

Kingdom Values

by Dick Woodward

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's kingdom and righteousness as the foundation for true values and priorities in life.

Duration: 27:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 6:24-34

Topics: "Anxiety"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to reflect on their past actions and attitudes by examining their calendars and spending habits. They emphasize the importance of having the right mindset and outlook in life. The speaker also discusses the concept of allegiances and challenges the audience to consider who or what they serve on a daily basis. Additionally, the sermon addresses the topic of anxieties and how they can reveal a person's true values. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need to not only possess the right values but also to actively communicate and demonstrate them to others.

Transcript

Hello, and welcome to another lesson as we continue our study of the teachings of Jesus Christ here in the Mini Bible College. Now let us join our teacher and learn about the kingdom values we should have as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore I say to you, do not worry 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, yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you, by worrying, can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin.

And yet I say to you that even Solomon, in all of his glory, was not arrayed like one of these little flowers. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, but gone to-morrow, will He not much more clothe you? O you of little faith! Therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? For after all of these things the Gentiles seek, for your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added to you.

Therefore do not worry about to-morrow, for to-morrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. I have just read verses 25 through 34 of Matthew chapter 6, which come in the middle of the second section of the chapter in the first part of Matthew 6, where the Lord is telling the disciples to look upward.

He teaches three spiritual disciplines that will give us a structured and disciplined upward look. They are the discipline of giving, which is such an important part of the life of a disciple of Christ, and the disciplines of prayer and of fasting. All three of these disciplines show us how to look upward.

Having told us to look inward and to look around there in the largest section of Matthew 5, where He told us how to relate and apply the Beatitudes in all of our relationships, then in chapter 6 He says that you are never going to see what you're supposed to see when you look inward and when you look around unless you also look upward. You have to receive the grace of God in order to have these attitudes and maintain them, and you have to have the grace of God to relate to people the way these attitudes tell us to relate to people. So you have to learn to have a discipline and a sustained upward look.

Having told us about the three spiritual disciplines that will sustain the upward look, then He goes into the teaching about spiritual values. He is very direct with us when He talks about our values. First of all, He tells us how to discover what our values are.

Are your values spiritual values? Are they heavenly values? Are they the values of a person who is looking upward and sustaining a continuous, consistent upward look? To show us what our values are, Jesus raises questions like, What do you do all day? What do you think about all day? Who or what do you serve all day? What do you worry about all day? What do you want for all day? If you want to know about your values, Jesus says, let us look at your activities. Let's look at how you've spent your money for the last five years or at your old calendars for the last five years and see what you've been up to, what you've been doing with your time, your energy, your money, and the things that make up your life. Then let's think about your attitudes again.

What is your mindset? What is your outlook? How do you see things? That's a critical part of a person's life. Let's talk about your allegiances. Who or what do you serve all day? Let us think about your anxieties, things that you worry about.

Jesus gives a number of verses here to this subject. He says, What do you worry about all day? Show me your anxieties, what you worry about, and I will show you what you are all about. I will show you something of your values, because if you spend a lot of time and energy and emotion by worrying, then the things you are worrying about must be an important part of your value system.

So Jesus raises questions about our anxieties. At the end of this great teaching, Jesus talks about our ambitions or what we want all day. What do you seek? What do you want? That is the way Jesus began his dialogue with some of these apostles when he first met them.

In the first chapter of John, Jesus was walking down a dusty road in the Holy Land. John the Baptizer pointed to him and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who has come to take away the sins of the world. John the Baptizer suggested that his disciples follow Jesus, and as some began to follow him, Jesus turned to them, and he asked them, What do you seek? What do you want? Those are very important questions.

The Scriptures tell us that God will give us the desires of our hearts. You find that promise in Psalm 32. It's a promise, it's a consolation, but it's also a great challenge because it raises the question, What are the desires of your heart? You see, God made us to be creatures of choice, and we can have it our way.

We can decide what we want. Do you want to be immoral? Do you want to have the morals of a goat or an alley cat? Do you want to be like an animal? You have a choice. You can be like that if you want to be.

You have to live with the consequences, but you can be like that if that's what you want to do. It's a very profound question, What do you want? And Jesus, in talking about values, raises that question, What do you want? What are your ambitions? In this great verse, he tells us what our ambitions ought to be. Many people have the custom of having a life's verse.

If I have one verse that I use as a life's verse, it's this one, Matthew 6, verse 33. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. My wife and I have made that our life's verse, and frankly, it has never let us down.

The way we interpret and apply the verse is simply this. If we believe that something we are going to do is the will of God, if God is our king and in his sovereignty over our life, he lets us know that this is what he wants us to do, that this is what is right for us, then we know that we do not have to worry about our needs being met because where he leads, he feeds. Where he leads me, I will follow.

