts. But we have to make sure that we belong to that kingdom.

I said, one of the ways is, Lord, I surrender to you. I want you to be king of my life. And whatever you show me, which is not pleasing in you, in your eyes, I want to put away.

And then he shows us, look, this habit that you have, that's not fit for my kingdom. I want you to get rid of it. And we say, Lord, help me to get rid of it.

Help me to get rid of this complaining spirit. Or whatever it is, attachment to earthly things, attachment to gadgets, clothes, whatever it is, the Lord shows us and says, Lord, I'm willing to give up. I know that you will take care of all my needs.

Whatever I need, you'll give me. But don't let me be attached to it. And the Lord has been teaching that more and more.

You know, when we left India, we came with very little of things, which we just need for a few months. And here we are staying one month after another. And I think of all my things which I left behind, which I could use.

Then I suddenly thought, Jesus said, when I come back and you're on the housetop, don't go downstairs to pick up your things. Just leave everything and come. And the Lord is teaching me this is a practice for that.

Very soon I'll come. And all these earthly things which you hoarded and collected, you'll have to leave. Then you have to come with me.

This is a practice. I said, Lord, sure, I'm ready. Anytime you want me to come, I'm ready to come, Lord.

When the Lord comes to take us, it should not be a culture shock for us when we go there. We should not think, oh, I didn't think it would be like this. I wasted my life on thinking of the wrong kind of things.

I wish I could have meditated on God's word. I wish I could have accustomed myself to knowing how things are done in this kingdom. Dear sisters, this is the time for us to get to know God's kingdom by reading his words and meditating.

Every time when we open the word, Jesus is there ready to speak to us and tell us, look, my child, this is for you. This is how I want you to live. This is how your future will be in my kingdom.

Jesus said in Luke 12 verse 32, fear not little flock. It is your father's pleasure to give you the kingdom. We don't have to fear.

The Lord, it's the pleasure of the father to give us his kingdom. And we just have to put aside any fear, any anxiety that will come to our mind and say, Lord, let me partake of that kingdom more and more. That kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy.

In that kingdom, there's no partiality. Right now, I may not think of other people's children the same way as I look at my children. But Lord, change me more and more that I'll have your love, that I look at all your children the same way as I look at my own children.

Not an element of partiality should be there, Lord. Like that, Lord, change me little by little to have your values, to have the values of your kingdom in my life. So that is our privilege right now.

Say, Lord, he's the king of my life. Let your will be done in my life. Let your kingdom come, Lord.

Let your will be done in my life. That's my prayer. And that's the challenge I want to leave with each one of us.

I know there's such a thirst in my heart to know more of God's ways, God's kingdom. And the time is so short, dear sisters. And this pandemic which has come is just like a small torchlight, the Lord is shining and saying, look at these verses.

Very soon, this is just a warning where my coming is so close. Don't be taken up with all the unnecessary things. Prepare your family, prepare your children to be ready for that kingdom.

Of course, they have to do their studies. But what will they do if they are not studying? They'll waste their time idling, teach them to do their lessons well so that they can have a, they can get a job and support themselves, not be a burden on society. But deep down, teach them truthfulness, honesty, not to tell lies, to be obedient, to respect elders, to be willing to share.

We can show our love and not give, keep the love selfishly. But the test of love is in giving. When we give to the Lord, that shows that we really love Him.

When we give to others, that shows that we love them. And that's my prayer, Lord. Give me that heart, give me that loving heart which you had, willing to die for my sake on Calvary, willing to give up all the comforts of heaven and come down to earth and show me and take me, tell me, Lord, you just hold my hand.

I'll take you. I am the way. I'll take you to that heavenly kingdom.

Lord, give me that, that love for others while I have that opportunity. God bless you all. Maybe we can close in prayer.

Lord, our heavenly father, we thank you that we can come to you at this time. Lord, there's such a longing in our heart to know more of you, to know more of your kingdom. Yet we thank you that you've given us opportunities to get a glimpse of that heavenly kingdom.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming down to earth and to show us the beauties of that wonderful kingdom. As much as we are able to understand. Yes, Lord, with our finite mind, we cannot understand everything that you want to teach us.

But we open our minds to you, Lord. Teach us little by little those valuable things, Lord. Help us to value more than earthly things.

The pearl of great price, the treasure which you have for us. And help us to learn and obey. Help us to be willing to change whatever you want us to change, whatever areas you want us to change.

Lord, help us. Help us to be as loving as you are, Lord, more and more. Unselfish, joyful, peace loving people, righteous in every area of our life.

All those things we want, Lord, because those are part of your kingdom. We want to have a part in your kingdom, Lord. Even while we live on this earth, we want to live as citizens of your kingdom, Lord.

Not as citizens of this earth. Help us always to remember that we are part of your kingdom. You loved us so much to be willing to come down to earth to take us to that kingdom.

Help us, Lord, to be worthy of that. Worthy of your love. Please help us, Lord.

We ask in Jesus precious name. Amen.

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