

# Seek First the Kingdom of God

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Go ahead and open your Bibles to 2 Samuel, chapter 7. 2 Samuel, chapter 7 and we'll get into it here this morning. We're going to read the first 17 verses of this chapter and that's going to be the springboard that we use to talk about what we're going to talk about today. It says:

## **2 Samuel 7:1-17 (ESV)**

*Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you."*

*Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan (and by the way, the king is David, the king said to Nathan) the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you."*

## **2 Samuel 7:1-17 (ESV)**

*But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling."*

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## **2 Samuel 7:1-17 (ESV)**

*In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel.'*

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**2 Samuel 7:1-17 (ESV)**

*And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly,*

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**2 Samuel 7:1-17 (ESV)**

*from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.*

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**2 Samuel 7:1-17 (ESV)**

*He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,*

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## **2 Samuel 7:1-17 (ESV)**

*but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’” In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.*

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I'll have you stop there. Let's pray.

Father God, as we get into Your Word this morning, I just really pray for Your Holy Spirit to open our hearts, open our eyes spiritually, our ears. Lord, we want to hear from You. We want to receive today from You. We want to be nourished in the Word of God and we want to receive the ministry of Your Spirit.

So we ask You to guide us, to direct us, and to minister among us. Lord, You know all the people here and what they need to hear. So speak, we pray, in the name and authority that is ours through Jesus our Savior, amen. Amen. Amen.

In and amidst all of the Old Testament prophecies that are given, this is one that stands out. It stands out for many reasons because it has such far reaching implications. In fact, so far reaching that there are elements of this prophecy that have yet to be fulfilled.

What we have going on here is Nathan, who's a prophet, and David are just hanging out I suppose one evening and talking. And David's living in a grand home, but yet the Arc of the Covenant is in a tent. It's still in the tabernacle. The same thing that it resided in in the wilderness period while Moses was bringing the people of Israel through that wilderness. And David was feeling badly about that. That he was living in such a grand place and the Arc of the Covenant is just in this tent.

And so he starts to talk to Nathan about it. And Nathan, things are going well at this time. David has rest from his enemies and so Nathan knows what David is intimating, and so he just says, just whatever you have in your heart, do it. Just go for it.

And so, I suppose David probably gets all excited. We know that he made a lot of preparations for the building of the temple. But when Nathan got home that night, the Lord knocked on his door and said Nate you were quick to speak to the king so I have a message that I want you to go back and tell him. And this is basically it, David, you're not the one that's going to build My house.

I am going to raise up a Son, your son from your own body, and He's the One who's going to build My house. You see because David, you're a man, and it doesn't say it right in this particular area, but we know from other passages that David was a man of blood. And the Lord told him that. He says, you're a man of blood. You're a warrior. You've killed many men. And I want a man of peace to build my house. And so He begins to speak prophetically about who we know to be Solomon, who, David's son who would come and eventually build the temple.

But there's some interesting things in and amidst what the Lord says that begin to tweak us a little bit because we're like, wait a minute, could that possibly apply to Solomon? Particularly what He says here is, He says in verse 16, *"And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever..."* In fact, He repeats it in that verse when He goes on to say, *"Your throne shall be established forever."* Forever. Forever is a long time.

And so we look at this and we think, okay, well, David passed from the scene and Solomon came up and he did build the temple, and it was very glorious. And David's rule in Reign was, or excuse me, Solomon's rule and reign was magnificent. But he passed from the scene as well. So we're left to say, wait a minute. We've got a gap here. We've got a problem.

Well, actually we don't have a problem because what we're seeing in this passage is what we call the Law of Double Reference. I don't know if you've heard of that before, but let me put the definition up on the screen for you so we can see it together.

### **Law of Double Reference**

A prophecy that has a short-term and a long-term fulfillment.

The Law of Double Reference is a prophecy that has a short-term and a long-term fulfillment. And let me just say that there are many, many prophecies in the Bible, both Old and New testaments that contain what we call the Law of Double Reference. They have a short-term fulfillment and then a later long-term fulfillment. And this is something that we have to recognize or learn to recognize or we're going to misinterpret Scripture. And believe me, a lot of

people do. A lot of people misinterpret the Word of God because they fail to recognize the Law of Double Reference that is in a passage.