What he feeds me, I will swallow, somebody once said. What does he feed you when he is leading you? He meets your needs. We have trusted that verse for many years, and it has never failed us.

When you get into the teaching of the Lord about values, that is what it seems to all come down to. This should be the bullseye of our priority target, God first, his kingdom first, what he shows us to be right first, and then all the things that we worry about so much, God makes sure that we have all those things. Here again, you have the same promise that you had as a premise for the teaching about the disciples' prayer.

In verse 32 of Matthew 6, Jesus says that the pagans, the unspiritual people, the secular people, in those days they referred to them as the Gentiles because the people to whom Jesus was speaking were all Jews, and they considered the Gentiles to be the secular people, the unspiritual people. Jesus made an observation here. He said that the pagans seek after all the things that you worry about so much, and then he says, your heavenly father knows that you need these things.

I have a sister who's more like a spiritual mother because she and her husband led me to faith when I was a high school student. She has been a kind of spiritual mentor over the years. Her husband has been with the Lord now for 10 years.

Even so, I still get a lot of coaching and counsel from her. One thing that she says frequently when I describe a problem is, well, the Lord knows. I would tell her that my child is in college and it's time to pay a semester of tuition and I don't have enough money, and she will say, the Lord knows.

After she had said that to me about 100 times, I said, well, that is nice. What is the blessing in that? So the Lord knows. So what does that mean? She said, oh, if you think about how God is all-powerful, the cattle on a thousand hills belong to him.

He has everything in the world under his control. He is all-loving. We know that he loves us.

We know that he will meet our needs. So all we need to know is that he knows, because if he knows about it, he's going to do something about it. I wonder if you had that kind of faith in God.

You know that he's loving. You know that he is all-powerful. You know enough of the names of God that show you the essence of his being, what he's like.

Do you have enough faith in the character, the essence of God that all you need to know is that he knows about your problems? That is the kind of teaching Jesus is giving here in verse 32. Your Father knows you need all these things. In the second section of this teaching about values in Matthew 6, notice how many questions Jesus asks.

Again, I would like to make the observation that Jesus asked a lot of questions. When Jesus asked questions, when God asked questions, they were often questions like, where are you? Who told you? Where have you come from? Where are you going? God and Jesus do not ask questions because they don't know the answers to the questions or because they lack some kind of information. When God asked questions of men, when Jesus asked questions of men on the mountaintop, it was not because he was trying to get some information or because he did not know the answers.

He wanted them to think until they knew certain things, until they would do certain things and become certain things, and to get them to think in these kinds of directions, he would ask them questions. Listen to the questions here in this section of Matthew 6. Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they are? What is your value? Do you not have more value in the sight of God than the little bird? And then, which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? Or which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? When you get into this subject of worry, you have to ask this question, what is accomplished by worry? The Bible does not tell us to be totally apathetic and never be serious about anything.

Psalms 127 tells us that it is possible to worry, to have concern, to work, to build in vain because it is possible to worry or to have concern or to work or to labor and to build the wrong things. But that great Psalm is also telling us that it is possible to have concern, labor, and build with great profit because it is possible to be concerned about the right things and it is possible to work for the right things and to build the right things with your life's energy. Jesus is not teaching here that you should not ever be serious about anything or be concerned about anything.

He is asking, why are you worrying about the things you cannot control? Someone has said that you cannot control rainy days and bad weather, but you can control the emotional climate that surrounds you. You cannot control how far your head is going to be from the sidewalk, but you can control the contents of your head. After citing a lot of those, the little poem ends, why worry about the things you cannot control? Get busy controlling the things that do depend upon you.

You see, there are things we ought to be concerned about, but it would be foolish to worry about the things that we cannot control. What good is it to worry? Worry uses up energy that you could use doing something about the things that do depend upon you. But that is a great question.

Why are you worrying about the things you cannot control? And then he asked the question in verse 28, why do you care so much about clothes? And then eventually he asked the question, is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Think about that. What is your body? Something that you must dress every day. Your body, of course, is the temple of God.

The thing you ought to be concerned about is being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, being clothed with the virtues that the Holy Spirit can produce in your life, which the Bible calls the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We can be clothed in good works. There are a lot of ways that we can be clothed, spiritually speaking.

If we only see the body as a physical thing and all we worry about is making the physical body look as good as it can without being adorned with the fruit of the Spirit and the virtues that go with godly living, then our values are not in agreement. That is what Jesus is teaching. Is not life more than meat? He asked that question.

In other words, what is your life? James asked that question in chapter 4. What is your life? That's a profound question. Jesus seems to be saying here in Matthew chapter 6 as he teaches us about values, let us think about your values. I believe Jesus asks, or he indirectly implies, at least 20 questions in this section of Matthew 6, verses 19 through 34, which all have to do with values.

