

Seeking God First in Life

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Welcome to Sovereign Grace Reformed Church in Devon, that's in southwest UK. We pray that God's most precious word may bless you this evening. There is a Gospel sermon this evening taken from Matthew 6:33. Of course, you can see that I'm here at home instead of in our church and we just, we do pray that God's most precious word even though it is not in the sacredness of God's house, we do pray that God's word may bless you this evening, his precious word. So to that familiar text in Matthew 6:33, a dear text to many people, it has been a dear text to myself over the years, Matthew 6:33. Let's read that.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Of course, these are the words of our dear Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in this sixth chapter to give us some context, the Lord Jesus here is really bringing home to the spiritual leaders of that day, the spiritual elite of that day who they were truly serving, who they were truly seeking after, and it is quite plain when we read Matthew 6 that the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the religious elite of that day were seeking self, they were seeking and serving self. It is plain to see it was an outward pretense of godliness. There was no inner work of grace in their hearts. So the Lord Jesus Christ really puts an emphasis in this passage and in this particular text here, he really puts an emphasis upon the deep meaningful things of life that we should be concentrating on and that we should be primarily concerned for in this life. The Lord Jesus really does bring home what we should be, our primary concern in this life.

What is, what is your chief priority in life, dear friends? What is your chief priority in life? Is it to live for self? To live for the present? Just to make plans for the here-and-now? And just like the beasts and cattle of the field, just to rise up every morning and to eat and to drink and to work and to repeat that cycle every day and then go to sleep, and then, of course, repeat it over and over again, just living for the here and the now, just living for the present as if there's no soul, as if there's no conscience, as if there's no eternity, as if we're not made to worship something greater than ourselves? Of course, we

are not made for the creature, we are made for our Creator, we are made for a higher purpose in life. Our chief priority is to seek the power to which we were made, to seek God, to seek the things of eternity.

I watched a documentary a while back about some wild salmon in Alaska. It was a lovely documentary and it's amazing, these salmon, these wild salmon in Alaska, they would go off, they would start off, of course, very young in these rivers and pools, rock pools, and then they would make their way downstream and, of course, down lots of different streams and rugged rocks and all the way to the ocean, and then quite amazingly for I think at least a year or two, they would take off into the ocean, into the vast ocean, and no one quite knows what happens to these wild Alaskan salmon, and then a year or two later they suddenly out of nowhere come back and, of course, they with great zeal make their way back up these rivers in Alaska, trying to push their way up against the tide, as it were, against the great surge and gravity of the river, of course, against lots of dangerous elements as well, against bears and wild animals and predators and sharp and jagged rocks with an urgency to get back to the place where they were made, the place to where they were from, the power to where they existed, they came from. And really that is a reminder to us with the same urgency, to do the same.

It was quite amazing while watching this documentary, that during the time where they were out to sea, that there was a farm built, a fish farm built in this one property and they built over some of these places where the salmon were spawning and were being made, and remarkably the salmon were, when they came back, because they saw that they couldn't go any further, they started to go through the pipework that the fish farms had for the excess water and for other things and they started going through the pipework and these great big salmon started to go through the pipework, squeezing themselves through, determined to get back to where they were from, this great overwhelming urge to do that. And quite amazingly the owners of the fish farm found, they came one morning to their pools where they have all the breeding of their fish, spawning of their fish, little baby fish, salmon fish in these pools, and one morning they see a great big salmon in one of these pools, and they found out that this great big salmon pushed its way through all this pipework underneath the fish farm into one of the pools, and it had a heavy grid on top, and such was the urge to get back to where it came from that the salmon pushed and was hitting the grid until this heavy grid on top of the pool was pushed off with great force, and then the salmon came in. And they found that more salmon were trying to do the same, this great urge to get back to where it was made. It was quite incredible and, dear friends, this is the same for those who truly come to God. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Seek the power to which we've been made.

So we need to make our chief priority to seek for eternal things, lasting things, inner things, the things that will truly last forever, the purpose to which we are truly made. God has made us to have dominion over the animals. We are not like the animals and yet we are told, aren't we, by our society and by our culture, that we are from the animals by the so-called experts in lab coats and in all these ways, we are told that we are like them, and of course, we are not. We are made especially for God with faculties to worship God and

to understand God and to understand his wisdom and to understand his power in creation and his love in salvation. We are made for God, to understand him and to live for him and to have a relationship with him.