Well, how do you know if you're seeing the Law of Double Reference? Well, you're seeing something that a short-term fulfillment couldn't possibly fulfill. And that's what's going on here. The Lord begins to speak of this kingdom that's going to be established, but He says it's going to be an enduring kingdom and it's going to go on and on and on forever. Well, that didn't happen with David and it didn't happen with Solomon, or any of the sons that came after them. So we understand that this is something that goes beyond the time of David.

Now here's what's interesting. Many years later, God spoke again about this enduring kingdom, and strangely enough, He did it through a dream that He gave to a pagan king. A man by the name of Nebuchadnezzar. He was king of Babylon, the Persian empire, and you'll remember that the Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom of Judah, took the people into exile along with many of the nobles of whom Daniel was one. And we read about this in the Book of Daniel and we read that King Nebuchadnezzar had this dream of a statue. And it was this enormous statue, and the head of the statue was gold, and the chest and the arms were silver, and the belly and the thighs were made out of bronze, and the legs were made out of iron, and the feet were made out of iron and baked clay.

And Nebuchadnezzar had no idea what this vision he was having, this dream was about. He was clueless. And so he gathered all of his wise men together and he says, I had a dream and I want you guys to interpret it for me. And they said, okay, tell us the dream. He goes, oh no, you got to tell me my dream. If you guys are really worth your salt, you can tell me what I dreamed and then give me the interpretation. And they were like, nobody can do that. And Nebuchadnezzar was furious. He was going to kill them all.

Well, the word got to Daniel, and Daniel began to pray and seek the Lord. And God gave Daniel the interpretation of the dream. So he went to the king ultimately, and he began to explain to the king that this statue and all of these different metallic types ending in iron with clay. And the feet were symbols of successive world powers beginning with Babylon itself, which was the head of gold. And then we know that the chest and arms were the Medo Persian empire and on down through the thing. And he said, these are these different nations that are going to come and conquer and so forth.

But see, there was another element to this dream that really bothered Nebuchadnezzar and he really wanted to get to the bottom of it because the last

part of the dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a rock, a stone that had been hewn by no human hands. And it rolled toward the statue and it struck it on the feet of iron and clay, and it destroyed the entire statue. And then the rock or the stone itself grew into this enormous mountain, and Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know what that was all about.

Well, here's Daniel's interpretation up on the screen for you. From Daniel chapter 2, verse 44, Daniel says:

**Daniel 2:44 (ESV)**

*And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.*

*And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom* (oh, here we go again, he's talking about this kingdom and it says) *that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people.* (like all other kingdoms are, and look what it goes on to say) *It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand* (here's that word again) *forever.*

Here's this, God's talking about the same thing. He said, there's coming a kingdom that's going to endure. It's not going to be temporary, it's going to be ongoing. So we see it again there in the Word of God.

And we're not told, by the way, what the representation of the stone is yet. Isn't that interesting? So we're all sitting here going, well, what is that all about? We know that the different metallic elements of that statue represented kingdoms, but who's the stone? Who's the rock?

Well, interestingly enough, God doesn't get around to explaining who the rock is for 500 more years, and for of all people, He explains it to a little Jewish girl. And this is all recorded for us in the first chapter of Luke. Let me show you on the screen.

**Luke 1:30-33 (ESV)**

*And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

*And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name (Yeshua) Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him (look at this) the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, (and then look at this last line) and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

There it is, he finally came out with the punchline. We had to wait a long time. Aren't you glad you weren't living back in some of those days where God's giving hints about stuff. Now we know.

He's been talking about this kingdom for hundreds and hundreds of years, this enduring kingdom that would not be left to others. And He tells us about this stone that we realize now is Jesus, who is the King of this great kingdom. Who will, by the way, in that dream of Nebuchadnezzar, come and destroy all the nations of the earth.

