

Luke 12:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Analysis

The Priority of God's Kingdom: This verse concludes Jesus's teaching on worry and materialism (Luke 12:22-31), providing the antidote to anxiety. The Greek phrase "plēn zeteite tēn basileian autou" (πλὴν ζητεῖτε τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ) literally means "but/rather seek His kingdom." The verb "zeteite" (ζητεῖτε) is a present active imperative, commanding continuous, ongoing seeking—not a one-time decision but a lifestyle of prioritization. The kingdom (βασιλεία, basileia) refers to God's reign and rule, both present spiritual reality and future consummation.

The Promise of Provision: The phrase "kai tauta panta prosthesetai hymin" (καὶ ταῦτα πάντα προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν) means "and all these things shall be added to you." The verb "prosthesetai" (προστεθήσεται) is future passive, indicating that God Himself will do the adding—it's His action, not ours. The "these things" (tauta, ταῦτα) refers back to the material needs discussed in verses 22-30: food, clothing, and daily necessities. Jesus promises that prioritizing God's kingdom doesn't lead to deprivation but divine provision.

Contrast with Gentile Anxiety: Earlier (verse 30), Jesus stated that "tauta panta ta ethne tou kosμου epizeteousin" (ταῦτα πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου ἐπιζητοῦσιν)—"all these things the nations of the world seek after." The compound verb "epizeteousin" (ἐπιζητοῦσιν) suggests anxious, intense seeking. Gentiles (ἔθνη, ethne)—those without knowledge of the true God—naturally focus on material security. But disciples of Christ are called to a different priority system, trusting

their Heavenly Father who knows their needs (verse 30). This teaching echoes Solomon's wisdom: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33 KJV).

Historical Context

This teaching occurs within Luke's unique section often called the "travel narrative" (Luke 9:51-19:27), as Jesus journeys toward Jerusalem and the cross. The immediate context involves Jesus addressing a crowd of "many thousands" (Luke 12:1) who had gathered, though this particular teaching on anxiety was initially directed to His disciples (verse 22). The concern about food and clothing wasn't abstract—first-century Palestine was an agrarian society where survival depended on crops and weather, both unpredictable.

The Roman Empire's taxation system (poll tax, land tax, customs duties) left many Jewish peasants in poverty, making worry about daily needs very real. Herod Antipas's building projects and the Temple tax further strained resources. Jesus's audience would have included day laborers who literally lived hand-to-mouth, farmers vulnerable to drought or Roman confiscation, and fishermen dependent on catches. His teaching about God's provision wasn't addressing middle-class financial planning but genuine survival anxiety.

The theological background draws from Jewish wisdom literature, particularly Proverbs 30:8-9 ("give me neither poverty nor riches") and the Psalms' repeated emphasis on God's provision (Psalm 37:25, 145:15-16). Jesus contrasts His disciples with "the nations" (Gentiles), echoing the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:32). Early Christian communities took this teaching seriously—Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-37 describe believers sharing possessions and meeting needs. The Apostle Paul would later teach that godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6-8) and that he had learned to be content in all circumstances (Philippians 4:11-13), demonstrating how foundational this principle became to Christian practice.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to "seek first the kingdom of God" in daily decisions about career, finances, and lifestyle?
2. How does Jesus's promise that "all these things shall be added" challenge the modern assumption that spiritual devotion requires sacrificing material well-being?
3. In what ways does anxiety about material needs reveal a lack of trust in God's character and promises?
4. How can Christians balance responsible planning and work (Proverbs 6:6-8, 2 Thessalonians 3:10) with Jesus's command not to worry about tomorrow?
5. What is the relationship between seeking God's kingdom and experiencing God's provision, both materially and spiritually?

Interlinear Text

πλὴν	ζητεῖτε	τὴν	βασιλείαν	τοῦ	Θεοῦ,	καὶ	ταῦτα
But rather	seek ye	G3588	the kingdom	G3588	of God	and	these things
G4133	G2212		G932		G2316	G2532	G5023

πάντα	προστεθήσεται	ὑμῖν
all	shall be added	unto you
G3956	G4369	G5213

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 6:33 (Kingdom): But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Hebrews 13:5 (Parallel theme): Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Psalms 34:9 (Parallel theme): O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

1 Timothy 4:8 (References God): For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Psalms 84:11 (References God): For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

John 6:27 (References God): Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Psalms 37:3 (Parallel theme): Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

Romans 8:31 (References God): What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Psalms 37:25 (Parallel theme): I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Isaiah 33:16 (Parallel theme): He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.