

The Sermon on the Mount Part 18: Seek First Matthew 6:33-34

Thesis: We are a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Text: Matthew 5 – 7

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. People refer to it and quote from this teaching of Jesus all the time.

These words of Jesus are revolutionary, radical, and relational (righteousness). I wonder if the words of Jesus have lost their cutting edge in our lives because of familiarity.

God is showing me wonderful things from his Word. And, the Lord is using The Sermon on the Mount to transform me.

So, I am asking the Lord to encourage you by his Holy Spirit and to speak to us as we spend time on Matthew 5 – 7 over the next months.

What we have considered so far in our time looking at The Sermon on the Mount.

In a message 11'10'24, we worked on **an overview** of The Sermon on the Mount.

Then, we looked at Matthew 5:3-5: **The Poor in Spirit, The Grieved, and The Unimportant** on 11'17'24.

In a message on 11'24'24, we looked at Matthew 5:6-8: **The Hungry, The Merciful, and The Pure in Heart.**

In a message on 7'13'25, we considered Matthew 5:9-12: **The Peacemakers, The Persecuted, and the Misunderstood.**

In a message on 7'20'25, **we finished looking at our kingdom identity from Matthew 5:9-16: The Peacemakers, The Persecuted, and the Misunderstood.** We also sought to understand three illustrations of the way we show up in this world as a part of our kingdom identity: as salt, light, and a city on a hill.

In a message on 7'27'25, we looked at Matthew 5:17-20. Jesus came to fulfill the Torah. Jesus' teaching on righteousness brings the Torah to its completion.

In a message on 11'16'25, we looked at Matthew 5:21-26 which dealt with murder and angry contempt. True righteousness means treating every human as an image of God who is to be loved and respected.

In a message on 11'30'25, we looked at Matthew 5:27-30 which dealt with adultery and lust. The Old Testament law about adultery reveals God's wisdom about how we reduce people to objects of desire. Jesus invites us to view every human being as an image of God who is to be honored in our actions and imaginations.

In a message on 2'22'26, we looked at Matthew 5:31-32 which dealt with divorce and remarriage. Jesus sides with the interpreters teaching that a man may not divorce his wife for just any reason he chooses. The Lord calls out the harm that is done to women in this scenario by identifying them as the victims of adultery.

In a message on 3'15'26, we looked at Matthew 5:33-37, which dealt with oaths and telling the truth. Instead of seeking to embellish our words and to trying to manipulate others by making religious sounding oaths, Jesus calls us to embrace honesty, telling the truth, and integrity.

In a message on 3'22'26, we looked at Matthew 5:38-48, which dealt with retaliation (revenge) and enemy love. Regarding retaliation, Jesus raises the bar when he says to respond to revenge and retaliation with creative nonviolence. Jesus is not telling us to do nothing. Rather, Jesus raises the bar in his kingdom for creative and nonviolent responses that open the door for real peace. Regarding enemy love, Jesus commands us to love our enemies. It may sound crazy, but Jesus is saying that bold generosity can subvert the power games of our world and even turn enemies into friends.

In a message on 4'15'26, we looked at Matthew 6:1-18, which dealt with warnings about religious practices. Jesus focuses on doing right by God as he describes three common religious practices—giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus warns us about engaging in spiritual practices in a hypocritical, performative way to be seen by others. Instead, Jesus encourages true devotion born out of a desire for intimacy with God and alignment with his will.

In a message on 4'26'26, we looked at Matthew 6:9-15, in which Jesus gives us The Lord's Prayer. Praying the Lord's Prayer is one way to make Jesus' story our own story. Over time, the prayer forms us into people who trust God daily, love and forgive others, and participate in the good work that unites Heaven and Earth.

In a message on 5'17'26, we continued our look at Matthew 5:9-15 on The Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught his disciples to pray. **The Model Prayer (The Lord's Prayer) is a way to pray according to the will of God.** You don't always have to pray through every part of the Lord's Prayer. Sometimes, you will simply pray the model prayer itself. Sometimes, you will use each part of the model prayer as a launching pad for prayer. Sometimes, you will focus on one part or another.

In a message on 6'14'26, we looked at Matthew 6:19-21, in which **Jesus urges his followers to focus on loving God and others instead of wealth.** Our possessions can master us, demand our attention, and distract us. But trusting God and focusing on what he values will allow us to be free and generous. Jesus discourages his followers from storing up things that can easily wear out, get eaten by pests, or be stolen by thieves. Earthly wealth can make us feel safe, but Jesus says it is an illusion that won't last. Instead, Jesus urges to store up treasures in heaven by prioritizing the well-being and care of others, serving in the name of Jesus, and loving our neighbor.

