

Matthew 6:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. This command appears in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, specifically within teaching about anxiety and priorities (Matthew 6:25-34). It addresses the fundamental question: What should govern our lives?

"But" (δέ/de) contrasts with preceding verses where Jesus describes Gentiles anxiously seeking material provisions (v.32). Believers are to live differently, with different priorities and source of security.

"Seek" (ζητεῖτε/zēteite) means to seek diligently, pursue earnestly, strive after. Present imperative indicates continuous action: "keep seeking," "make it your ongoing pursuit." This isn't casual interest but determined pursuit, the way someone seeks treasure or a merchant seeks fine pearls (Matthew 13:44-46).

"First" (πρῶτον/prōton) indicates priority, primacy, chief importance. Not merely "also" or "among other things," but first in time, first in importance, foundational priority that governs all else. Jesus calls for radical reordering of values and pursuits.

"The kingdom of God" (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ/tēn basileian tou Theou) refers to God's sovereign rule and reign. Seeking the kingdom means prioritizing God's reign in our lives, valuing His purposes over personal agendas, submitting to His authority, advancing His glory. It's not a place to enter (only) but a King to serve.

"And his righteousness" (καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ/kai tēn dikaiosynēn autou) specifies the character of God's kingdom—marked by His righteousness. This encompasses both

1. the righteousness God provides through Christ (justification)
2. the righteous living God requires (sanctification).

We seek both right standing with God and right living before God.

"All these things" (ταῦτα πάντα/tauta panta) refers back to material needs listed in v.25-32: food, drink, clothing—necessities for life. "Shall be added" (προστεθήσεται/prostethēsetai) is future passive: God will add them. We don't earn provisions by seeking the kingdom; God graciously provides as we prioritize His reign.

Historical Context

Jesus spoke these words early in His Galilean ministry, teaching crowds on a mountainside (likely near Capernaum). His audience included both Jewish disciples and Gentile listeners from "Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judaea, and beyond Jordan" (Matthew 4:25).

First-century Palestine lived under Roman occupation with heavy taxation. Economic anxiety was pervasive—day laborers uncertain of tomorrow's work, farmers dependent on weather, merchants vulnerable to Roman confiscation. The question "What shall we eat? What shall we wear?" wasn't theoretical but daily reality.

Jewish expectation of Messiah's kingdom focused largely on political liberation and economic prosperity—Messiah would overthrow Rome, restore Israel, bring abundance. Jesus radically redefines the kingdom: it's primarily spiritual (God's reign in hearts) though with material implications. The kingdom comes not through revolution but through repentance and faith.

Jesus contrasts believers with "Gentiles" (v.32) who anxiously seek material things.

Pagan religion often focused on appeasing gods for material blessing—sacrificing to ensure harvest, fertility, prosperity. Jesus teaches that God knows our needs (v.32) and provides for His children. We don't manipulate God through anxiety or works but trust His fatherly care.

Early Christians took this teaching seriously amid persecution and economic marginalization. Refusing to participate in trade guilds (which required idolatry) cost economic opportunity. Yet testimonies abound of God's provision for those who prioritized kingdom over comfort.

Throughout church history, this verse has confronted materialism, consumerism, and worldly ambition. Monasticism arose partly from seeking God's kingdom above worldly pursuits. Reformation teaching on vocation helped believers understand kingdom priorities within daily work. Modern prosperity gospel inverts Jesus's teaching—seek material blessing, and God will be added—contradicting the clear priority: seek first God's kingdom.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to 'seek first' God's kingdom in our daily decisions about career, finances, time, and relationships?
2. How do we distinguish between legitimate concern for providing necessities and the anxious worry Jesus forbids in this passage?
3. In what ways does modern consumer culture tempt us to seek material things first and treat God's kingdom as secondary?
4. How does God's promise to 'add all these things' challenge us to radical trust and generosity rather than self-protective accumulation?
5. What would change in your life if you truly made God's kingdom and righteousness your first priority above all other pursuits?

Interlinear Text

ζητεῖτε δὲ πρῶτον τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν
seek ye **But** **first** G3588 **the kingdom** G3588 **of God** **and** G3588
G2212 G1161 G4412 G932 G2316 G2532

δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ καὶ ταῦτα πάντα προστεθήσεται
righteousness **his** **and** **these things** **all** **shall be added**
G1343 G846 G2532 G5023 G3956 G4369

ὑμῖν
unto you
G5213

Additional Cross-References

Luke 12:31 (Kingdom): But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 5:6 (Righteousness): Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

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.

Romans 14:17 (Righteousness): For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

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

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.

Matthew 19:29 (Parallel theme): And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

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

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.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Righteousness): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

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