Now that hasn't happened yet. That's not going to happen until the end of the Great Tribulation period in the battle that we call the Battle of Armageddon. When all the nations of the world come against Israel and when it looks like they're about to completely wipe out Israel, Jesus returns. And He fights on behalf of Israel and destroys all of those armies and establishes his throne over the earth for a period of 1,000 years. A period that we call the Millennial Kingdom or sometimes the Messianic Kingdom. And so these are all things that are going to happen.

Now, let me ask you a question. What would it be if we just stopped right here? We're not going to, but what if I did? What if I just stopped and said, well, that's all we're going to cover here today. And you might go home and somebody say, well, what did they do say in church today? Well, we learned about the fact that God's been talking about a kingdom that's to come, and it's an eternal kingdom. And He didn't kind of give the punchline for a lot of years, but He finally did, told us that kingdom would be ruled by Jesus. And by the way, that kingdom hasn't really been, established yet, except in your heart.

And somebody might say, oh, that's interesting. So what all does that mean? I mean, what does that mean for you today? And you might go I don't know. I'm not really sure. And see that's why we can't stop. We got to talk about what, what does, what's this all mean? What? Why is this important for you and me to know?

Well, and the reason it's important to know is because God says a lot about His kingdom. He talks a lot about it throughout the Scriptures and when we start to piece all these passages together that talk about the kingdom of God, we find out that it's fascinating. That there's a lot of information, a lot of insights about it. And then we're going to see how Jesus is going to make a statement about the kingdom, the kingdom of God that goes into our application.

And so we're going to begin looking at these things, but the first question I want to answer for you is one that might be in some of your hearts and minds, because I've gotten it in the past. And it, it's the simple question. Is there any difference between the kingdom of God as it is revealed in the Bible and the kingdom of Heaven? And the answer is no, there is not. They're used interchangeably. Okay, so good thing to remember. So now that you know when you're reading through the Bible, when you see kingdom of God or kingdom of Heaven, you know it's talking about the same thing.

But we need to find out more about this kingdom in order that we might truly apply it to our lives. And the first thing we're going to look at up on the screen is a statement that Jesus made in John chapter 18, where He simply said:

**John 18:36a (ESV)**

*Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world."*

*"My kingdom is not of this world."*

And that's a very simple statement. *"My kingdom is not of this world."* But it's an important statement because in one fell swoop, Jesus is reminding us that God's kingdom really has nothing to do with another kingdom that we happen to be living in at the same time. And that's the kingdom of man, or if you will, the kingdom of this world.

And we know who is in charge of the kingdom of this world temporarily because Jesus told us. You'll remember at the Last Supper, He made reference to Satan and He said, *"the prince of this world is coming,"* but he has no hold on Me. (John 14:30) I always loved that statement, but He referred to Satan as *"the prince of this world."* It's not a title I would've given him, but Jesus

knowing all things helps us to understand that temporary role of the enemy as it relates to this kingdom of the world that we are living in.

Now, we know what this kingdom of the world is all about, right? And we know how corrupt it is. We see it every day. We see that it's a temporary kingdom. We know that it's not going to last. This is not the kingdom God talked about when He said, this kingdom coming is going to be eternal. This one is not. And it's full of sin, and it's full of sinners, and we're part of it.

And here's the important thing. Jesus says, yeah, My kingdom isn't part of this. It's not of this world. And we're all like, phew, thank you for telling me that. Otherwise, I might've been a little bit concerned because really the only kingdom that I see all around me, apart from God's Word, is the kingdom of this world. And it's not a fun place to live. This world is full of heartache. It's full of pain. It's full of difficulty and hard labor. And if this one was going to last forever, we'd all be in a world of hurt, right? So Jesus tells us a very important thing. My kingdom is not of this world.

The next thing we learn from the Bible is what is told us in John 3:3. Up on the screen as well. Here we go.

