

# Eternal Values - Seeking God's Kingdom First

by Zac Poonen

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*We must seek God's kingdom first and trust in Him, even in times of need, because He knows every detail of what is happening to us and causes all things to work for our good.*

**Duration:** 37:34

**Scripture:** Job 23:10, Isaiah 49:23, Matthew 5:39, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 6:1, 1 Corinthians 6:6-7, 1 Peter 3:13

**Topics:** "Eternity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of learning to trust the Lord and standing on our own feet. He uses the analogy of being carried on a stretcher versus learning to walk and trust God. The speaker also highlights the need to prepare ourselves for the future by trusting God in times of ease and plenty. He gives the example of the disciples feeding the five thousand, where they served selflessly and were rewarded with baskets full of provisions. The sermon encourages listeners to trust God for their needs and not rely on earthly security systems. The speaker also mentions the importance of not engaging in arguments or fights with others, but instead following Jesus' example of speaking the truth in a spirit of love. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the verse in 1 Peter 3:13, which encourages believers that no harm will come to them if they are zealous for what is good.

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## Transcript

Thinking about what we were considering earlier, let's turn to Ephesians in chapter 6. We were thinking about what Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. If it were of this world, My servants would be fighting. I would say that right from childhood, we learn how to fight.

Small children fight. It depends what we fight for. Small children fight for toys.

We don't fight for toys anymore. At least I hope not. But some of the things we may be fighting for may not be much better than toys.

Please remember that. When relatives fight for property, it's not very much different from children fighting for toys. Jesus said if My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting.

When we have heaven's sense of values, you know Paul reminded Timothy of the good confession that Jesus made before Pontius Pilate, that My kingdom is not of this world. That means if it is something worldly, then I have nothing to do, I don't fight, you can have it brother. Paul said here to the Ephesians in

Ephesians 6 verse 12 about fighting.

Verse 12. And he said our fight or our struggle is not against flesh and blood. That means we do not fight with human beings anymore.

Now in the Old Testament, they were always fighting with human beings. The Canaanites, the Philistines, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Assyrians. The Old Testament is full of fighting with flesh and blood.

But as soon as you come into the New Testament, you find it is another level altogether. Jesus never fought with flesh and blood. Never.

He had no interest in fighting for anything earthly. Even Judas Iscariot who was stealing his money, he never fought with him. After all the money he stole at the end of three and a half years, Jesus could turn around and say to him, Friend, if I can turn to someone who has stolen all my money in my entire life and turn to him and say, Friend, I demonstrate there heaven's sense of values.

What have you stolen from me? Paper money which has no value. I still love you. You cannot make me hate you.

I believe that should be our testimony, dear brothers and sisters, towards everybody. Can anyone harm me? I don't believe so. We must make a decision sometime in our life.

I made that decision long ago that I will never in my life fight for anything earthly and I will never in my life fight for, fight with people. What will I fight for then and whom will I fight with? Here it says, I do not fight, we do not fight with flesh and blood but we fight against these spiritual rulers, the world forces of this darkness, spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. These are two types of fighting.

In the Old Testament, they fought with earthly people and in the New Testament, Jesus taught us to fight with spiritual forces. And the establishment of God's kingdom on earth depends on how effectively you fight with spiritual forces because Jesus said, on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Not the Philistines or the Amorites or any human being.

It's the gates of hell that are fighting against the church and if you and I are to fight against the gates of hell, the powers of spiritual darkness effectively, we must make sure that we have stopped fighting with human beings. I hope, and if it is not true at the moment, I hope at least in the future it will be true, that we never contend with flesh and blood concerning anything. There's a lot of fighting in Christian churches about earthly things.

What should be our attitude? Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, he says in verse 1, Does any of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? And he says in verse 6, brother goes to law with brother and that before unbelievers? Actually this is a defeat for you. Then he says in the last part of verse 7, why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? What an exhortation. Why not allow other people to wrong you? Why not allow yourselves to be cheated? Jesus has given us an example.

