

Kingdom of God-4: The First Priority

The key to a successful life is finding out what matters most and building your life around it. We live in an age of many distractions, often filled with many goods granted to us by God: e.g., spouse, family, friends, work, church, and health. However, if we make any of these limited goods the focus or universal good of our lives, we end up with very thin and vacuous lives (consider Ecclesiastes), which can fool us into thinking that because we are busy, we must be doing good. Working hard is great. But it does not matter how hard we work if we are going in the wrong direction? The key questions are: *What matters most? What is the grand narrative that brings all our activities together in a cohesive, transcendent manner? What is the big plan that gives meaning to life? What are we building our lives around?*

In our American culture, fame and success have often become end goals without much substance. But what is the point of fame and success in the grand scheme of things if those goals are meaningless?

What is the grand and unifying theme of Scripture, from Genesis through Revelation? What is the number one thing Jesus talked about more than anything else? It was not love. It was not grace. It was not the cross. It was not Heaven. It was not Hell. It was not propitiation. It was not redemption. It was not justification. It was not reconciliation. It was not forgiveness of sins. It was not predestination. It was not sin. It was not the nature of God. It was not loving God and our neighbors. It was not about the Bible being the very Word of God. It was not about works. It was not about witnessing for the Lord. It was not about being part of a local church. It was not about being faithful to your spouse and family. It was not about walking in the Spirit. It was not about confession of sin. It was not about mercy. It was not about trusting God. It was not about the prohibition of slander. It was not about rebuking the devil. It was not about correct Bible doctrine. It was not about the Trinity. It was not about social ethics. It was not about political ideology. It was about God's economic principles. It was not about the rich. It was not about the poor. It was not about the Fall of Adam and Eve. It was not about the Second Advent. It was not about the Tribulation. It was not about making us feel good. It was not about the meaning of life. It was not about solving our problems. It was not about making us healthy, wealthy, and wise.

So what was the thing that Jesus taught more than anything else? THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The Kingdom of God was the grand theme that held all above together. Jesus gave us many commands, but there was only one thing He said to seek first: The Kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). And this command was in response to his disciples' honest questions about the pressing needs of daily temporal life. They left everything to follow Jesus and now were wondering about the temporal things of life: What will we eat? What will we wear? How can we balance all our temporal life's needs?

Jesus responded to their questions by reassuring them that if they would seek the kingdom of God before anything else, "all these [temporal] things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). In other words, prioritizing the Kingdom does not minimize the other aspects of life. Rather, it puts them all in perspective and raises them all to a newer and higher level because they are put in context of the Kingdom of God. As C. S. Lewis put it, "When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed but increased.

It is the Kingdom that unites and elevates all the details of life, making life coherent, comprehensive, and transcendently meaningful. It is the Kingdom of God that brings beauty to all life.