

Sunday 12th February 2022
Matthew 6:25-34 – Seek First the Kingdom of God

Introduction:

Just over a week ago, Thursday 2nd February, it was announced that the \$5 note in Australia would not be reprinted with an image of King Charles III on it. Up to now the \$5 note has carried a picture of Queen Elizabeth II (it is the only Australian bank note to do so). However the Reserve Bank of Australia announced that they will not be replacing her with the new King, instead they will seek a design that reflects ‘the culture and history’ of Indigenous Australians.

Although Australian coins will change to have the head of King Charles III on, the \$5 note issue was ceased upon as a victory for those opposed to monarchy within Australia. Is it deliberate step away from the pervasive influence of a British King on Australian society?

1. First things first – The Kingdom:

Let us in fact start at the end of our passage:

Seek first his kingdom ... and all these things will be given to you as well (v33)

The idea of the ‘kingdom’ is important in Matthew’s Gospel. It appears fifty times - more than any of the other gospels, with 32 of these appearances being unique to Matthew. Here are some examples:

Matt 3:2 (John the Baptist) – *Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*

Matt 4:17 (Jesus) – *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*

Matt 10:7 (Jesus to the disciples) – *As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near’*

Matt 5:3 (Sermon on the Mount) – *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Matt 6:10 (Sermon on the Mount) – *your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.*

Matt 6:33 (Sermon on the Mount) – *seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

The Kingdom Parables (Eg Matt 13) – Usually begin ‘*The kingdom of heaven is like*’ ... There are 10 in total in Matthew

Matt 24:14 (Olivet Discourse) – *This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.*

Matt 26:29 (The Last Supper) – *I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.*

2. So What Is This Kingdom?

- Is it a political kingdom, like Putin's Russia, or Kim Jong Un's N. Korea?
- Is it an international corporate empire, like Google, Shell, or HSBC?

No it isn't! Jesus pushed that temptation aside in the desert during his time of temptation, and he dismissed his own disciples call for a restoration of the kingdom of Israel.

Rather it is the place, whether physical, spiritual, or organisational, where God reigns supreme. Where his will is done and where the influence of the King of Kings permeates throughout. It is, in short, a kingdom of people, committed to Jesus.

So - Seek first the Kingdom! Everything else will follow on from that key priority. (Ref v33)

3. What stops us 'Seeking the Kingdom?': (v26, 28-30)

We are unable to seek the kingdom when we get our priorities the wrong way around. When the 'self' replaces Jesus as king! The NT writers refer to this as 'selfish ambition'

We become preoccupied with our own needs, our wants, our desires ... food, clothes, money, power, holidays, mobile phones, 60" TVs, cars, homes, pensions, fame, success, ... But Jesus says that's what 'godless people' (pagans) pursue (v32)

Imagine that you managed to amass a fortune of £10m by the time you died. Then when you stand before God and he asks you what have you done with your life you can say 'I made £10m!' 'Oh good' says God, 'now we can play Monopoly.'

In our passage Jesus said, 'look at the birds ... God feeds them.' (v26). Jesus said 'look at the flowers ... God clothes them ... and how beautifully he does so!' (v28-30). Now the birds still need to "find" the food, the flowers still need to "grow", BUT ultimately it is God who provides all that they need.

Jesus said that we are more valuable to God than the birds are (v26). Jesus said we are more significant to God than the flowers are (v30). So if he cares for the birds and flowers we can be sure he will care for us too. So stop worrying about your 'self', stop striving to look after No1 and instead:

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.(v33)

4. Which Kingdom Are You Seeking?

The kingdom of God asks only one thing of you and me. That we make Jesus No1 in our life. That he is the king, the Lord, the focus, the foundation, the bottom-line, our security and our goal. If we are willing to do that, then the one who created plants, animals, cotton, silk, gold, silicon, Barbados, and chocolate, will give you a share of his creation as well.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION:

If you were suddenly given a million pounds, no strings attached, what would you do with it? Try to be honest!

*Re-read **Matthew 6:25-34***

First things first – The Kingdom:

- *When you hear the word 'kingdom', what do you think of?*
- *So what is this Kingdom Jesus speaks of so often in the Gospel?*
- *What do you think Jesus means by 'Seek first the Kingdom' in v33.*

What stops us 'Seeking the Kingdom'?

- *Do we always put God's kingdom first in our lives?*
- *So what stops us, what takes its place?*

*Read **Philippians 2:3, James 3:14-16***

- *What might be some of the 'selfish ambitions' referred to in these passages?*

What does Jesus have to say on this?

- *Jesus picks on two key worries or areas of 'selfish ambition' in vs25-32 of our reading. What are they?*
- *Why does Jesus say we should not worry about these things?*

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.(v33)

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, and your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

And give us this day our daily bread. Amen.