Where are those, dear friends, in times past who did not seek first the kingdom of God? Where are those who have just lived for the things of this world, who have just lived for the pleasures of this world, just seeking to gratify the flesh, just living every day for the things of this world as if there's no God? Where are those people who sought this world's treasures and this world's aspirations, this world's ideology? Where are those people now in the past? Of course, they're in the grave, aren't they? And of course, if they went to the grave unbelieving, of course, they're in hell now, a place of constant regret, a place of one's worst nightmare. Where are they now? Of course, those people who sought those things, they are in the grave.

But the text says here seek ye first, seek ye first. There is an order here. There is a divine order here. There is a priority here. We must put first the things of God in our life. Are we not to seek first the more weighty issues in life? We spend so much time, don't we, dear friends, and so much care thinking about our bodies and thinking, as Matthew 6 says, "Take no thought for the things of yourself, of what you shall eat and how you shall be clothed." We prioritize and spend so much time in thinking about our bodies and fitness and beautifying ourselves and so many other things, and yet take no thought for our souls, what is of true value to us, our souls. And of course, we seek to gratify this insatiable appetite to build up our self-esteem and to pursue the things of this world, worldly security, worldly appetites, and we do this with our lives, of course, at the great expense of our souls. Of course, we need to feed our souls. We're made spiritual beings. We're made to worship God and when we just live for the creature, when we just seek to gratify the flesh as if we're the same as the animals, of course, we live very lonely lives and the systems, the broken systems of this world can never ever satisfy the longing soul.

As it reads in Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We cannot just live by feeding ourselves and by living for the flesh, for just gratifying the flesh. We cannot do that. We've got souls, eternal souls, and that which will last for eternity must take priority. We have to put first the more needful part of what God has given us, our souls, and if we do not put that first in life what God has given us, if we've been deceived into thinking that we just need to live to please our flesh and to please others and to live for the ideals and the things of this world, we have been deceived, friends.

Are we not made to seek and love and worship something? And we see that, don't we, dear friends, we see that's the problem that the world has, that they're made for God. People are made to have a relationship with God and yet we seek the creation more than the Creator, we seek to satisfy the soul that's made for eternity with temporary things which, of course, can never satisfy the soul. And God knows, God knows our frame. He knows if we will not seek him, we will naturally desire and seek something else. He knows that. He knows our frame. He knows what's in our hearts, friends. He knows me and he knows you better than you know yourself, and he knows that if you will not put

him first in life, if you will not put first the greatest thing that he has given you, the greatest asset, your soul, if you will not put that first in life and if you will just put first just gratifying the flesh and other men and other things and living for the aspirations of this world and what people in society tell you, you'll just be swept along with the current, as it were. And dear friends, this is a tragedy because you're made for God. Christ puts the importance upon our most valuable possession, our souls. We need to be made right with God. We need to prioritize the things of heaven, the things of eternity, the things that will truly last forever. We need to prioritize our souls, friend, stop living for the here and the now.

Have you made sure to secure your soul first in your life, dear friends? Have you made sure of that, to put God first in your life? To secure those things first before anything else? Is God on the pedestal of your heart? Have you truly sought your Maker with all your heart, the power to which you exist? Like the Alaskan salmon with great urgency, seek to go back to the power to which you've been made, the Almighty? Have you done that?

God has given you your life. He has given us everything that we have. He has given my wife, my children, he has given my home, my clothes, my food. He sends rain and sunshine alike. He covers the morning with dew. He provides everything that I have, even the common grace that I enjoy of love and care. All of these are from his bountiful hand and yet I do not acknowledge him, and yet I live my life a lie in the face of God. I steal from God every day, every day I live my life without acknowledging God, without turning from my sin and trusting in his righteousness, for what he has done on the cross of Calvary for me to redeem me of my sin, which I feel within me. Oh, friends, the tragedy of a life, an empty, shallow, base life spent without Christ. We see so much of that in the world today, don't we?

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." He is the way, dear friends. He is the only way for us to experience true meaning and purpose in life. Now don't make him a secondary issue in your life. Don't make him a third issue or fourth or fifth. You know, in our Western culture there is a tendency for that, even people, many people who are religious or call themselves Christians, they make God secondary in their life, or third in their life, and they prioritize other things. "Oh, but I've got to do these things. I've got to put these things first in my life." And yet the text says, "Seek ye first." There is an order here. We have to make sure that we experience the new birth. We have to make sure that we've put God first in our life, that we're saved and that we've truly turned from our sin and known of the Lord's grace coming into our hearts, revealing to us our neglect of our Maker, the many years that we've walked with our backs towards the holy God, the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, the Creator of the universe. We've lived in great neglect although we've had our conscience burdening us, although the heavens declare the glory of God, although the Lord has put people in our lives, has put preachers in our lives, has put friends in our lives speaking to us, and yet we've kicked against the pricks of conscience. What a tragedy. What an eternal tragedy this will be if we do not take heed of our stubbornness.

