

Introduction

When I was a young boy, I decided that I wanted to play the PGA Tour. As I went through high school and college, I was seeking to play the Tour. I practiced on week-ends and whenever I had an opportunity. I worked hard in my seeking to play on the PGA Tour. In June 1978, I earned my PGA Tour card and became the youngest player on the Tour at that time. Once I was there, I realized just how good the guys on the PGA Tour were, and my game needed to improve in order to compete at that level. I was no longer seeking to get on the PGA Tour; I was now seeking to improve my game so that I could play competitively and win on the PGA Tour.

When Jesus gave the sermon on the mount, He was addressing a very mixed audience. There was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and they had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases.

(Lk 6:17–18) “Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and *there was* a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, {18} who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured.”

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. Again, there was a large crowd of His disciples, and His twelve apostles were also disciples and would be numbered with the crowd of disciple. His disciples came to Him on the mountain. At the end of the sermon on the mount, the crowds were amazed at His teaching. I believe the crowd also included all these people had come from all over Judea to hear Him and to be healed. They had traveled for many days to seek Jesus, and I think that wherever Jesus went, they were going to follow Him.

(Mt 5:1) “When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.”

(Mt 7:28–29) “When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; {29} for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.”

So, there were two groups of people in the audience when He preached, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” There were those that believed that He was the Christ and were following Him. There were also those that were seeking Jesus, but had not yet made a commitment to follow Him. Like my pursuit to play on the PGA Tour, they were initially seeking. When they found Jesus and became His disciples, they were on a different pursuit. Now, they were seeking to learn as much as they could about the kingdom of God.

This morning, we are looking at Jesus’ exhortation, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.” We will first take a look at what it means to seek. Then, we will look at initial seeking and ongoing seeking. Fourth, we will look at the ultimate seeker.

Seek First His Kingdom

1. What does it mean to seek?
2. Initial Seeking of the kingdom of God
3. Ongoing Seeking of the kingdom of God
4. The ultimate Seeker

(Mt 6:33) "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."

1. What does it mean to seek?

I want to start by looking at "seeking." The Greek word is *zeteo* (Strong's G2212), and it is used 115 times in the New Testament. It is used in both positive and negative ways, and not just about seeking God. Seeking first the kingdom of God is obviously a positive use. Here are some examples when seeking is not used in a positive way. In Luke 22:1-2, the chief priests and scribes were seeking to put Jesus to death. Their seeking shows a determination to put Him to death. In Mark 14:10-11, Judas was seeking for an opportune time to betray Jesus. Another positive example is the parable of the lost coins, where the woman had lost a coin. She searched (*zeteo*) carefully until she found it (Luke 15:8-10). From the various uses, we see that *zeteo* means to seek, search, try to find, to look, and to desire.

When we traded in our zero-turn mower for another one that had a bagger, I went out and began to mow the grass with it. I had mowed for about fifteen minutes and I noticed that the bagger chute attachment on the side of the mower had come loose. The manufacturer had used a bolt with a handle on it to secure the bagger chute attachment. Even though I had tightened it before starting to mow, the vibrations of the mower had caused it to come loose, and ultimately come off. I stopped my mowing and began to walk and retrace the areas that I had just mowed, and was looking for this bolt with a star-shaped handle. It had sunk down below the grass surface, making it difficult to see. After searching without much success, I got Chad's metal detector and began going back and forth. After another forty-five minutes of searching, I finally found the bolt. I put the bagger chute attachment on the mower and finished my mowing. Then, I thought of a better way to attach it, and went to Home Depot, and bought the parts I needed. With my new way of attaching it, it has never come loose again. When I was seeking to find that mower part, I was determined to find it. I searched up and down for over an hour looking for the piece. I even got another tool to help me find it. When you are determined to find something, you search with determination.

Jesus said to seek first the kingdom of God. We are not just to seek with determination; it is to be a priority in our life. The Greek word that is translated as first is *protos* (Strong's G4413), which means foremost in time, place, order, or importance. It means to come before anything else. It means the beginning. It means the best, chief, or first. It is used 104 times in the New Testament and is translated as first eighty-four times.

When we seek first the kingdom of God, we are putting our search for the kingdom before anything else. We are making our quest to find the kingdom of God the highest priority in our life. It means that we are willing to move other things in our life down in priority, so that we can put the kingdom of God at the top of our priorities.