Jesus asks these questions because he wants us to think. What are your values? And how do you discover what your values are? Once these questions focus our values for us, then there's this great teaching that answers the question. What Jesus wants us to realize as the result of thinking about all these questions has to do with things like this.

My treasure should be in the spiritual dimension, in the heavenly place. The things I treasure should be things that can never be taken away from me and that never will be taken away from me. They should be things that do not depreciate in value.

My heart is where my treasures are, and I'm supposed to have my heart wrapped up in the bundle of life with God. My heart should be wrapped up in the things of God, not the things of this earth. This is a very direct study in values.

Let me add one thing to this very direct teaching about values. In the third chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus stays up all night with the rabbi Nicodemus, and that was when he said, You must be born again. Marvel not that I say unto you, you must be born again.

Marvel not as if it were impossible. Marvel not as if it were unnecessary. Marvel not as if it were incomprehensible.

You must be born again. In connection with that great teaching, in the context of that interview, Jesus said that the new birth was not an end in itself, but a means to an end. He said that you must be born again because you will never see the kingdom of God unless you are born again, and you will never enter into the kingdom of God unless you are born again.

The kingdom of God, as we saw when we looked at the disciples' prayer, is simply the concept that God is a king, and if we let him rule over our hearts, then we are subjects in that kingdom. Now that's a great truth, the lordship, the kingship of God. God is king of kings and lord of lords.

Frankly, if God is God, it would not make any sense for him to be anything less. If God is God, God is absolute, and if God is absolute, then it only makes sense that we would have a God who says to us, he must be first. I must be king.

If I am God at all, I am God absolutely. Now Jesus said to Nicodemus, Nicodemus, people have to be born again. You must be born again because you will never see the fact that God is king unless you are born

again, and you will never enter into the relationship with God in which he is your king unless you are born again.

The new birth is a means to that end, Nicodemus. So when people are born again, that is the first thing they're going to see. That's the first thing they're going to enter into.

They're going to see that the Lord, he is God. He is their king, and they're going to enter into a relationship with him whereby he is God and he is king. Here in this great passage of scripture where Jesus teaches us about values, he raises a lot of questions that probes us and forces us to find out what our values are.

If you examine yourself honestly and you come to this second half of Matthew 6 concerned about your values, then answer this question. What are the values of a man or a woman who truly looks upward and maintains a disciplined and structured upward look? Jesus comes to this conclusion in verse 33 when he says, you will put first this value, the kingdom of God, the righteousness of God. You will see that God is to be your king, and you will enter into a relationship with him whereby he is your king, and he shows you every day what is right for you.

As his loyal subject, you obey him. That should be the heart of anybody's system who looks upward and by God's grace has spiritual heavenly values in their life. Let me ask you a very heart-searching question.

If when your values are probed in the scripture, you have to admit to yourself that you have never seen that God is a king and he wants to be your king, and if you have to admit that you have never entered into a relationship with him whereby he is king and you are his subject, then do you have a right to claim that you have been born again? What is the new birth, and what are the evidences of the new birth? According to Jesus in John 3, when he talked to Nicodemus, the evidences of the new birth, the first byproducts of the new birth will be that we will see and we will enter into the kingdom of God. Here in Matthew 6, Jesus is simply telling us, when you look upward as one of my disciples, and you have not only spiritual disciplines but spiritual values, well, these are the values you would have if you were a born-again believer. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all of these other things will be added unto you.

I would now like to see if we can focus for you a little closer on the 20 questions that Jesus asked directly or that he implied by his teaching about values in Matthew 6, 19-34. He is asking, if you want to know what your values are, look at what you do all day. Show me your expenses for the last five years.

Show me your old calendars for the last five years. Show me how you've spent your time, your energy, and your talents, your money, and I will show you what your values are. In other words, the questions in verses 19, 20, and 21 is, what are your activities, and what do they say about your values? Then there was that question we have already cited that asks about your attitudes.

They are the way you see things. That is what makes the difference between a body full of light and a body full of darkness. That is found in verses 22 and 23.

So if you want to know what your values are, let us ask the question, what are your attitudes? Verse 24 has to do with allegiances. You cannot serve two masters. You can only have one master, really, and so you cannot serve God and money or God and anything else.

If your total allegiance is to God, then it can only be to God. If the Lord is your shepherd, then nobody else can be your shepherd. So the question implied here is, what are your allegiances? The longest part of this

passage has to do with our anxieties.

What are your anxieties? What do you worry about all day? Tell me about your anxieties, and you will show me a whole lot about what is valuable to you, what is really important to you. Then there was that question about ambitions. What are your ambitions? What do you want all day? And we are told what we should want.

