

GOD MUST COME FIRST

TEXT: MATTHEW 6:19-34

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5--7) is the most beloved and well-known sermon ever recorded. The great preacher A.T. Pierson said, "This is the imperial sermon of the ages. It is the longest discourse which is attributed to our Lord in the pages of the New Testament. It requires close and careful study to reveal its symmetry. It is by no means a mere collection of wise sayings like the Book of Proverbs, by no means a disjointed discourse without continuous thought or logical order. It is one of the most magnificent of all the words spoken in the ears of men...(Our Lord) gives us certain great precepts which are to guide us in external and internal righteousness."
2. Dr. Pierson taught that the entire sermon revolved around Matthew 6:33, and I think he was right. He said, "And I have no hesitation in saying that I think it is the most important of all the verses of the Sermon on the Mount."
3. I have entitled my message, "God Must Come First."

I. WE NEED TO HAVE OUR PRIORITIES RIGHT (6:19-21)

1. Our Lord said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (6:19). Why do people lay up for themselves treasures upon earth?
2. Because that is where their heart is (6:21).
3. People spend money on things they love, on things that are important to them. But sadly, God is not important to most people (cf. Luke 12:16-21).
4. There are many warnings in the Bible about covetousness. The tenth commandment, recorded in Exodus 20:17, is, "Thou shalt not covet."
5. Judas Iscariot was covetous and his covetousness led him to betray Jesus. Judas said to the high priests, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Matthew 26:15).
6. John 12:6 says Judas was a thief. People who are covetous will resort to stealing, and even murder.
7. In Mark 7, our Lord referred to several "evil things" which come out of a man, and that defiles the man -- "evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (7:20-23).
8. Right in the middle of this list of "evil things" is covetousness.

9. Our Lord said in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."
10. In Ephesians 5:3-5, the apostle Paul lists many wicked sins of the flesh -- fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, etc. Again, we see covetousness right in the middle.
11. In Colossians 3:5, Paul says, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
12. In Ephesians 5:5, Paul says, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
13. There are many problems in America today -- the economy is bad; we are entangled in several overseas conflicts; America has become increasingly godless and immoral, etc.
14. And one of the biggest problems is materialism. Materialism has been defined as, "preoccupation with or emphasis on material objects, comforts, and considerations, with a disinterest in or rejection of spiritual values." That describes America today.
15. The key word in that definition is "preoccupation." Too many people are preoccupied with money and what it can buy.
16. We all need food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. (6:25-34), but many people covet things they do not need.
17. I heard about an old farmer who was persuaded by his grandchildren to take a trip to see the new shopping mall they built about 50 miles from his farm. He went, and later on someone asked him what he thought.
18. He said, "I never saw so many things I didn't need!"
19. Shopping malls are modern-day temples built in honor of the great god of Materialism. Sadly, many of these so-called "mega-churches" are designed to resemble shopping malls!
20. Materialism enslaves the heart (Matt. 6:21), blinds the mind (6:22, 23), and captivates the will (6:24).
21. Our Lord said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (6:24).
22. Either Jesus is Lord, or mammon (money) is Lord. A man cannot serve two masters (cf. I Tim. 6:6-11).
23. Our Lord is not concerned so much with what we have, but with our attitude toward what we have. The Bible does not condemn wealth,

- but when God gives a man wealth, He holds him accountable for what He does with it (cf. Deut. 8:10-20; I Sam. 2:7).
24. This is the basis for Christian stewardship. First Corinthians 4:2 says, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."
25. Luke 16:2 says, "Give an account of thy stewardship."