In a message on 6'21'26, we looked at Matthew 6:22-24, in which **Jesus gives two parables. The first parable deals with Two Eyes.** The good eye represents a person who imitates God's generosity. The bad eye symbolized a self-consumed person who neglects the needs of others. Jesus tells us that the good life is found not in greed for possessions but in neighborly love. **The second parable deals with Two Masters: God and Mammon.** The word "mammon" refers to possessions, like money or property. Jesus describes it as a burdensome ruler which offers false promises of security and happiness. And, Jesus also believes that possessions (money or property) can be used to care for others and build relationships, which is true wealth. Mammon or money can become a focus of concern and greed that competes for our loyalty with God himself. **The principle of materialism is in conflict with the kingship of God. Whom will you serve: God or Mammon?**

In a message on 7'5'25, we looked at Matthew 6:25-34, in which Jesus urges his followers to love God and others—not wealth. Possessions, like masters, command our attention and distract us. But by trusting our generous creator and focusing on what God values, we can become more free and content. Jesus also addresses the issue of worry. We are invited to trust the generous God of creation who cares about us.

As we make this journey, here is an important perspective to keep in mind:

As we look at The Sermon on the Mount, I will share with you what I am learning and processing, some of which is new to me. But please understand: The Lord can speak to you through his Word without all this teaching I am doing and without all the research we are processing. **What we are doing together is to help us enter into the context of**

this Word, and to let the Lord speak to us in our current context. The Lord can do that through the Holy Spirit whenever you open God's word and read it devotionally or study it thoroughly. **Getting into God's Word and listening for The Voice is one of the most important spiritual practices the Lord has given us for growing in our relationships with God and others.** **I pray that our time in The Sermon on the Mount will stir in you a greater love for God, for God's word, and for the leadership of Jesus in your life.**

Consider While Reading:

The first hearers of these words were mostly low-status, powerless Israelites on the fringes of mainstream society ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7). They were the impoverished, the infirmed, the unimportant, the oppressed, and the ignored.

Overview:

"The introduction (5:3-16) announces the surprising and counterintuitive identity of those who are a part of God's Kingdom. Then comes the main body of teachings (5:17-7:12), where Jesus explains further what he means when he calls his followers to be 'righteous.' Finally, Jesus concludes the sermon (7:13-27) by calling people to make a choice about how they're going to respond" ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

The Sermon on the Mount is carefully designed and organized.

- 1. There are 3 main parts to The Sermon on the Mount.**
 - a. The middle part is divided into 3 parts.
 - b. Each of the parts of the middle part is divided into 3 parts.
 - c. Right at the center of the center of The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's Prayer.
- 2. The Bible tells us what it means for God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.**
 - a. The kingdom of God coming to earth is the one of the main themes of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.
- 3. From the beginning, humans rebelled and started to build their own kingdom by their own wisdom.**
- 4. So, God chose one family, Israel, to join him in his mission.**
 - a. And, God offered them his wisdom.
 - b. That wisdom was called the Torah—the teaching.

- c. Beginning on with Moses on Mt. Sinai, God entered into a covenant with Isreal.
 - d. The goal was for Israel, one nation, to be transformed by God's wisdom, so that they could represent God's Kingdom before all the nations and to lead the nations back to God.
- 5. **In Jesus' day, the kingdom of God was nowhere to be seen.**
 - a. Instead, Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire and Roman oppressors.
- 6. **So, why wasn't God's Kingdom coming?**
 - a. Some religious leaders-- the **Pharisees**-- believed Israel was not being faithful enough to the Torah.
 - b. Other religious leaders—the **Sadducees**—said it would be best if Israel found a way to cooperate with Rome. They were the power brokers in Jesus' day.
 - c. Some people ran to the hills to become freedom fighters against Rome. They were known as the **Zealots**.
 - d. Others **withdrew to the desert**, waiting for God to use them to start the new Israel.
- 7. **But walk around the country of Israel, like Jesus did in his day, and here is what you would find.**
 - a. You would find mostly normal people.
 - b. They were trying to figure out how to live their lives as best they can.
 - c. Most people were living in poverty and were carving out a subsistence living.
 - d. There were lots of poor and sick people.
 - e. They were oppressed by high taxes.
 - f. Rome had taken their land away from them.
 - g. Most people were struggling to pay the heavy taxes imposed on them by their Roman occupiers.
 - h. In essence, the people of Jesus' day were powerless and hopeless.
- 8. **Jesus went to these people** healing the sick, setting free the demonized, mending broken hearts, and bringing salvation.
 - a. Jesus came with good news.
 - b. And, Jesus told these people that the kingdom of God was arriving.
 - c. People came from all over to hear his teaching and to get healing, deliverance, and encouragement.
- 9. **One day, Jesus went up to a tall hill or small mountain and said, "The arrival of kingdom of God is starting here and now with you."**
 - a. The kingdom of God was starting with the powerless, the weak, and the nobodies.
 - b. Where can you go to see God's presence and blessing?