We should seek or want first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all the things over which we have so much anxiety will be added to us. There are the questions, but in addition to those questions, there are more questions implied, like in verses 19 through 21, where you see the question, where are your treasures? Are they on earth or are they in the spiritual dimension, both here and hereafter in heaven? Not only in the life to come, but in this life. Your treasures, are they here and in the hereafter? And then verse 21 implies the question, where is your heart? Your heart is supposed to be given to God.

We are supposed to love God with all of our hearts. There's an expression in Samuel, 1 Samuel 25, verse 29, that is very beautiful. That is where our heart is supposed to be, wrapped up in the bundle of life with God, here and for eternity.

Then there is this question implied under the heading of attitudes. Are your eyes good? How do you see things? Is your outlook, is your mindset, is the filter through which you look at everything what it ought to be? Because if that part is defective, then your whole body can be full of darkness. You can have a body full of light or a body full of darkness.

Is your body filled with light or is it filled with darkness? In other words, are you truly, genuinely happy? Is your life a blessed life? That's the bottom line in some ways. It's not that the focus of the Christian life is supposed to be happiness, but true happiness is one of the results. If we are rightly related to Jesus Christ and to God, if we are born again, if we are disciple of the kingdom, then one of the proofs of that should be a kind of happiness that does not depend upon circumstances.

People who are suffering, people who are in labor camps, people who are in prison, people who are going through deep, dark valleys, people who are in very difficult places in their lives, in the midst of all those circumstances, they can still have a kind of joy, a kind of light, a kind of happiness. They can still have a body full of light when they would not think they'd even have a reason to have a body full of light. So the questions implied are, how is your spiritual eyesight? Is your body full of light or is it full of darkness? Is your life happy or very unhappy? And then verse 24 raises the questions about who or what you serve all day.

God is supposed to be our master, but if he is not, somebody or something else will be. So who or what do you serve all day? Who is your master? And then are you serving God and anything else? The clear statement is, you cannot serve both God and money. Well, you could substitute anything in that statement.

If God is your master in the way he is supposed to be your master, then you cannot serve both God and anything or anyone else. God first. That is what the scripture comes down to again and again.

But if God is not first, somebody else or something else will be there. Then when we get into the longest section of the chapter where he says, do not worry about your life, what you're eat or drink or your body or what you're going to wear. He says that we should not be asking questions like what we should eat or

what we should drink or what we should wear.

In a sense, Jesus is asking this question. Why are you asking the wrong questions? Why are the questions that are uppermost in your mind and heart and life questions that no true disciple of Jesus Christ should be asking? He reminds us at the end of this section that the pagans are seeking after such things. The pagan people say, eat, drink, be merry for tomorrow we may die.

That's found in Luke chapter 12, verse 19. So pagan people, secular people, unspiritual people are the ones who are always asking such questions like, what are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? Or what are we going to wear? The disciple of Christ should be concerned with the will of God and the purposes of Christ and the world with being a solution, with being an answer for him. For instance, they should be concerned about getting the gospel out to the ends of the earth, to the whole world.

They should be so concerned with things like that, that their anxiety should never center around things like, what am I going to eat? Or what am I going to drink? Or what am I going to wear? Jesus raises this question. Do you not realize that your father knows that you need all those things? Then he adds questions like this. Have you considered the birds of the air? Have you ever considered the fact that they do not sow or reap or store away into barns, and yet they are fed? Now remember, the reason for sorting out our values here is not solely that we might have the right values because they will bring us a life full of light rather than a life full of darkness.

Remember the perspective in which all of this teaching is given. Look at the people in this world. Do you realize the wretched unhappiness of many people in this world? And do you realize that one of the reasons why people are wretchedly unhappy is that they do not have the right values? So what Jesus is commissioning the disciples to do at this first Christian retreat is to go down off the mountain and communicate these values to the people of this world who do not have the right values.

First, you have to have these values yourself. When you have these values by the grace of God, you have the right answers to these 20 questions. That is not the end of it.

That's the beginning of it. Now you have the right values. You must communicate those values to others.

How do you communicate a value? Is it by lecturing on values or by simply talking about them? No, it's not only by talk because values are not taught by words. Values are caught by example. As your children do not listen to your lectures about values, but rather they imitate the values you demonstrate based upon how you are spending yourself.

That is the way we are supposed to communicate values to the people of this world. Like the salt, we have come out of our salt shaker and get out there where they are and live our lives among them. Then by the grace of God, it is very possible those values that we have will be caught by the people of this world.

God bless you until next time. Our prayer is that you will be more committed and available to be used by God as a faithful disciple and to be a blessing to your family, community, and church. Now, until we meet next time, may our God, who gives encouragement and peace, give you his spirit of courage as you follow Christ Jesus so that all you say and do will glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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