**John 3:3 (ESV)**

*Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

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And what that means is if you've been talking to your unsafe neighbor about the kingdom of God, that's probably why they think you're out to lunch because they can't see it. And you have to be born again to see it because right now it's an invisible kingdom. It's in your heart. It lives in your heart, and it lives in my heart, and it lives in our minds, and we're walking after it, and we're going to talk about that more, but it's invisible to the world. The world has no clue. We talk about the kingdom of God, and they're just on tilt about the whole thing, so you can't even see it unless you've been born again.

Well, how do you get into it? Well, a couple of verses later. Let me show you this, John 3:5. It goes on to say,

**John 3:5 (ESV)**

*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."*

*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."*

So once again, now we know how you get in. So the kingdom's coming. It's eternal right? It hasn't yet shown up in a fully manifest way. It has been manifested in your heart, but it will one day be manifest on the earth. And the way you get in is you got to be born again.

Well, that's really good news because we know that to be born again doesn't take any sort of works or goodness on our part. Right. Go on. Somebody say yes. I mean, if you don't, I'm going to, we're going to go back to the beginning. We're going to go back to kindergarten. But you all know this.

You know that in the Bible says in Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, it is by grace, you've been saved through faith, right? And this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, right? So you're saved according to a gift. When's the last time you paid for a gift? The answer is never, because if you paid for a gift, it would cease at that point to be a gift, right? It would be then an obligation, something that was earned. So we don't pay for gifts unless we're giving them like for Christmas or a birthday, but when we're receiving gifts, it has to be given free of charge or it's not a gift.

So what does God's Word say about salvation? It is the gift of God lest anyone should boast. There's no boasting in heaven. Nobody's going to say, well, I'm here because I was a good guy and I went to church every week, Calvary Chapel Emmett. Prayed a lot, paid my taxes, that's why I'm here. It's not going to be, nobody's ever going to do that. We're all going to be spending eternity saying, I don't deserve to be here, but I'm so glad I'm here. Right? Because salvation is a gift.

Well, if salvation is a gift, then entrance into the kingdom of God is also free. It's a free gift. And we know that those who can enter are those who are born again. And that simply means they've received in their heart, what Jesus did on the cross for them when He paid the penalty of their sin. Simple as that.

All right, well, we're learning. We're seeing a lot of interesting things about the kingdom of God. Now, here's the interesting thing. Even though you can't get into heaven, according to your righteousness, you do have to have a

righteousness to get into the kingdom of heaven. Let me show you Matthew 5:20 on the screen.

**Matthew 5:20 (ESV)**

*“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

*“For I tell you, (Jesus speaking here) unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of (God) heaven.”*

I've said this many times. I would've loved to have been there when Jesus made this statement because I'm sure there were a lot of widened eyes and open mouths, because the people would've thought to themselves, are you joking? Yeah, my righteousness has to exceed that of the Pharisees? They specialize in righteousness. They're living a righteous life. Yeah, but you see, they were living a righteous life according to the law, and they never actually obtained a righteous stance. Why? Because Paul tells us in Romans, no man will be considered righteous through the law. (Romans 3:20) All the law doesn't make anybody righteous. All the law does is tell you how much of a scumbag you are. Seriously. It just tells you how far you've fallen short of the righteous standard of God. Okay?

So there obviously has to come a righteousness by some other means. That's what Paul writes about in Romans chapter 3, up on the screen.

**Romans 3:21-22 (ESV)**

*...now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*

*...now the righteousness of God has been manifested (but look at this, it's) apart from the law, (in other words, not by law keeping or rule keeping) although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God (that he's talking about, it comes what?) through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*

Okay. You know what guys? If we really understood the depth of what we just read on the screen. I mean, if we really, truly understood it. I mean, I know we can understand it, but if we really could grasp the full, you wouldn't be able to stay in your seats. You guys would be like they are at football games when your team just scored a touchdown that was impossible. You would've stood up and just, yeah, I mean, just gone crazy. I'm serious.

God has given us His righteousness. He has imputed righteousness to us by faith, and that is a requirement of entering the kingdom of God and it comes to us by faith, not by works. I'm not putting works down from the standpoint of living a life unto the Lord. I'm simply saying, it can't save you. You can't be saved by being a good person.