- i. You see God's presence and blessing among the poor in spirit, the crushed, and the defeated.
- ii. The kingdom of God was not coming first among the wealthy and the powerful.
- iii. The kingdom of God was coming to the people standing right before Jesus.

The structure of The Sermon on the Mount:

There are **3 main sections** to The Sermon on the Mount.

1. Main Section 1: Matthew 5:3 – 16. This is the introduction. Jesus tells us about the kingdom identity of his followers. Jesus gives 9 sayings about who is experiencing the good life of God's kingdom.

- a. Matthew 5:3 – 12. The Good Life.
 - i. The Poor in Spirit (3).
 - ii. The Grieved (4).
 - iii. The Unimportant (5).
 - iv. The Hungry (6).
 - v. The Merciful (7).
 - vi. The Pure in Heart (8).
 - vii. The Peacemakers (9).
 - viii. The Persecuted (10).
 - ix. The Misunderstood (11-12).
- b. Matthew 5:13. Salt of the Earth.
 - i. "In the Hebrew Scriptures, salt is a symbol of God's long-lasting covenant relationship with Israel. So Jesus is claiming that he and his followers are carrying Israel's covenant relationship to its fulfillment" ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).
 - ii. Salt is an important preservative.
 - iii. Salt is a seasoning. We are to bring out the God-flavors in this world (MSG).
 - iv. A little salt goes a long way. Christians are supposed to influence rather than be influenced by the ways of this world.
- c. Matthew 5:14 – 16. The Light of the World and a city on a hill.
 - i. According to Isaiah, one day the inhabitants of Jerusalem will reflect God's light, peace, and blessing out to all the world.
 - ii. Jerusalem is the image of the city on a hill that shines for all the world to see. We are a part of that family, heritage, and kingdom.

- iii. Light shines in the darkness and overcomes darkness. Christians have influence way beyond themselves.
 - iv. We are to bring out the God-colors in this world (MSG).
 - v. When Jesus calls his followers “the light of the world” and “a city on a hill,” he is referencing images from the prophet Isaiah. The shining city on the hill portrays God’s wisdom and heavenly presence emanating from Jerusalem and filling the whole Earth. By using these images, Jesus is applying Isaiah’s prophecies to himself and his followers ([The Bible Project](#)).
2. **Main Section 2: Matthew 5:17 – 7:12.** This is the main body of teaching. In this section, Jesus tells us what he means **for his followers to be righteous**. Righteousness is living in right relationship with God and others. It is a character trait that creates justice and peace in the world.
- a. **Section 1 of the Middle Section:** Matthew 5:17 – 48. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness relates to the **Torah**.
 - i. Matthew 5:17 – 20. Jesus fulfills the Torah.
 - 1. Jesus’ teaching on righteousness brings the Torah to its completion.
 - ii. Matthew 5:21 – 47. Jesus gives six case studies on how the righteousness of Jesus fulfills the Torah.
 - 1. Anger, lust, divorce, telling the truth, revenge, and enemy love.
 - iii. Matthew 5:48. Summary: be complete or whole. The purpose of the Torah is teaching people God’s wisdom so that they can become mature, whole people who spread God’s blessing to the world.
 - 1. Being complete or whole links back to what Jesus says: living by Jesus’ teachings will fulfill the Torah and Prophets.
 - b. **Section 2 of the Middle Section:** Matthew 6:1 – 18. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness relates to **religious practices**.
 - i. Matthew 6:1. Living in right relationship with God and other results in a reward.
 - 1. But be careful: If you are doing your righteousness to get public praise, you will miss out on the real reward God has in store.
 - ii. Matthew 6:2 – 18. Three examples of how religious devotion can go astray.
 - 1. Generosity to the poor.
 - 2. Prayer.
 - 3. Fasting.
 - iii. Matthew 6:19 – 21. True wealth: the real reward.