People wronged him, people cheated him. He never fought with them. He never sued Judas Iscariot for cheating him.

He never sued the Pharisees for defaming him by saying he was guilty. No, he had no time for these things. When the moment we concentrate our energies on people, we will not be able to do God's work in fighting against demons.

We must make one decision in our life that nobody on earth will ever be able to get me to fight with him concerning anything earthly. If a person wants to argue with me, I stop arguing. If a person wants to know the truth, I don't mind explaining but not in a spirit of argument.

Jesus is our example in all this. Let me turn to 1 Peter chapter 3. It's an amazing verse in verse 13. Whom is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? I want to say, my dear brothers and sisters, that in the days to come, we will need this verse.

We will need to have faith in India and we need to teach our churches to have faith in this verse. That nobody can harm me if I am zealous for what is good. I mean, they may kill me.

They killed Peter. They killed Paul. They killed James.

They killed Thomas Bartholomew. They killed at least 11 out of the 12 apostles. I don't know about John.

But they couldn't harm them. Jesus said, not a hair on your heads will be touched without my permission. You are more valuable than sparrows.

Whom is there who can harm you spiritually? The answer is only you yourself. I have found tremendous encouragement by knowing that spiritually there is only one person in the world that can harm me and that's I myself. Nobody else can harm me.

They can malign me. They can speak evil of me. They can tell false stories about me.

They can physically hurt me. They can rob me. They can defame me.

They can defame my wife, defame my children. They can do what they like. But they cannot harm me.

It is impossible. Because I live under the shadow of the Almighty. I hope you do too.

You must believe that. That's why we don't fight with people. Because our sense of values is not the same as the world.

The world says those who fight will inherit the earth and Jesus says the meek will inherit the earth. Who is right? Are those who are fighting going to inherit the earth or the meek are going to inherit the earth? Jesus said the meek and I believe that. And I have to demonstrate to the world that if I am meek, one day it may take time, it may take millennium to prove it.

But I will prove to this unbelieving generation that the meek will inherit the earth. And is it by running after money that we shall meet all our needs? That's what the world says. If you are not always thinking of ways and means to make more money, you will find yourself hard up.

But Jesus says if you seek my kingdom first and my righteousness, all your earthly needs will be added to you. And I say Lord, many years ago I said that to the Lord. I said Lord, I want to be a living demonstration to this unbelieving generation that if I spend my life seeking God's kingdom, not seeking after money, you will provide not only my needs, you will provide the needs of my family and my children when that time

comes.

Without my running after money. You see, this is a challenge to all of us. I mean, if you are from a rich family or wealthy country, you don't have the opportunity to prove that.

If you are from Australia, for example, I was there in Australia where there was a brother without a job. There was an Australian brother and he was telling me if I get a job, I will earn less than what I am earning now. It's amazing in some of these western countries where the government gives them social security money and they get more money when they are unemployed than when they are employed.

It's a very funny situation. So when such a person says all my earthly needs are met, that is not a great thing. But in a poor country like ours where there is no social security and no free medical coverage or any such thing, then we can demonstrate that we spent our life devoted to serving God, to seeking the interest of His kingdom only.

That was the sole passion of my life. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God will give us our daily bread. That's for sure.

And if you and I can be a living demonstration of that in an unbelieving generation, in a poor country like yours and mine, that is a greater testimony than some person from a rich country saying, God provided my needs. So take that challenge, that we are going to prove to this generation that the words of Jesus are true, even in the 20th century. But if you seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness, all the other things will be added to you.

I urge you, my brothers and sisters, we must develop faith in this. God is sovereign. The disciples, the example I often like to speak about is the disciples feeding the 5000.

They were hungry and the people were eating and they served and served and served and served and served and at the end God didn't give them just one plate. Jesus gave each of them one basket full of loaves and fishes to take home. And I want to say to you, if you spend your life serving the Lord unselfishly, sacrificially, thinking of the needs of others and not your own, I guarantee on the authority of the word of God, the Lord will have a basket for you when your need arises and for your family.