Is your primary care to live for him who has made you, and not only made you, has given himself for you, has given himself as a sacrifice for your sins? Have you made that your priority, dear friends, in life to do that? Have you sought first to be right with your Maker, the one who has given you everything, rather than to be right with yourself or with what society wants you to be, the impressed image of what society wants you, or what man wants you to be, what Hollywood wants you to be? You want to be in the perfect picturesque picture of a family or whatever it is that Hollywood wants you to be? Oh friends, these things will not last. These are shallow, base things, the things this world can never satisfy in you. Lasting happiness can never be found in this world unless we have Christ's righteousness indwelling in us.

If we seek satisfaction and happiness from the things of this world for our bodies to the neglect of our souls, truly, dear friends, we are deceived. We have been deceived. We have lived a lie. We are mocking God with the lies that he has given us and, of course, it is a very sad lonely road with our backs away from the sun, walking in darkness because we're made to seek God first, put him first in life. If we are just living for what all the people of the world want, just building up our wealth, our earthly securities, the things of this world, the things that people have gone for in the past, if we just pursue these things, they're all in vain, dear friends. Beauty will fade away. Strength, of course, will fail. The mind's faculties and capabilities will diminish over time. Dear friends, all these things will come to naught, all these things that we build up in this life that we think are so great and precious, the things which the nations of the world look to for contentment and for satisfaction, they could never satisfy you because you're made for eternity, you're made to have a relationship with your Maker and Jesus Christ, the only Savior of sinners, has come to restore that broken relationship because of the fall in which we've inherited that sin. He has come to restore that broken relationship and to redeem us, to pay back the great debt that we have towards our Maker and all of our sin, and that's why he was punished on the cruel cross of Calvary for sinners such as us, so that we can now have his righteousness because sin has to be punished and, of course, the righteous judge of the world was punished for us so that we could be made the righteousness of God, we could be justified in him because, of course, no sin can enter into heaven. Lasting happiness, of course, can be found in Christ and not the things of this world. True contentment and true righteousness can be found in the blessed Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must seek first the things of Christ, the things of eternity. If, in fact, we give ourselves to worldly ideals and we make them our priority, they will take us away from the things of God. Do we not understand why we need to seek and put God first? Do we not understand why? Why do we need to put God first in our lives? Well, let me read Luke's Gospel 18:10-14 that reads as follows, "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." That is the Pharisee. That is the person who thinks that they are good enough for God; that they are not sinners; that they are good enough for God; that they're good outstanding citizens, as it were, and we see a lot of this nowadays, don't we? And this is the other type of person, "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes

unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." God be merciful to me a sinner. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." God be merciful to me a sinner.

I wonder there is someone watching this or hearing this sermon today, I would urge you like Alaskan salmon to seek first the kingdom of God and be honest with your Maker, be honest with your God. He cares for you. He cares for you, dear friends. Don't just carry on in life thinking that things are going to be okay. Don't be deceived by what you're hearing in society, this do-gooder religion, this nominal Christianity that we see so prevalent in our modern culture today. It is obvious that there is a lot of this going on today. Dear friends, be honest with your God. We all fail God. We all miss the target, as it were, and although we miss the bull's eye of Christ, the perfection of Christ, the Lord doesn't see, he doesn't necessarily take onboard our failures, what he sees is the desire of our heart, if we're aiming for the bull's eye, if we're aiming for the bull's eye of Christ, the perfection of Christ, if our true desire in life, our first desire is to please God, is to receive him into our hearts, just to seek him with all our hearts. That's what he wants, friends. We've all got it wrong, dear friends, I have got it wrong, for many years I have got it wrong and I praise the Lord that he saved me when he did, and I just hope and pray that there is someone here, someone out there listening to this that will truly turn from their empty broken systems and the systems of this world that will never satisfy you.

The text set before us says the Lord Jesus himself, the Son of the living God says, "Seek ye first, seek ye first." This is a personal invitation to you, friends. This is a personal invite to you who are listening to this. These are not my words, this is God's words, this is God in the flesh who came according to all testament prophecies who proved that he came for your sins. This is a personal invite from Christ, the Son of God, to you, a personal invite to your very heart that if you will truly seek him, if you'll truly take his words seriously, if you will truly believe in the report as prophesied in Isaiah 53, if you'll truly believe in the Son of God to save you from your sins and you'll truly repent of your sins and look to Christ and no other, if you truly will do that, he will save you. Oh, I pray that you will accept this invitation, that you'll be born again from above, that you'll enjoy the new birth, "I've been born again of the Holy Spirit." A new life. A new start in life. A new foundation in life.