Alright, so we're continuing to learn more about the kingdom of God, but we still want to ask the question, how does that affect me today? I mean, this is all interesting stuff. But how am I to walk this out? What is the Lord asking or, wanting from me personally about this kingdom? Well, this is where we get to our main passage and it's Matthew 6:33 up on the screen so we can see it together. Jesus says,

**Matthew 6:33 (ESV)**

*"...seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

*"...seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, (this is for today guys, and then he says) and all these things will be added to you."*

Now what I've just done is I've given you a verse without its context so I'll tell you that the context of this statement that Jesus made is all about worrying, fretting, and being anxious about life. Okay? So Jesus, He talks to them about, the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, and you guys know the passage. Then he says, the birds, they're not, wringing their hands, getting an ulcer, the Lord takes care of them. Flowers of the field are decked out nicer than the richest man on earth could possibly clothe himself. And if He cares, if God cares about the birds and clothes the flowers that way, won't He much more care for you, owe you of little faith. So this is the context.

And then He says this, instead of running after and seeking after all the things that the world seeks after, here's what I want you to do. I want you to seek after the kingdom of God. And when you do, all this other stuff that people are getting an ulcer over, it'll all be taken care of. Your Father in heaven will take care of you.

And what Jesus is basically doing is He's giving us an antidote to anxious thoughts and worry and stuff like that. And who doesn't worry from time to time. We're all guilty to some degree of worrying. And yet I believe Jesus is giving us even more than an antidote, just for worry. I think Jesus, when He talks about this, He's talking about a way of life. An actual, it's not just when you're worrying, it's for all the time, living every day.

And He says, here's what I want you to do. I want you to seek the kingdom of God. You know what the world seeks after, but I want you to seek the kingdom of God. Okay?

Now we all know what the word seek means because we probably use it on a regular basis. It never hurts to be reminded so we'll put the definition up on the screen for you. Here we go.

**Seek // verb**

Def. attempt to find (something).

attempt or desire to obtain or achieve (something).

ask for (something) from someone.

search for and find someone or something.

Seek, it's a verb. That means it's an action word. Remember your grammar? It means to attempt to find something. It means to attempt or to desire to obtain or achieve something. It means to ask for something from someone. It means to search for and find someone or something. All right.

Well that's good. We all know this stuff. It's what you do and you lose your keys or your glasses or the TV remote. You have to go looking for it. You got to seek for it.

Well, let me tell you something, forgive me if this sounds offensive, but we've lost a great deal of the art of what it means to seek after things because, we live today in what is called the information age, and we can just look things up quickly. We can just get, we can get on our computer, type something into a search engine and Google does all the heavy lifting. And in .526 seconds, we get a screen full of answers about whatever we're looking for. And we call that searching. We call it a search engine. They did the searching guys, you just...

Some of you whose hair is the same color as mine you remember what it was like in school when you had to do a book report. You had to go to the library and you had to get out the encyclopedia. And then—first you had to find the right encyclopedia and then you got to open the dumb thing up and read it. Oh man, I hated and do you guys remember those card things you had to go through at the library? You're looking through these little 3x5 cards and you takes you about 30 minutes to get to the card that you know that you need, only to find out that this dopey kid got there ahead of you and he's got the card and you got to wait for him to be done with it. That's the way we used to do book reports back at a time when Noah got off the ark and it was horrible. And now we just type

things in. And you know what? That ability to have information at our fingertips has made us lazy. We've forgotten how to search.

And Jesus says to you and me, I want you to seek, I want you to look for the kingdom of God. I want you to seek for it. But we're not. We didn't have time for that. I had a gal right to me, just a week or two ago, emailed me and she said, pastor Paul, if Jesus is God, why didn't He just come out and say, I'm God. And I thought, oh, here we go. This is that same attitude.

There's a lot of reasons Jesus didn't come out and just say, by the way, guys, I'm God, just so you know, it would've been counterproductive. But the other thing is that secondly, talk is cheap. Anybody can say that. Anybody in this room could get up right now and just go, oh, by the way, I'm God. All right. And we would all say, shut up and sit down. Right. Or whatever.