He will not forget them. Absolutely certain. That is more certain than any social security system in the world can guarantee your needs.

It's true. But we must be a demonstration to this generation of that. God is a jealous God.

The Bible says in James chapter 4 verse 5 that he jealously desires the spirit which he has made to dwell in us. It could have many interpretations, but one interpretation I find is this that God is very jealous that our confidence must be in Him. Supposing a person's wife is going through a very insecure financial situation and you ask her, who is going to meet your need? And she says, well, I think maybe some of my neighbors or maybe my family members.

How will her husband feel? A wife should have such confidence in her husband. She says, my husband will take care of me. I think if a wife is to feel that, if I am sick, I don't know whether my husband will take care of me.

Some of my kind neighbors may do it. Or if I am in financial need, I don't know whether my husband will take care of me. That's how many Christians are.

They say, if I am in need, I don't know whether the Lord will take care of me. Maybe GFA will, because they have done that, but whether the Lord will, I don't know. Is that your attitude? That if you are in need, some organization, some kind neighbor, and not your husband? It is an insult to your husband.

Just think of it, my brothers and sisters. Let's think very practically. Supposing a time comes in India, and it may come, we see the way in which things are going, that the government says, all foreign contributions for Christian work are to be stopped.

What are you going to do? Join some other organization? Stop serving the Lord? Then I would say, you were never called to serve the Lord in the first place. Do you think Peter or Thomas or James or John would stop serving the Lord? Because some workplace factor? No, not at all. It wouldn't make any difference.

And I want to say, before that time comes, and it may come. I tell you, it may come. And if you don't have faith in the Lord before that time, you are not going to suddenly develop faith in that time.

Now is the time to exercise our faith. Many Christians in Christian organizations are like people whose legs have not had enough exercise. They are like people who are lying in a bed carried around on a stretcher by the organization with all their needs met.

You know when people lie in a bed for a long time, they are not able to walk after some time because their muscles have become weak. And I think of many, many Christian workers are not able to stand on their own legs trusting the Lord because every time they had a need, they depended on some man or some organization that would see them through. And what is the result? They have never learned to stand on their own feet trusting the Lord.

They are carried around on a stretcher. And now the Lord says to you, you take up your stretcher and walk. And we should learn to walk, stand on our own feet, and say, Lord, I want to trust you.

I want to prepare myself for the future. You know the story of the man who was going to be thrown out of his job? He prepared himself for the future, Jesus said, when he knew that he was going to lose his job, because he did it in a very earthly way. But that's the way we are going to do it.

We are going to learn to trust the Lord in these days of ease and plenty, so that one day, when it's going to be difficult, our legs would have got some exercise, and we'll have faith that a sovereign God will meet our needs. He will not let us down. And anyone who wants to sincerely serve the Lord must learn to do that.

I remember reading the biography of Hudson Taylor, who was a missionary to China. If you don't have that habit, I would encourage all of you to read the biographies of these men like C.D. Studd and Hudson Taylor and some of these godly men who went out to different places and sacrificed. Those are the things that challenged me in my younger days.

And Hudson Taylor says how in his younger days, when he was working as an apprentice for, I think it was a doctor, he wanted to learn to trust the Lord. And his boss was a bit of an absent-minded person and would tell Hudson Taylor, please remind me at the end of the week, they used to get weekly salary, remind me at the end of the week to give you your salary, because sometimes I may walk away on a

Saturday and forget to pay you, not deliberately, but because I don't have a good memory. So Hudson Taylor thought, boy, that's a good opportunity to trust the Lord.

Here is an absent-minded boss and he tells me to remind him. Can I ask the Lord to remind him? I mean, if there is a God in heaven, God will do it. So he decided never to remind his boss about his salary.

And one day, Saturday, when Hudson Taylor had almost nothing in his pocket, the Seat closed the office and went off and said goodbye, see you on Monday. He had no money. And Hudson Taylor said, Lord, I trust you.

And a little while later, that man came back. He said, I forgot something here in the office. And when he came back and said, by the way, did I pay you? He said, no, you didn't pay me.