1. The real reward links back to Matthew 6:1. The reward is knowing and being love by God.
- c. **Section 3 of the Middle Section.** Matthew 6:19 – 7:12. In this section, Jesus tells us how **this righteousness is expressed in right relationships with God and with neighbor.** Doing righteousness affects our relationship with God and neighbor.
 - i. Matthew 6:19 – 34. God and money.
 1. Our stuff tends to claim our allegiance and causes us to worry.
 2. Our relationship to our stuff can be one of the biggest obstacles to healthy relationships with God and others.
 3. Store up treasure in heaven.
 4. **Parable 1: Two eyes.** You can have a healthy, generous eye, or an evil, stingy eye.
 5. **Parable 2: Two masters you can serve—God or money.**
 6. Teaching on worry. We are invited to trust the generous God of creation who cares about us.
 - ii. Matthew 7:1 – 11. God and neighbor.
 1. Teaching on not judging others.
 2. Parable 1: Speck and log.
 3. Parable 2: Holy pearls—using discernment when we try to help and correct others.
 4. Ask God for the wisdom you need: ask, seek, and knock.
 - iii. Matthew 7:12. The Golden Rule.
3. **Main Section 3:** Matthew 7:13 – 27. In his conclusion, **Jesus calls people to make a choice as to how they are going to respond.**
 - a. The choice for how we will live our lives.
 - i. Matthew 7:13 – 14. Two paths with two different gates. One leads to life; the other leads to ruin.
 - ii. Matthew 7:15 – 23. Two trees. Discerning between two kinds of leaders who claim to represent God. One tree is good; one is not.
 - iii. Matthew 7:24 – 27. Two types of houses you can build. You can ignore Jesus and build your house by your own wisdom. Or, you can listen to Jesus and build your house on the rock.
4. **Finally, every one of these parts has 3 parts.**
 - a. There is a lot of design in the structure of The Sermon on the Mount.
5. **Review of The Sermon on the Mount:**
 - a. **Kingdom Identity:** the sermon begins with a surprise announcement about how the good life of the kingdom of God has come to the least likely people.

- b. **A Greater Righteousness:** in the main body, Jesus teaches how to do right by God and others.
- c. **The Choice:** the conclusion calls for a decision. In light of what Jesus has said, what choice will you make?

Here is what Jesus is saying through The Sermon on the Mount.

1. God's Kingdom comes to Earth through Jesus.
2. In God's Kingdom, love, justice, and peace prevail.
3. This Kingdom is arriving first to ordinary people—the poor, the powerless, and the outsider ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

Prayer:

1. Lord, I pray that you speak to us, encounter us, and grant to us your Spirit of wisdom and revelation that we might know you better.
2. Bless our time in your word together corporately.
3. Bless our time in your word individually as a part of our spiritual practices.
4. Help us to hear your voice, God, by the power of your Holy Spirit.
5. Help us to fall more and more in love with you, and help us to join Jesus on his mission together with others in our spheres of influence.
6. May we be a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Today, we continue looking at Section 3 of the Middle Section of the Sermon on Mount. Matthew 6:19 – 7:12. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness is expressed in right relationships with God and with neighbor. Doing righteousness affects our relationship with God and neighbor.

In Matthew 6:19 – 34, Jesus talks about God and money.

1. Our stuff tends to claim our allegiance and causes us to worry.
2. Our relationship to our stuff can be one of the biggest obstacles to healthy relationships with God and others.
3. Jesus calls us to store up treasure in heaven.
4. **Parable 1: Two eyes.** You can have a healthy, generous eye, or an evil, stingy eye.
5. **Parable 2: Two masters you can serve**—God or money.
6. **At the end of Matthew 6, Jesus teaches us about worry. We are invited to trust the generous God of creation who cares about us.**
7. Finally, Jesus tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. Which challenges our mental models and ways of showing up in this world.

Seek First the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness

Matthew 6:25–34 (NIV84) 25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Adopted from the [BibleProject: What Matthew 6:33-- Seek First the Kingdom God-- Means](#)

How to Seek the Kingdom of God Now

1. Current reality vs. the way of Jesus.

- a. Why do we deadbolt our doors at night? Why lock our cars or windows or computers?
 - i. By the way, I do those practical things, too.
 - ii. With threats of injury and loss lurking everywhere, we learn to value personal security above anything else.
- b. Jesus values security, too.
 - i. The New Testament authors do not portray him as reckless or blind to our reality.
 - ii. But when he joins us in this painful world, he still chooses to live with [love for God and others](#) above anything else, even when doing so includes suffering, injury, and loss.
- c. Is Jesus just a unique hero doing something no one else can? Or is he showing us a way to live on Earth right now?