And Jesus could have done that, but what He did is He came to show us He was God. And that's what I wrote back and told this gal. I said, I don't want somebody telling me what is true. I want them to show me. And when you read through the Gospel accounts, that's what you find that Jesus did. He did things that only God can do. But you got to read through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You got to take notes. You got to pay attention. You got to seek it out. It's all there and it's easy to find.

Good grief. The deity of Jesus is like simple. This is first grade level figuring out. Jesus did in things that only God can do. Remember the time when they took that crippled guy and lowered him down right in front of Jesus, dug a hole in the roof and dropped him right in front of Jesus? Remember that story? Jesus looked at him and He walked over to the man and he goes, your sins are forgiven. And right away, the Pharisees are like, well, here you go. Committed blasphemy. And you know what? They were right. The Pharisees were right. Only God can forgive sins and that's what they were saying to themselves. Only God can forgive sins. They were right. They were correct. And they were thinking to themselves, this guy's guilty of blasphemy.

And Jesus knew their thoughts and He turned around and He said, okay boys, I have a question for you. Which is easier to say? Your sins are forgiven? Or rise up, take up your mat, and go home? Well see, the fact of the matter is both of those statements were equally impossible for a man to say a mere man. But one of them is easier than the other because I can say to somebody, your sins are forgiven, and I don't have to prove it. I can just say, hey, your sins are forgiven. Boom, there you go. Oh yeah. How do you prove it for me? Well, I don't have to, you know what I mean? When our sins are forgiven, we usually don't look

any different. We don't suddenly have a halo around our heads. You see what I'm saying?

But Jesus then went on to do the more difficult thing, the one that involved proof. He turned to the man and He said, take up your mat and go home. And the man did and everybody saw it. And you know what they saw? They saw God in action because only God can do that. Right? But here's the point. You got to read through the Gospels, you got to take note. That's something only God can do, that's part of seeking. Instead of just opening up to page 1, in the beginning was Jesus, and He said, I am God. Ah, that's it. I don't need to read any further. So we need to search. We need to seek.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus taught in parables? He wasn't just trying to make things hard for people necessarily. But He was speaking in a way that would require them to think. We study through the Gospels, we read through the parables. I've taught through the parables many times. It's not always simple. You have to apply yourself to the parables to understand what they're talking about out, and that's why He was doing that. He wanted the people to apply themselves, but they'd gotten so lazy and so full of themselves that they stopped trying, and so He spoke to them that way.

So what does seeking look like? What does searching look like? There's a passage in the Proverbs that I think makes it so clear. Let me show you on the screen. This is Proverbs chapter 2, verses 1 through 5. It says,

**Proverbs 2:1-5 (ESV)**

*My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

*My son, if you receive my words (that's where it starts) and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then (here's the promise) you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

Which by the way, the knowledge of God fills His kingdom. And that's what we're to search for. But did you notice in this passage in Proverbs, all the action

words? Did you see them all? All of the verbs? It is just filled—you have to receive then treasure, then be, make your ear attentive, and incline your heart.

Call out for insight. Raise your voice for understanding. Seek it like you would for money. Search for it as for hidden treasure, I mean, get out your pick and your shovel and your ax and get working to dig it out. Then you'll find it. Then you'll find it.

And there's another wonderful promise in the scripture that I love from Jeremiah chapter 29 on the screen. This is so good. God says:

**Jeremiah 29:13-14 (ESV)**

*You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all of your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD...*

*You will seek me and find me*, (when you casually read your Bible, then put it away. It doesn't say that does it. It says) *when you seek me with all of your heart*. (and then He goes on to say) *I will be found by you*, (if you seek Me with all of your heart) *declares the LORD...*

I'm talking about the way the world seeks things. There's one, you can't fault the people of the world. They seek things of the world with all their heart. And that's the same level of priority that Jesus wants us to seek the kingdom of God. Notice He said, seek first the kingdom of God. Right, and that word first in the Greek means of first importance. In other words, there's nothing more important than this, so seek it as of first importance.