Oh, I'm sorry. And he paid him. And it was little instances like this that strengthened Hudson Taylor's faith when he was all alone in China to believe that God is a God who hears prayer.

I mean, George Muller's biography also says about the number of times when they would have empty plates with all these hundreds of orphans and they would give thanks for the food when there was nothing on the plate. And then all types of things would happen. Somebody's bread van would break down in front of the orphanage or the milk van would break down or somebody God would speak on the previous night to go and take a sack of potatoes to George Muller's orphanage.

All types of things which strengthened the faith to believe that there is a God who hears. You know, nowadays, there's a thing called satellite communication. You speak in a phone, the sound goes up to that satellite and goes down to America over there.

Something happens over there, it doesn't go directly, it goes up via the satellite. And that's how these people communicated with God. They spoke to God and God spoke to somebody miles away to do something.

And not only miles away, you know, when Hudson Taylor was in China, things had to happen in England at least one month before Hudson Taylor prayed, you know, for the letter to come by ship all the way to China in those days. So, it's like God knew one month later Hudson Taylor was going to pray, so I better start answering the prayer right now so that when he prays, the next day he'll get the letter with the money in it. You see, this is the exact fulfillment of what we read in Isaiah 65, 24.

Before they call, I will answer. How is that possible? I mean, this is better than satellite communication. Before they call, I will answer means God sees your need that one month from now you're going to pray for something.

He's already started working on it. Now, this is the faith we must have in the days to come, in the sovereignty of God. And that's why we're not afraid as we face the future.

We're not afraid of financial hardship. We're not afraid of, if we go through a difficulty, we're not afraid of persecution because we know that God is watching every single detail of our life. I have a verse, one of the few verses in my sitting room.

And it's Job 23, verse 10. In the Living Bible, Job 23, verse 10, reads like this. He knows, here it says, He knows the way I take.

In the Living Bible, it says, He knows, in the margin of this Bible also, He says, He knows the way it is with me. He knows the way it is with me. In the Living Bible, it says, He knows every detail of what is happening to me.

That's a lovely verse, particularly those of you who may be going through difficult times and you're wondering whether it's worth it, serving the Lord, whether it's worth it, giving up all these things which you could have otherwise if you lived for the world. To remember, He knows every detail of what is happening to me. He knows.

It says in the book of Genesis, in chapter 8, when the world was being destroyed by the flood and Noah was inside the ark for 150 days, it says in Genesis 7.24, and then it says, but God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle. You know, it could look when you're inside the ark with all the rain falling for 40 days and after the rain has stopped, days and days and days and days, 150 days, 5 months gone by. The rain has stopped 5 months ago and Noah could be tempted to sit there wondering like John the Baptist in the prison said, Are you really the one who is to come or should we wait for another? And here Noah sitting inside the ark, it says, God remembered Noah.

These are precious verses in scripture that can come to our mind in a similar situation we may be in. When months go by, 150 days, nothing is happening. The Lord is not opening the door.

He hasn't forgotten you. He remembers. He knows every detail of what is happening to us.

Not only He knows, the New Testament promises even better than He knows every detail. Romans 8.28 says, He makes every detail work for our good. Not just He knows.

Knowing itself would be a comfort, the fact that God knows, but more than that, that He causes it all to work for good. If you trust in God, when the Lord called me to serve Him on the 6th of May 1964, 34 years ago, one of the words He gave me was, Isaiah 49.23, the last part, Those who hopefully wait for me will not be put to shame. And I want to encourage you to claim that promise.

Whatever your need, it may be a need for physical healing in a situation where nobody else can help, it may be a need for finances, it may be a need for your children, some need, we have many needs for our children, their physical needs, their material needs, their educational needs, and as they grow up, in terms of jobs and marriage, so many things. Here is a promise of God, those who wait for me, those who hopefully, those who trust in me, will never be put to shame. They will never be put to shame.

Trust in the Lord, brother, sister. Let us be a demonstration to this unbelieving generation that we do not live by the values of this world. We do not live to make money.