2. The vision of Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

- a. When Jesus starts preaching the good news of God's Kingdom, he envisions the fulfillment of God's long-standing promise to eradicate corruption and death—to completely renew creation and forever establish a world where you love everyone and you know that everyone loves you.
- b. Imagine living in a world where you know that nobody will harm you in any way.
 - i. It's a world where security is rooted in common love for one another, not protection against one another.
 - ii. It's also an abundant world, so there's no hoarding or competing for resources.
 - iii. No violence, no threats, no death.
 - iv. No deadbolts, no padlocks, and no passwords.
- c. How would you live differently if you lived every day in a world like this?

3. The way of Jesus raises some questions for us.

- a. Jesus saw himself bringing this kind of life to our world through what he called "the Kingdom of God," by teaching people about the good news of God's Kingdom. So, in [Matthew 6:33](#), when Jesus tells the crowds to continually "seek first the Kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be added to you," what is he saying?
- b. Is Jesus offering a new way to keep our instinctive value for personal security above all else?

- i. Or is he saying we should stop thinking about securing food, clothing, and shelter altogether because the Kingdom is here?
- ii. Or is he inviting people to see that God's Kingdom is here and available—teaching us to practice ways of life rooted in strong love for God and others?
- iii. What does [Matthew 6:33](#) mean?

4. **The choice of how to live secure lives.**

- a. For context, let's explore a few key points in the larger biblical story. It will help bring [Matthew 6:33](#) into clearer focus, especially in terms of what it means to "seek first the Kingdom of God."
- b. In [Genesis 1](#) and 2, the biblical authors invite us to see a life-and-death choice that humans have to make.
 - i. Will we live freely and forever in God's abundant world (represented by the garden of Eden) by joining his own way of ruling the world according to his wisdom?
 - ii. Or will we try to rule according to our own wisdom?
- c. In [Genesis 3:1-15](#), the humans trust their own perspective on how the world should work more than they trust God's wisdom.
 - i. They eat from the tree that God specifically told them to avoid, and they immediately experience fear.
 - ii. They end up outside the good garden, suffering in a world of injury, loss, and death—a place where deadbolts and weapons make sense because life is dangerous and eventually returns to dust.
- d. The biblical story tells us that humanity will be tempted to secure life in ways that might make sense from certain (limited) perspectives, but when those ways disregard God's instruction, humans always end up bringing harm to creation and one another.
- e. Jesus weaves this thread from [Genesis 3](#) right to the heart of his teaching. He speaks directly to the deep human instinct for survival.
 - i. What do I need to own, or whom must I defeat, in order to live another day?
 - ii. His electrifying response to this question sums up the essence of his [Sermon on the Mount](#): "But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you."
- f. Notice how [Matthew 6:33](#) begins with the contrasting conjunction "but," telling us that he's helping us see a contrast with what came before.
 - i. Earlier in [Matthew 6](#), he describes two worlds: one where humans anxiously secure their lives according to their preferences and personal perspectives, and one where humans freely live according to God's wisdom and provision—a world

where every person trusts that God ultimately gives people everything they need for life.

5. Seeking first the kingdom in a dangerous world.

- a. Surrounded by poverty, crime, and threats of violence, **we rightly sense danger everywhere.**
 - i. Working to protect “me and mine” at any cost, even if it includes neglecting or harming others, has become normal, even “virtuous” in popular culture.
 - ii. We’ve got our own problems to deal with, and doing what it takes to generously love each of our neighbors sounds nice but feels unrealistic.
 - iii. **So when we hear Jesus say, “Seek first the Kingdom of God,” it sounds idealistic and impractical if not impossible.**
- b. **But Jesus resists the temptation to depend on violence of any kind to preserve himself.**
 - i. He rejects every selfish way of gaining personal security.
 - ii. And, he becomes the clearest example of what it looks like to live in this new way of life.
- c. **To get a good definition of “Kingdom of God,” it’s helpful to first understand what “kingdom” meant for the biblical authors.**
 - i. **In Jesus’ first-century Jewish context, kingdom meant a tangible, real world on Earth. Kingdom included real citizens, a real king, and a way of life governed by that king.**
 - ii. When kings embraced harmful ways of living and governing, everyone in the empire would suffer.
 - iii. But when kings operated according to God’s wisdom, everyone in the empire would experience increased life, provision, and safety.
- d. **The tension we feel when Jesus says “seek first the Kingdom” is related to the fact that this Kingdom is not fully here yet. He is the king. He is on the throne. But not everyone realizes this.**
- e. **Reality:** It would be easier to practice loving every neighbor with perfect love in a world where every neighbor loves you back the same way, but it’s difficult (even deadly) to practice that way of life in a hostile world.
- f. When danger still exists, fear can compel us more than love. We conform to average patterns of life that value security above all else.
- g. Possessions, income, and protections help us feel safe. Often this means we feel entitled to what we have, leading us to compete with our neighbors for resources.
- h. **But to seek first the Kingdom of God means prioritizing love over survival—something Jesus embodies throughout his life and teaching, especially on the cross.**