Will you seek him first in life or will you keep on going down that dark broad road with your back against the sun, with your back against Christ, with your fist like proud dust against your Maker? Or will you turn to him and acknowledge him for who he is? For what he's done for you? For the mercy which he's shown you? Christ came to seek and to save that which is lost and all we, friends, are like those sheep, all we have gone astray like sheep, we have gone astray from our good shepherd but, of course, the good shepherd gave his life for his sheep. Would you cry unto him? Would you cry unto him like a lost sheep in need of your good shepherd, of his need of his correcting rod and his protection and his guidance and his blessing in your life? Or will you stubbornly carry on in your sin, not taking him seriously, not truly turning from your sin?

I say to you, do not rest until you know that you are his, dear friends. Do not rest until you know that you're saved, until you truly know that you're born again, that you've truly sought God. And dear friends, I can with biblical authority and warrant, I can say this, that no one that had ever ever sought the Lord earnestly like this Alaskan salmon, no one ever that sought the Lord earnestly and sincerely ever was refused. The door was opened to them. And Christ is that door, and truly if you sincerely seek him with your whole heart, don't do it half-heartedly, don't do it still secretly loving the things of this world or as a pretense if perhaps you are from a family, have been brought up at that, still living a pretense but deep down you know there's been no radical change in your heart, now is the time, today is the day of salvation, friends. Christ can save you.

It says in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. What must be the object of our seeking? What must be the object of your seeking? The kingdom of God and his righteousness, that is the object, to be with our blessed Maker and Redeemer, the one who has truly loved us, the one who has given us our lives, who has given us our loved ones, who has given us everything. Every good thing that we have down here below is from him, therefore we need to prioritize him, we need to seek him first in life, the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Have you done that? What must be the object of our seeking? To be a citizen of heaven. To know that you're a citizen of heaven. That your sins are forgiven. That you have peace with God. That you have purpose in life. There's no greater privilege than that, dear friends. Or will you continue stubbornly to the things of this world, to look to the things of this world for happiness? What must be the object of our seeking? Holiness, of course, is the way where we trust in Jesus Christ. We need to keep ourselves for him. By his grace we need to seek the comforts of the kingdom of grace. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, aim at the kingdom of heaven, press towards it like those Alaskan salmon. Give all diligence to make sure of your calling, friends. Make it your absolute priority. Put it above anything in your life, and especially now, dear friends, where we see the world, as it were, all the entertainments and all the things of this world being brought to nothing.

God is our refuge, friends. Don't cry to the government. Don't even cry to your pastor, although it's good to speak to faithful ministers. Cry first to the Lord. Cry to him first. Seek him first. Seek him early and you'll be found in him, friends. Cry to him first. Put him first in your life and he will save you. Seek the glory of the King of the kingdom of heaven, the King of kings which washed his disciples' feet, which died for sinners such as us so that we could know the righteousness of God, his glory, his honor, then you will partake of the heavenly blessings and know and far more than you'll know those heavenly blessings far more than earthly so-called delights.

Our desire to seek and be found in God's kingdom and in his righteousness, of course, it needs to be a sincere one. Do it sincerely, friends. Please, if there's someone listening today, do it sincerely. Don't do it as one celebrity I heard did it and went outside of his

home and I think he was going through difficulties and he professed to be a Christian in public tv, very nominal Christian, of course, very worldly as well, there were things which I completely wouldn't agree with him, but he went outside and he said he shouted over days, over two days for God, and then he gave up and he denounced his Christianity. And dear friends, this is not the type of seeking we're talking about here. We are talking about a seeking like Jacob, the one that cleaves to the Lord and says, "Unless you bless me, I am lost forever. I have to seek you until I'm found in you."

We have to seek, dear friends, with all our hearts. Oh, that we were more thoughtful about the things that we see not than the things of eternity. Oh, that we would think more upon eternity, prioritize more the things of eternity instead of the things of the earth. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Dear friends, if you truly put Christ first in your life, if there's someone listening to this message, if God is speaking to your heart and if you will truly turn from your sin and live and seek first the things of God and receive Christ now into your heart by his Holy Spirit, you will receive his righteousness covering all your sins, every single sin that you've ever thought, that you've ever done, committed, thought of the imagination, and ever will do, you're covered in Christ's righteous robe and you are a citizen of heaven and, of course, now you'll need to grow in Christ and you'll need to study his word, then go to a faithful church who preaches the true doctrines of grace and the true doctrines of the Scriptures and are serious about God's word.

So dear friends, I pray once again that God's most precious word may have blessed you in this message for Christ's sake alone and for his glory alone. Amen.