If we are seeking first the kingdom of God, we will spend time with the King of the Kingdom. We will spend time worshiping the king. We will spend time reading and studying God's word. We will spend time praying and talking to the king. We will assemble with the saints on the Lord's Day, and at other times when the saints gather so that we can learn more about God's kingdom. We will block those times off on our schedule so that our other responsibilities do not hinder us from going to church or small group. By doing this, we demonstrate that we are seeking first the kingdom of God. By doing this, we show both determination and priority.

In Deuteronomy 4:29, God tells us that if we seek the Lord our God, we will find Him if we search for Him with all our heart and all our soul. Jeremiah also shared the same message. He said, “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” When we seek God, we are to seek with determination and with our whole heart, and He promises that we will find Him if we do this.

(Dt 4:29) “But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.”

(Je 29:13) “You will seek Me and find *Me* when you search for Me with all your heart.”

2. Initial Seeking of the kingdom of God

Initially, people need to know how to enter into the kingdom of God. After John the Baptist was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God. He said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” The gospel is the message about how to enter the kingdom of God. The message that Jesus preached was very clear: repent and believe in the gospel.

(Mk 1:14–15) “Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, {15} and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Mark records Jesus preaching the gospel of God. In Matthew’s account, he said that “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of diseases and every kind of sickness among the people.” John Wimber, who founded the Vineyard movement, said that the kingdom of God was the central message that Jesus preached, and that He proclaimed the gospel and demonstrated the gospel.

(Matt 4:23) “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.”

In Matthew 24, Jesus was teaching about His second coming. He said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.” When people talk about Christ’s return, this verse is one of the most quoted verses. People talk about preaching the gospel to all the different people groups around the world. One thing that is usually not mentioned is the term, “gospel of the kingdom.” Most gospel presentations today do not mention anything about the kingdom of God.

(Mt 24:14) “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

John Wimber, in his book *Power Evangelism*, had this to say about the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel that is preached today.

“Proclamation of a faulty gospel will produce faulty or, at best, weak Christians. Such is the case all too often today. Instead of a call to the King and His kingdom, people are hearing a gospel that emphasizes self: come to Jesus and get this or that need met, be personally fulfilled, reach your potential. This, however, is not the costly Kingdom gospel that Christ

proclaims: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25). The gospel of the Kingdom is costly because it cost God everything – the death of His Son on the cross.”¹

The gospel of the kingdom is not supposed to be a different gospel than the gospel of God; it is the same gospel message. Sometimes the gospel is simply referred to as the gospel, and sometimes it is referred to as the gospel of God or the gospel of the kingdom. When we refer to the gospel, we have truncated the name and left off the ending; it is really the gospel of the kingdom of God. Unfortunately, we have not just truncated the ending, we have changed the context of the gospel message, and tried to make it a more appealing message to the hearer, by telling them how they can benefit from believing in Christ. There is no question that all of us benefit by receiving Christ, but much of the benefit comes later in the kingdom of God, not necessarily in earthly treasures or conveniences. The twelve apostles did not die as the wealthiest people in their day. Eleven of them were martyred and did not have much material wealth.

What was the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached? He said that the kingdom of God is at hand, or near, and to repent and believe in the gospel. Repentance is how He started. The Greek word for repent is *metanoeo* (Strong’s G3340), and it means to change the mind, think differently, reconsider, or do an about face. The Word Study of the New Testament says this: “It involves regret or sorrow, accompanied by a true change of heart toward God.” It implies “pious sorrow for unbelief and sin and a turning from them unto God and the gospel of Christ.” It means to “repent and turn to God from idolatry.”

John the Baptist preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People went to him and were being baptized and were confessing their sins. They were acknowledging their sins before God and turning away from their sins.

(Mk 1:4–5) “John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. {5} And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”

Why is repentance necessary? Repentance is necessary because the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. All of us are sinners. Paul wrote in Romans 3 that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, are under sin.

(Ro 3:9–10) “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; {10} as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one;”

When we looked at the characteristics of the kingdom of God, we saw that it is a holy kingdom. Sin and unrighteousness will not be present in the kingdom of God. In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he wrote, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” Paul went on to say, “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. The difference between the righteous and the unrighteous is that the

¹ John Wimber, Power Evangelism, Chapter 4, The Gospel of the Kingdom, page 33

righteous have repented and put their faith in Christ. They obtained the righteousness of Christ by believing and confessing Him as Lord. Believers have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. Believers have been forgiven and declared innocent.