6. **Is it possible to seek first the Kingdom of God in this dangerous world?**

- a. The story about the early Church in [Acts 2](#) gives us a glimpse of people compelled by love and living in the ways of Jesus. They're living in God's Kingdom while also surviving in our dangerous world. How?
- b. The story describes them as a community of people choosing to help each other live together in the way of their King.
- c. It's a life marked by selfless giving and freedom from fearful self-preservation.
- d. The New Testament's gospel accounts show us how Jesus encouraged his followers to receive life as an ongoing gift from God and to live as a gift, or grace, toward others.
- e. He never suggests that some violence is needed to stay safe or that some selfishness is necessary for improved comfort or efficiency. He flips that hostile script and lives according to the promised reality of God's Kingdom becoming just as real [on Earth as it is in Heaven](#).
- f. Living in the way of Jesus sets us free to love our neighbors as generously as he does.

7. **Where do true safety and security come from?**

- a. **Normal empires and kings** tell their citizens that safety and satisfaction result when one has money, stuff, and power over other people. Once we have secured ourselves with these things, then we can serve others.
- b. **But Jesus, the King of God's Kingdom,** tells us that safety and satisfaction result when we love God and others as we love ourselves. When Jesus says, "all these things will be added to you," he's talking about drink, food, and shelter—all symbols of provision, fullness, and life (e.g., Matt. 6:19-32).
- c. At first, it sounds like he's talking about a friendlier way to secure, right now, the goods we value above all else.
 - i. But notice how Jesus tells the crowds that these things "will be" added to you.
 - ii. **He's not promising that this will happen quickly.**
- d. **He's talking about a long-term vision for whole-world restoration.**
 - i. These things were not all added to Jesus himself during his lifetime.
 - ii. He remained poor and in great danger, even suffering as a victim of brutal murder.
 - iii. But he knew these experiences were not ultimate.
- e. **Having every possible need met every day appears to be something we will ultimately experience when God's Kingdom is complete, when everyone everywhere operates and loves according to the King.**
- f. **Many of us will experience the pain of unmet needs in this life.**

- i. We may not have the food, medicine, or other provisions we need to survive, even if we faithfully follow Jesus to the end.
 - ii. We may live with justice for all and still receive oppression in return.
 - iii. Some of us will be hurt and have no one to tend to our needs.
 - g. **Jesus' life and words speak to this reality as well.**
 - i. He himself experienced betrayal, poverty, hunger, and violence as he lived in the ways of God's Kingdom.
 - ii. But he never felt insecure.
 - iii. Throughout the four Gospels, the story of Jesus shows him remaining confident that his life is in God's hands.
 - h. **Jesus did not embrace anxious ways of protection or accumulation, and he consistently teaches his followers to do the same** (e.g., Luke 12:29-31). He was banking everything on God's promise and trusting that the way of love is more satisfying, secure, and safe than any other way.
 - i. **Though we can experience God's Kingdom in part right now, especially in communities where others are choosing to live like Jesus (e.g., Acts 2), we still suffer in ways that invite us to rely more and more on God's generous character and his promise to unite his Kingdom with our whole world.**
 - i. We'll stop competing with coworkers.
 - ii. We'll stop fretting about others' approval.
 - iii. We'll stop exhausting ourselves to secure a future we cannot control.
 - iv. The more we practice the ways of Jesus and his Kingdom, the more we enter a kind of freedom that helps us see how we are no longer in danger right now.
 - v. **God's got us. We are safe, and we are loved.**
 - j. All of the fragmented and corrupted ways we use to satisfy our deepest needs will come to an end as Jesus renews [Heaven and Earth](#).
 - i. **Jesus is bringing life as we would imagine it in Eden—peaceful, without threats, filled with adventure and generous love.**
 - ii. The biblical story shapes our understanding of this Eden-like life to come, imagining an abundant world free from any kind of threat.
- 8. **Seeking God's Kingdom right now:** **So, what does living in Jesus' new way of life actually look like?**
 - a. **We learn how to seek the Kingdom of God when we choose to enter the unique story of God, which has a lot to do with exposing the deception used to build human empires, lies that end up justifying neglectful or violent actions toward others.**

