

Seek First The Kingdom Of God.

Text: Matt 6:33

1) Grammar

Suggested Hymns:

2) Geography

301, 296, 148, 377, 371, 282, 299

3) Mathematics

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our Confirmation sermon today is Matthew 6:33, ³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Confirmation Day marks a most important milestone in any young life. Without detracting one iota from the red-letter character of the days of one's birth, marriage, and death — confirmation day, too, must be included in the listing of the great days in our lives.

Dear Matthew, the hour when you publicly pledge allegiance to Christ for time and eternity, is most vital to your parents and sponsors, your beloved Church, and your own future.

Confirmation in its present form is not directly commanded in the Bible, but is a historic continuation and application of the symbolic laying on of hands practised by the ancient Church in connection with Baptism and the rite of reception into the Christian Church.

Today you will remember and renew your baptismal vow. Luther especially appreciated the period of instruction and preparation which preceded it.

Your Confirmation Lessons have also been joyous ones for your pastor, who sought constantly to point you to the Cross of Calvary as a refuge from the storms of sin. They have also been happy days for you. Now you are publicly and personally to confess your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and solemnly to promise that, with the help of God, you will be true to Him even unto death.

How graphic and unforgettable are the words of Jesus which we have taken from the Sermon on the Mount for our text, ***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***

Matthew, make these words your motto for life, and you will build on a solid foundation, which offers you a well-integrated personality and issues in, true success and contentment. That you may the better remember these beautiful words, let us think of them under three terms with which you are quite familiar from homeschooling, Primary School and High School — grammar, geography, and mathematics.

Our theme is *Seek First The Kingdom Of God*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Grammar Of This Text

First, look at the grammar of this text. “***Seek***” is the verb, and it is near the beginning of the sentence. What voice is it in? Active. What tense? Present. What mood? The imperative, which expresses a command.

Every soldier knows what a command involves. It calls for obedience. Every Christian regards the Lord Jesus as the Captain of his salvation and gladly pledges Him loyalty and allegiance in all phases of life.

Furthermore, ours is the command of the heavenly King, the Lord of Creation. All we have, all we are, all we hope to be, rests in His almighty hand. It would be ungrateful to refuse obedience to God, who guides and keeps us.

God wants us when we are young, strong, and active — as you are today, to ***Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.***¹ As the Army and the Navy of our country seek youths that are mentally alert and physically fit to fight its cause, so our Saviour, who loves us even when we are old and frail, seeks in us sacred aspirations and a buoyant enthusiasm for His cause.

The hymnist wrote,²

Give of your best to the Master;
Give of the strength of your youth;
Throw your soul's fresh, glowing ardor
Into the battle for truth.

“Seek ... the Kingdom of God.” We regret that instead of a closer walk with God, many have sought out and followed the servants and interests of Satan. As deserters from the King’s army they have endeavoured to sabotage the Father’s business.

You yourselves, may know some of those who stood before the Lord’s altar a number of years ago with their classmates and spoke their sacred vow. But early in life they went A.W.O.L., absent without leave, and soon were lost to the forces of righteousness and peace for time and eternity.

Note, again, that our verb is in the present tense. We must constantly be on our guard and **“seek”** by diligent and prayerful use of Bible study and the Sacraments to remain true to Christ. Indifference or neutrality in this matter means eventual surrender to our spiritual enemies.

And speaking of grammar, one of the most helpful bits of advice is that which William De Witt Hyde of Bowdoin used to give.

“Live,” he said, “in the active voice rather than in the passive, thinking more of what you can do than of what may happen to you. Live in the indicative mood rather than in the subjunctive, concerned with facts as they are rather than as they might be.

Live in the present tense, concentrating upon the duty at hand without regret for the past or worry for the future. Live in the singular number, seeking the approval of your own conscience rather than popularity with the many. Live in the first person, criticising yourself rather than condemning others.”

And since we must have a verb to conjugate, we can do no better than take that word which Jesus used to summarise the Moral Law and which is quite generally used in both Latin and English grammar classes — *amo*, meaning “I love.”

Yes, as we read in Luke 10:27, **‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’**

2. The Geography In This Text

Let us see if there is any geography in our text. Geography teaches us by means of maps to find the location of distant places. Such a study proves invaluable to our armed forces.

When an Army invades another country, the topographical divisions directed the men along safe routes and secure roads. They mapped every trail and highway, every bridge and possible point of ambush. Their work saved many in the face of danger and death.

Now, where is the Kingdom of God? Someone says it is in the Bible. No, the Bible is comparable to a map which directs us to the kingdom of heaven. Another says it is the visible Church. No, the Church may be compared to the marching army of the Kingdom band. Still a third declares it is in heaven. Heaven is only the citadel of the Kingdom. Well, where is the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God is the gracious and glorious rule of God. The subjects in this kingdom are the true believers, who obey God's will. In Luke 17:21 we hear Jesus say, *"For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."*

In 1520 Luther wrote: *"The Kingdom of God will be within us when we are not ruled by any sin, but place all our affections into the service of God, so that, not we live, but He lives in us."*

Many years ago a person attended an event in Canada and saw many Scotch Highlanders. They looked odd in their kilts and plaids. But they had a perfect right to be in attendance although oceans away from home. They were in a part of the British Empire, and as loyal subjects, whose hearts beat true to the king, they had a right to be there.