And He begins to talk about that priority of our lives. What is the priority of your life when it comes to the things you seek after? What are your priorities? And the reason he's talking to us about this as a priority is because He knows that if we don't think of the priority of seeking the kingdom, other priorities are going to creep in because we live in this worldly kingdom that has all kinds of alluring things going on all around us. And those things are going to grab our attention and we're going to run after those things. And He knows it unless we make it a priority to seek the kingdom of God, and so forth.

So what do we see the world seeking after? It's easy. I mean, we've all been there. We've all participated. I haven't always walked with the Lord. I've walked with the Lord now for a little over 40 years but before that, I did not walk with the Lord. And so I learned the ways of the world pretty well. I learned how to run after the things that the world runs after, things like happiness. And by the

way, God's not opposed to you being happy, but I'm here to tell you, if you make it your search, you're not going to find it.

If you make God your search, you'll find it. You'll find joy and happiness. But the world is seeking after those things apart from God, and that's what's not going to work. We see the world running after wealth, and material goods, and we see the world running after popularity and physical beauty and health. Health. We've become obsessed as a people with our health. I was reading in the news just yesterday that the pharmaceutical company, Eli Lilly, you familiar with it? Just surpassed \$1 trillion in profits. That's with a T. 1 trillion. You know why? It's cause we're obsessed. We're obsessed. With our health, we're obsessed, period.

We're obsessed with ourselves but I remember back when I was a kid, commercials on TV were all about dish soap and dog food. Now they're about pills. Every time you turn on the tv. And I don't turn it on very often, usually mostly to watch football, which is depressing these days too. I'm a Minnesota Viking fan. I get to watch them lose to the Packers later today. But it's all pill commercials. Have you ever heard them talking about the side effects? If that doesn't scare you, nothing will. It's crazy. You run after the things that the world runs after and you're never going to be satisfied. And the reason is because it's not an enduring kingdom. Ours, the kingdom of God that's in our hearts is an enduring kingdom, and it does satisfy when you seek after it.

So what are we talking about when we talk about the kingdom of God? What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God? Well, I just wrote down some things and there are more, but put them up on the screen for you.

### **Priorities of the Kingdom**

- Seeking daily to be more like Jesus
- Loving and praying for our enemies
- Serving others with a whole heart
- Forgiving others as we have been forgiven
- Being faithful in all things
- Bring content with what we have
- Growing daily in the knowledge of God's Word
- Speaking the truth in love

It means like seeking daily to be more like Jesus. Like loving and praying for our enemies, that'll get you noticed in this world. Serving others with the whole heart, even when they're not watching. Forgiving others as we have been forgiven. Being faithful in all things, including your marriage, what you do

every day. Being faithful to the Lord. Being content with what you've been given. Growing daily in a knowledge of God's Word. Speaking the truth in love to a world that doesn't want to tolerate it. But these are all parts of the kingdom of God and the righteousness that is expressed in the kingdom of God. And these are things that we should be seeking after. These are things that we should be running after. These are the priorities.

When Jesus says, seek first. All those things that are consistent with the kingdom of God, these things. And then there's that wonderful promise, and I'll put it up on the screen one more time and highlight that last portion so you can see it. Matthew chapter 6, verse 33:

**Matthew 6:33 (ESV)**

*“...seek first, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

*“...seek first, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, (and here's the promise) and all these things will be added to you.”*

And Jesus is saying to you and me, if you will make a priority of being more like Jesus, and seeking His will, His ways, His heart, His righteousness. If you will seek after the things of the kingdom that has been birthed in your heart and not the one that's living out here, He says to you, I'll take care of the rest.

It doesn't mean He'll take care of your greeds, but he will take care of your needs. He says, I'll take care of you and you don't need to worry and fret and be anxious about all the things the world worries about and frets about, and is anxious about.

I'll take care of you because you mean a lot to Me God says. And I love you with an everlasting love, and that love is never going to go away. So make Me and My kingdom a priority the Lord says to you and me, and that's where our hearts need to be. Standing on the promise of God, amen.