We do not live looking for comfort. We do not live looking for ease. We do not feel, now I have become a senior servant of the Lord, that I have to have more of this or more of that.

No, I do not have to have more of anything. What the Lord gives, I take. I am happy.

We do not complain about anything. God knows exactly what is right for us. We do not have any aspirations.

I mean, I rode a scooter 36 years ago and I ride a scooter today. That takes me from place to place. We do not have aspirations that I must be this or I must be that.

I am nothing. I am to be a zero. I am to be satisfied with whatever God provides.

My goal in life must not be comfort, must not be money. Let other people seek it. I am not here to judge them.

Let other servants of the Lord seek it. Let other servants of the Lord in your own organization seek it. Do not judge them.

Say, Lord, You are my example. What You give me, I will take. I am not saying comfort is wrong.

I am saying do not seek for it. It is not what you get. It is what you seek for.

That is dangerous. What we must seek is only one thing, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. That is all.

Nothing else. When Jesus said, Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, I do not think it meant, well, once I have sought that, I seek a lot of other things. I will tell you honestly, if you really start seeking first the kingdom of God, you will not have time for anything else.

There is no time for anything second. Because the kingdom of God in itself is so great. And you seek for His righteousness.

That means to become like Jesus totally in our life. What a pursuit that is. Where is there time for anything else? And if we seek His kingdom, promoting His kingdom on earth, establishing His kingdom on earth, demonstrating to an unbelieving generation what the values of heaven are, that's what it means to seek His kingdom.

That in your particular place, God has placed one person, that's you, to show a different way of life. You don't seek for position. You don't seek for honor.

You seek to serve. If they kick you and tell you to get out, OK, you go away and you wait for another opportunity that may come where you can serve them. And you go back and serve the people who kicked you out last month.

But that is another... You have no dignity to maintain saying, Oh, I've got some dignity. The fellow kicked me out. I'm going to have nothing to do with him.

You'll never be able to serve people like that. We go back to the people who kicked us out and say, Brother, can I help you in some way? That is the spirit of Jesus. It is so different from the values of this world.

We have no grudge against anyone. Because why? Because nobody can do me any harm. I have often publicly said, I'm 58 years old and nobody has ever done me any harm in 58 years.

Nobody. And it is impossible for any man to do me harm. Because the Bible says, He makes all things work together for my good.

And each of us God places in different places because all of us cannot go around with this testimony everywhere in India or Nepal or Bhutan or Sri Lanka or Burma or anywhere. So God places you in your locality. India itself is so vast.

And says you be a demonstration in your locality that you believe in a sovereign God in heaven who takes care of all those who seek His kingdom first. That your trust is in the Lord and not in any organization. That you are not seeking for money or comfort or all these things primarily.

If God gives them to you, you take it and use it. If God doesn't see, if God gives you a bed, I'm not asking you to sleep on the floor. That is stupidity.

That is Hinduism, Buddhism, Yoga. And we don't follow that. If God gives you a bed, sleep on the bed.

But if God doesn't give you a bed, then what do you do? Praise the Lord and sleep on the floor. And if God doesn't give you a room to stay, well, the railway station is always open. We sleep with others there.

I'm happy to do that. We are not. But if God gives us a room to stay, we stay there.

The point is not what you use. The point is what do you seek. There is a lovely verse in Jeremiah 45 where the Lord spoke to Baruch who was a co-worker of Jeremiah.

Baruch was a co-worker of Jeremiah who wrote down the things that Jeremiah spoke in verse 1. We read Jeremiah 45.1 The message which Jeremiah spoke to Baruch which he had written down in the dictation of Jeremiah. And then, you know, being a co-worker with this great prophet, Baruch must have thought, well, you know what happened to Elisha who poured water on the hands of Elijah. He became the next prophet.

And the Lord says to Baruch, You said, Ah, woe is me, for the Lord has added sorrow to my pain. I am weary with my groaning and I have found no rest. He had some complaint, Lord, you are not giving me a comfortable life, even though I have been a faithful servant to Jeremiah.