(1 Co 6:9–11) “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, {10} nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. {11} Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he wrote the same thing again. He warned them not to let immorality or any impurity or greed be named among them, as is proper among saints. He went on to say, “For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” It is a holy kingdom, and to enter into this holy kingdom, we must believe that Jesus came and died for our sins, and we must confess Him as Lord. When we do that, we are born again, and become part of the kingdom of God.

(Eph 5:3–5) “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; {4} and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. {5} For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

Jesus preached that people should repent and believe in the gospel. Gospel means good news, and the good news is that Jesus came to die for sins and take our payment for our sins, and to redeem us. When Jesus told people to repent, they were to stop trusting in their own works and righteousness, and to put their trust in Christ, the Messiah. When a person repents and puts his faith in Christ, he is born into the kingdom of God. The gospel message shows the way into the kingdom of God.

(Mark 1:15) “and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’”

Jesus gave many parables that gave people reason to repent. He taught about the coming judgment with the parable of the tares in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, and in the parable of the dragnet in Matthew 13:47-50. The church today is reluctant to talk about hell, fire, and damnation; she prefers a positive approach. But Jesus spoke of the coming judgment and eternal judgment. He gave people plenty of reason to repent, and that the kingdom of God was at hand. Jesus gave a parable about self-righteousness using a Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. In addition to the parables, He confronted hypocrisy, self-righteousness, divorce, and many other things. Jesus gave many reasons for people to examine themselves and to repent.

At Pentecost, after Peter had preached about how God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ, the hearts of the people were pierced, and they asked, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Again, the gospel message included repentance.

Jesus taught that if anyone wanted to come after Him, “he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” It was not a promise of all the good things that He would do in this life; it was a call to repent of sin, daily die to self, and to follow Him. To make it clear, He said, “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?” He was not preaching about storing up treasures in this life, but losing your life for His sake.

(Lk 9:23–25) “And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. {24} “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. {25} “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?”

The gospel of the kingdom is that we must believe that Jesus is the Messiah or the Christ. We must believe that He died for our sins, and was raised from the dead. We must not only believe, but we must also confess Jesus as Lord, meaning that we put Him on the throne of our lives. It means that we make Him king of our lives, and place our lives under His rule and reign.

When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, and told people to seek first the kingdom of God, He was addressing many people who had not believed and received Him as the Messiah. He was telling them to make their search for the King and the Kingdom of God the top priority in their lives.

When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles in Matthew 10:5-8, notice what He instructed them. “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.” He commanded them to preach the kingdom of God.

(Mt 10:5-8) “These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; {6} but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. {7} And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ {8} Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.”

Jesus’ message to everyone was to seek first the kingdom of God. We have some examples of people seeking the kingdom of God. When Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, he was seeking the kingdom of God. He was privately seeking, as he did not want to be seen or noticed by others. The important thing to gather was that he was seeking the kingdom of God. Jesus told him that he had to be born again to see the kingdom of God. Jesus was giving him the gospel message of the kingdom of God.

(Jn 3:1–3) “Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; {2} this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” {3} Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Another example of another man who was seeking was Zaccheus. As Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through, Zaccheus, a rich tax collector, was trying to see (zeteo) who Jesus was. The same Greek word, zeteo, is used. Zaccheus was seeking to see and learn more about this man named Jesus. Zaccheus climbed a sycamore tree because he was seeking to see who Jesus was.

Nothing caught Jesus by surprise, and when Jesus went by, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” God was seeking out Zaccheus. Jesus knew that Zaccheus was in the tree, and was seeking. Jesus told him to come down and that He was going to stay at his house. Zaccheus hurried, came down, and received Him gladly. Later, at Zaccheus’ house, Zaccheus repented, saying, “Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” Jesus responded, saying, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

(Lk 19:1–10) “He entered Jericho and was passing through. {2} And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. {3} Zaccheus was trying to see (zeteo) who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. {4} So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. {5} When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” {6} And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly.... {8} Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” {9} And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. {10} “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

3. Ongoing Seeking of the kingdom of God

When we consider seeking first the kingdom of God, we begin with the gospel of the kingdom. That is the initial message, but the message about the kingdom of God is far more than the plan of salvation. There is an ongoing seeking of the kingdom of God. Believers must also seek first the kingdom of God. When I got onto the PGA Tour, I had to set new goals. There was much more to learn. When we enter the kingdom of heaven, we discover there is so much more to learn about the kingdom of God.