- b. We learn to trust that God is not lying when he promises that his Kingdom is the world we're built for and that he will bring it into our world.
- c. By trusting that promise (more than fearing what our human empires tell us to fear), we can slowly begin to see how we are already free from any ultimate danger.
- d. "Oh death," says the [Apostle Paul](#), "where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). He was already seeking first the Kingdom of God above all else, even in the face of punishment by imprisonment and death. The threat undoubtedly scared him, but his love for Jesus and neighbors overpowered that fear. Love compelled Paul—not fear.
- e. **Everyone has real needs**, and Jesus does not minimize them.
 - i. He teaches people to give to one another and to receive from each other.
 - ii. It's a way of seeking the Kingdom first, starting to live right now like we always will in God's renewed world.
- f. **Jesus says that "all of these things will be added to you," not "you shouldn't want these things."**
 - i. Our human desire for survival is not bad.
 - ii. Jesus himself expressed his own desire to survive when he prays in the garden of Gethsemane, "*Please take this cup from me*" (Luke 22:42a).
 - iii. The cup is a metaphor for the responsibility God gave him to suffer unto death rather than retaliate in order to preserve himself.
 - iv. He's pleading with God to help him survive another day.
 - v. But his value for personal security is not above all else.
 - vi. His top priority is God's will.
 - vii. So, after expressing his desire to survive, he also affirms: "*Yet not my will be done, but yours*" (Luke 22:42b).
 - viii. **That's a picture of seeking first the Kingdom of God even in the face of death.**
- g. **Lastly, to seek first the Kingdom of God is a way of daring to hope.**
 - i. Jesus' appointed messengers speak of a day when we won't need to seek the Kingdom any longer because it will be fully here (e.g., 1 Corinthians 13:9; Hebrews. 8:7-13).
 - ii. It will be a world where everyone deeply, truly loves everyone else.
 - iii. There will be no injury or loss or death, no deadbolts, and no threats.
 - iv. **So, we seek, love, and anticipate what is both arriving and already here. We're almost home.**

Matthew 6:33-34 (NIV) But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

1. Without knowledge of God's goodness, we will worry about food and clothing.
2. But if we trust God's generosity, our focus shifts to seeking God's Kingdom first and living in right relationship with God and others.
3. If we choose to seek the Kingdom of God, if we seek to do right by God and others, if we choose to love our neighbor and even our enemies even at great cost to ourselves, we might experience hardship and trouble.
4. Jesus is not naïve. Life is troubling. In this world, we will have trouble. But real security is found in relationships bound by love and generosity.
5. If we are really loving our enemies and loving those who love you in community, when you have moments of need, people will help you. Or, you might have trouble and suffer.
6. So, rather than worrying about tomorrow and all of its troubles, we deal with the challenges and opportunities of today in God's grace, in God's goodness, in community with God's people, and in partnership with the King.
7. This is a radical way to live in a world that looks out for number one and takes care of self above all else.
 - a. And, the only way to live like this is through an ongoing, intimate relationship with God through Jesus and in true Christian community.
 - b. And, because we are broken, sometimes Christian community will let us down or hurt us. But even then, we choose the way of Jesus: to love that which is broken, to choose to forgive, and to show up differently in this broken world as agents of love for God and others.

Conclusion:

Our identity: We are a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

For reflection:

1. What is God saying to you?
2. What is getting stirred up in you?
3. Where do you sense resistance?
4. What questions do you have?
5. What are you feeling or thinking?
6. What is at least one takeaway for you today?

Other comments on the tensions of life and how God provides.