II. WE NEED TO TRUST GOD (MATT. 6:25-30).

1. There is within man a tendency to be anxious. Our Lord said to Martha, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful (full of care, anxious) and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41).
2. Philippians 4:6 says, "Be careful (full of care, anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
3. Anxiety is useless, and anxiety is needless. And anxiety is a sin because the Bible forbids it -- "Be careful (full of care, anxious) for nothing" (Phil. 4:6).
4. Someone said greed and worry go together. "Greed can never get enough, worry is afraid it may not have enough" (Arndt).
5. When Christians get anxious over material things and when they worry about money, it indicates a lack of faith in God (6:25-30).
6. Worrying over material things is heathenistic (6:32). Worldly people are preoccupied with money and clothes and jewelry and accumulating more and more things.
7. Queen Semiramis, the queen of Assyria, built a magnificent monument to herself on which she had inscribed: "Whatever king wants treasure, if he opens this tomb he may be satisfied."
8. When King Darius saw these words he opened the tomb, only to discover another inscription: "If thou were not a wicked person and of insatiable covetousness, thou wouldst not disturb the mansions of the dead."
9. David Livingstone, the missionary to Africa, had his priorities right. He said, "I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God."
10. But worldly people do not appreciate spiritual things. Philippians 3:19 says they "mind earthly things." Their security is in their possessions, not in God.
11. And some day soon they will lose it all (cf. Rev. 6:12-17).
12. Henrietta Garrett was an intensely private and very wealthy widow. She was a tobacco heiress who created a sensation when she passed without a will.

13. She was practically a hermit when she died in 1930. Having no children and few friends, it was difficult to determine who would receive her large inheritance -- \$17 million (in 2014 dollars that would be over \$200 million). Her closest relative was a second cousin she hardly knew.
14. More than 25,000 human vultures from 47 states and 29 foreign countries, represented by more than 3,000 lawyers, tried to claim her estate.
15. Some were distant relatives, former employees, and neighbors. Most were total strangers. Some were dishonest government officials.
16. In their frantic efforts, these money-hungry vultures committed perjury, faked family records, changed their names, altered data in family Bibles and even in some church Bibles, and concocted ridiculous tales of illegitimacy.
17. The fighting over Mrs. Garrett's estate lasted for years. As a result, 12 people were fined, 10 went to jail, 2 committed suicide, and 3 were murdered.
18. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:10).

III. PUTTING GOD FIRST (MATT. 6:33, 34).

1. First in order of time. Spurgeon told a story of a wealthy businessman who advised his son to, "Stick to trade and money, and then attend to religion." The son replied, "Father, you have always given me wise counsel but this time I cannot follow your advice, because our Lord said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..."
2. First in order of preference. If it comes down to a choice between God and a good-paying job, you are wise to choose God. If it comes down to a choice between God and a pretty wife (or a handsome husband), choose God. If it comes down to a choice between God and money, choose God (Matthew 6:33).
3. First in intensity. Many Christians are intensely involved in their career, but they are lukewarm toward God. Our Lord said, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16).
4. Some Christians are devoted to sports or to their hobbies or other things, but not to the things of God (Matt. 6:33).

5. Let us get our priorities right. The Bible says we are strangers and pilgrims here on the earth (Hebrews 11:13; I Peter 2:11).
6. Two elderly men were walking through a beautiful park one gorgeous Spring day, and one said, "These are the things that make it so hard to die!"
7. The second man was a Christian and he answered, "No. This little paradise helps me to think of what the real Paradise up yonder in heaven will be like! It makes me yearn to be there!"

CONCLUSION:

1. George W. Truett was a well-known Baptist pastor in Dallas, Texas. One night he was invited to dinner in the home of a very wealthy man. After the meal, the host led him to a place where they could get a good view of the surrounding area. Pointing to the oil wells punctuating the landscape, he boasted, "Twenty-five years ago I had nothing. Now, as far as you can see, it's all mine." Looking in the opposite direction at his sprawling fields of grain, he said, "That's all mine." Turning east toward huge herds of cattle, he bragged, "They're all mine." Then pointing to the west and a beautiful forest, he exclaimed, "That too is all mine."
2. He paused, expecting Pastor Truett to compliment him on his great success. Truett, however, placing one hand on the man's shoulder and pointing heavenward with the other, simply said, "How much do you have in that direction?" The man hung his head and confessed, "I never thought of that" (cf. Luke 12:20, 21).