Likewise, where there is a Christian believer, boy or girl, man or woman, whose heart belongs to Christ, our King, there is the Kingdom of God.

Our Catechism tells us how the Kingdom of God comes to us: *"When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life, here in time and hereafter in eternity."*³

Geography is also a valuable study because it tells us of the products exported from distant lands. The Word of God tells us of the products that come from the Kingdom of God.

We read in Romans 14:17, ¹⁷ *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

If you have been overseas you may have stood along the piers in New York and watched the ships unload their cargoes of sugar — you knew they came from Cuba; others were unloading coffee — you knew they had come from Brazil; still others came laden with wool — you knew they sailed in from Australia.

The Kingdom of God in the heart imports the qualities of peace, joy, and righteousness. To attain this JOY, however, spell it in this way: J for **Jesus**; O for **others**; Y for **yourself**. That is the order: Jesus first; others second; yourself last.

If you do this, you will always pray, *“Thy Kingdom come”* with deep meaningfulness, with the desire that God’s gracious rule may be extended to those who have not taken Christ as Ruler and King. You will also pray that those who call themselves Christians may go all out for Him and His cause in order that many more may share your peace and joy. So much for the geography of this text.

3. The Mathematics Of This Text

Finally, there is an important bit of mathematics in our text. *But seek first the kingdom of God ... and all these things shall be added to you.* The arithmetical terms are *“first”* and *“added.”* Not only are we to seek, but our seeking the things of God must be first. They must have priority over everything else.

During the recent epidemic we learned that public safety and welfare comes before private convenience and gain. Now, there are spiritual priorities, too.

The first words of the Bible are: *“In the beginning God ...”* The visible universe is a constant reminder that God must come first. God must come first because He is first — not only in time but from all eternity. God, who is, makes the first approach to man.

When man in the Garden of Eden carved out his own way he came to grief through his transgressions. But God provided a way to draw man back to Himself. He provided a Redeemer and Saviour in the Person of His only-begotten Son. Yes, it is God, not we, who made the first move.

We must, therefore, not resist the divine approach. Today God comes to us through the means of grace, and Matthew it is our prayer that you always welcome Him in faith and keep God first in your life by regular prayer, church attendance, and partaking of the Lord's Supper.

St. John declares in 1 John 4:19, ¹⁹ *We love Him because He first loved us.* Whoever does not give priority to God has lost his soul. No wonder the world has lost its way. So many people put only a little Christianity into their life. Someone said that some people have only enough religion to make them miserable, and not enough to make them happy.

The other mathematical word in our text is “**added.**” Everyone here today knows the difference between addition and subtraction. But do you know the difference in the spiritual realm?

Matthew, as you go out into our cold and calculating world, you will meet many people who will tell you that if you walk the straight and narrow way that leads to salvation, you will, in reality, find many things that make for happiness taken from you — fun, friends, and pleasures.

But Christ never promised exemption from suffering. He says to you today, “*seek first the kingdom of God,*” and everything else worth while and necessary will be “*added to you.*” The greatest benefit assures lesser ones.

If you are to become good stewards of Christ, you should remember these two mathematical words: “*first*” and “*added.*” Not that you will of necessity become rich in what the world accounts as wealth. But taking Christ into partnership you will lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves cannot break through and steal.⁴ Our heaven will not be in the bank; our bank will be in heaven.

God pays His dividends in better mintage than the world — in peace of mind, a clear conscience, a forgiven and a forgiving heart.

May I add, however, that there are many fine Christian men and women who have been rewarded by God in both kinds — spiritual peace and public recognition. This came about because they used their God-given aptitudes and consecrated them to Christ's service and the benefit of their fellow men. May you emulate their devotion by being “*faithful until death.*”⁵

Forget once and for all the thought that Christian living is subtraction. True, a real Christian will refrain from doing many things that the worldling will not hesitate to do. But when our lives are invested with God, our Lord gives us something better and far richer than the spirit of the world—a true “*Christian spirit*,” which means to have new godly thoughts and motives. We are different because of our relationship with Christ.

The hymnist wrote,

Give of your best to the Master;
Give Him first place in your heart;
Give Him first place in your service,
Consecrate every part.

Give, and to you shall be given;
God His beloved Son gave;
Gratefully seeking to serve Him,
Give Him the best that you have.

And so today our prayers and good wishes go with you Matthew.

I think that you will now agree with me that the real red-letter day in your life is when you make a public confession of your faith and diligently “*seek first the Kingdom of God.*”

Matthew, soon you will renew and confirm the solemn covenant, which at your Baptism, your sponsors made in your place. May God keep you faithful to Himself and useful in His kingdom. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Ecclesiastes 12:1

² Howard B. Grose, “Give of your best to the Master” verse 1

³ The Lord’s Prayer, Second Petition, Thy Kingdom Come

⁴ Matt 6:20

⁵ Revelation 2:10