You are to say to him, Thus says the Lord to Baruch, Behold, what I have built, I am about to tear down. What I have planted, I am about to uproot the whole land. Everything on this earth is going to be shaken.

Are you going to seek for earthly comfort? And you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek them. That's a word of the Lord to you, my brother, sister. What are you seeking? Great things for yourself, to be a well-known preacher or well-known servant of God or somebody advertised or photographed and put here and there and here and there.

There was a magazine which asked me for an article and I wrote an article and they said, Please send me a photograph. And I said, See, nobody will become spiritual by looking at my photograph. They may be spiritual by reading my article.

What do they want to see my photograph for? Just put my name, that's enough. I said, I have a little conviction on all these things. Do you seek great things for yourself? Do you seek to promote yourself, my brother, sister? Everybody must know who you are.

Is that the spirit of Jesus? Be honest with yourself. Don't go by my conviction. You ask yourself, The Jesus whom you worship, whom you serve, I hope you understand His spirit.

This is eternal life, to know Jesus Christ, to know how He would do it. Do you seek great things for yourself? Are you in competition with somebody else? Do you seek comfort for yourself? Seek them not. Do not seek them.

You could put many things there in place of great things for yourself. All the great things in the world, money, comfort, honor, do you seek them for yourself? Do not seek them. It's all, all created things are going to collapse.

Live for the things that are not created. The things that are seen, are visible, temporary, they are all going to collapse. The things that are unseen are eternal.

Many of us started like that when we were young Christians. How is it today? Have you begun to live more for the things that are visible? I tell you, I've been a Christian nearly 40 years, but I find, I have to battle. If I look around at what's happening in a lot of Christian leadership today, I say, Lord, it's not a good example.

I'm sorry, I don't want to judge them, but I want to look at Jesus, and I say, how did you live your earthly days? He lived his earthly days misunderstood, maligned, never replying back. Are you willing to be maligned? Are you willing to let people speak evil about you, spread false stories about you? And not only you keep quiet, but you love them. And you seek to do good to them whenever you get an opportunity.

That's how Jesus was. It's a totally different sense of, set of values. It's heaven's set of values that you are to demonstrate in your earthly life.

And I'll tell you, my brother, sister, you will never be the loser. You will never be the loser. You would have lived a worthwhile life on this earth.

Many people in eternity will be thankful that in your town, in your country, you demonstrated heaven's values and drew other people to heaven's values. Don't be satisfied with gathering a large number. If all that large number of people in your church have still got earth's values, one person with heaven's values is going to be a light.

Rather than a thousand people in your church who got earth's values. What's the use of that? Values of purity. If people can see your purity.

If people can see the way you conduct yourself with the opposite sex. What a need there is in this corrupt generation to have servants of God who are upright in this area. Who will not visit a home if there are only the ladies in the house.

Not because... You may say, I'm not going to be tempted. But it's not just that. What sort of example are you to other younger people who may be tempted? Think of that.

Purity. Who are upright, absolutely honest with money. Who trust in God and not in any organization.

Whose mind is always occupied with how can I promote God's kingdom? How can I be more like Jesus? Seeking His kingdom and His righteousness first. I believe it's... There's a great need in our land, in all these countries for such people. Don't seek great things for yourself.

Everything that we see is going to collapse. And we are living so close now to the time when Christ will come. The night comes when no man can work.

There's still a little few more minutes left of day time. Let us make the opportunity... Let us use the opportunity fully so that when you come to the end of your life, you will have no regrets over what you lived for. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, You placed us in different places. There's a very small bit of work only that each of us can do on this earth. Very, very little.

The work is so vast. The need is so great. The fields are so ripe.

The laborers are so few. And among the laborers, faithful laborers are even fewer. So many are seeking other things.

We don't want to judge them. We don't want to judge anybody else. But help us to live before Your face and be faithful in these days to live with eternity's values and view.

We humbly ask in Jesus' name.

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