In Matthew 6:33-34, Jesus says: But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you. 34 *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

1. **Jesus calls us to give our primary concern** to seeking the kingdom God and his righteousness.
 - a. Our concern [merimnao] is good when we have concern for the right things and in the right amount.
 - b. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says that people who are married are a little more concerned about some of the things of this world. And, that is not negative. We need to have concern for our spouses and families.
 - c. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul tells us to have concern for one another as he talks about the body of Christ. Each part should have concern for the other parts.
 - d. Throughout his letters, Paul tells us about his concern for all the churches.
 - e. **So, there is something really loving about the way that you care for your spouse, your family, and your congregation.**
 - f. And, there is a negative concern about earthly things like life, food, drink, shelter, and clothing.
 - g. Or, we have an unhealthy concern when we worry about tomorrow, because we can't control the future.
 - h. In Matthew 10, Jesus tells us not to have concern for to speak when we are called to give an account for our faith.
 - i. *Matthew 10:17–20 (NIV84) 17 “Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”*
 - ii. In this naturally anxiety producing situation of being arrested, since we have concern for the things of God, even in that situation God will provide what we need at that time. In this case, it is the right words to say.
 - i. In Luke 10:38-42, Jesus is visiting Mary and Martha at their house. Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet. Martha is busy trying to get everything ready. And Jesus says, “Martha you are worried and upset about many things.”

Martha's concern is focused on providing for everyone. Whereas, Mary is concerned about Jesus.

- j. In 1 Peter 5:7, Peter tells us to *cast all your anxiety [concerns, worries] on [God] because he cares for you.*
 - k. So, *merimnao* [concern] is good when we have concern for the right things in the right amount. It becomes a problem when we have concern for the wrong things in the wrong amount. That concern tips over into worry.
 - l. Jesus tells us to focus on our concern on the things of God, seeking for his kingdom and for doing what is right by God. Then, we can put our earthly concerns into God's hands.
2. **Seek first the kingdom of God.**
- a. So, we are to seek the rule and reign of God in our lives.
 - b. We want *to align our lives with the ways of Jesus*, and we want *to get in action* around what God is asking to do and to say.
 - c. **Remember that the kingdom of God is already in our midst, Jesus said** (Luke 17:20-21).
 - i. *Luke 17:20–21 (RSV) 20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."*
 - ii. Since Jesus the "king" was present, God's reign had already begun. *Thus the text should be translated "in your midst" or "in the midst of you," as in the RSV....*
 - 1. 17:21 *Here it is.* This can be translated "here it is" or "here he is." Since the immediate context involves God's kingdom rather than the Son of Man's return, it is best to translate it "here it is." Yet the consummation of the kingdom takes place when the Son of Man returns so that in the new context provided by Luke 17:23 (cf. also Mark 13:21) the same expression can be translated "here he is."
 - 2. Because the kingdom of God [*is among you or in your midst.*] The reason given for not looking for such premonitory signs can be either (1) that the (realized) kingdom had already come into their midst (17:21b) or (2) that the (consummated) kingdom will come suddenly and unexpectedly and when it comes all will know immediately (17:22–37). The first possibility is the correct one, for in 17:20–21 the emphasis is on the already realized dimension of God's kingdom. The

expression “within you” (entos hymōn) can mean “in your hearts,” “in your midst,” or “in your reach.” The first interpretation (“within you”) was much in favor in theological liberalism, which saw God’s kingdom as God’s rule in the human heart. But nowhere else in the Scriptures is God’s kingdom portrayed as an inner condition of the human heart or life. Furthermore the saying is addressed to the Pharisees, who were most unlikely candidates for Jesus’ saying that God rules within their hearts. Even if one makes “you” indefinite and not limited to the Pharisees, the first argument is conclusive: “Jesus speaks of men entering the kingdom, not the kingdom entering men.” Since Jesus the “king” was present, God’s reign had already begun. Thus the text should be translated “in your midst” or “in the midst of you,” as in the RSV and not as in the NIV. (Stein, Robert H. *Luke*. Vol. 24. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.)

3. Seek first his righteousness.

- a. Remember in the Sermon on the Mount, righteousness is about right relationship with God and others.
- b. We are called to embody the character and nature of God in our spheres of influence, starting with how we live our lives in right relationship with God and including how we live our lives in in doing right by others.

4. And all these things will be added to y’all.

- a. We tend to take the phrase, “all these things will be added to you” as individual. “God will give me everything I need.”
- b. But in the Greek, the “you” is plural. It is directed toward the community of Jesus followers, not primarily individuals.
- c. So it may be that what Jesus is saying is that when you seek first the kingdom, God will give the community everything that it needs.
- d. And, Jesus teaches that God’s people are expected to care for each other’s needs.

5. Balance: Jesus is not saying that we can stop working hard and just let things happen.

- a. We do work diligently. We do give effort.
- b. And, we trust that God will provide.
- c. God has a part and we have a part. God won’t do our part; and, we can’t do God’s part (Philippians 2:12-13).

- i. To have a crop, the farmer must till the soil, sow the seeds, weed the crops, and tend to the work of farming.
- ii. But the farmer can't make things grow. That is God's part, who has put life in the seed.