In Acts 20, Paul was in Miletus, and he met with the elders from Ephesus. Among other things, he commended them “to God and to the word of His grace.” Paul gave two ways for them and for us to continue seeking the kingdom of God, through our time with God, and in the word of His grace. I like that Paul separated our time with God and our time in His word of grace. Our time with God includes our prayers and our worship. Our time with the Father and in His word builds us up, and gives us our inheritance. Our inheritance is in the kingdom of God; it is not here on earth. We must continue seeking the kingdom of God after we come to Christ.

(Ac 20:32) “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

In Acts 13, the leaders in Antioch were ministering to the Lord and fasting. I believe their ministering to the Lord included praise, thanksgiving, and prayers. They were also fasting, and this is still another way that we can seek the Lord.

(Ac 13:2) “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

When Jesus was asked by His disciples to teach them how to pray, He gave them the Lord’s Prayer, which is really an outline for prayer with different areas that we should be praying. After

addressing and hallowing the name of our heavenly Father, the first thing He said to pray was “Your kingdom come.” We are to seek first the kingdom of God, and the top priority in our prayers should be for the kingdom of God to come, and for His will to be done in our lives.

(Lk 11:1–2) “It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” {2} And He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.’”

From a pastoral standpoint, we are to speak the whole counsel of God and speak about the kingdom of God. Not everything that Jesus taught was about entering the kingdom of God. We saw last week lots of different characteristics of the kingdom of God. It is a transforming kingdom. It is a growing kingdom. It is a holy kingdom. It is a powerful kingdom. It is a heavenly kingdom, and flesh and blood will not inherit it. There is righteousness, peace, and joy in the kingdom of God. I gave about thirteen characteristics of the kingdom of God, and most of these came from things that Jesus taught. He taught much more than just the gospel of the kingdom. As pastors, we must teach more on the kingdom of God so that people can continue learning about the kingdom of God.

When Paul was in Ephesus, he spoke boldly for three months about the kingdom of God. I do not believe he just preached the gospel message for three months. Then, when some became hardened and disobedient, Paul began reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus, and he did this for two years. All who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord. They heard more than the plan of salvation; they heard the whole counsel of the word of God, but initially they heard the gospel of the kingdom.

(Ac 19:8–10) “And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God. {9} But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. {10} This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

We know from Paul’s three weeks in Thessalonica that Paul shared the gospel of the kingdom, and many responded. He taught leadership principles and set leaders in place before leaving. He taught them work principles. He taught them about spiritual gifts. He also taught them about the Day of the Lord. Everywhere Paul went he taught the kingdom of God. It started with the gospel of the kingdom, but he went on to deeper things.

(2 Th 2:5) “Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?” (speaking about the day of the Lord)

(2 Th 3:10) “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

In Acts 20, Paul was meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus. It would be the last time that he would see them, and he said, “and now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.” While Paul was in Ephesus, he had preached the kingdom of God. We know that he preached and taught much more than the gospel of the kingdom. In verse twenty, he said that he had not shrunk back from declaring to them

anything that was profitable. In verse twenty-seven, He said, “I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Paul shared the gospel of the kingdom, but he went on to teach the deeper things of the kingdom of God. He taught the whole counsel of God.

(Ac 20:20-27) “how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house.... {25} And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.... {27} For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.”

In Acts 28, after Paul arrived in Rome, he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning Jesus. The gospel of the kingdom of God is crucial, but there is much more to preaching about the kingdom than just the initial gospel message.

(Ac 28:30–31) “And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, {31} preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”

4. The Ultimate Seeker

Jesus taught that we are to seek first the kingdom of God. I want to take a few minutes to talk about the ultimate seeker, and that is God. Many times, we think that we are to seek first the kingdom of God, and it is on us. We do have a responsibility to seek and to search and find the kingdom of God, but God is not passively watching; He is actively seeking us.

In John 3:16, God sent His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. In Luke 4:43, Jesus said that He must preach the kingdom of God, “for I was sent for this purpose.” God so loved the world that He sent Jesus here to preach the kingdom of God, so that whoever would believe in Jesus would have eternal life. God was seeking to save whoever would believe.

(Jn 3:16) “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

(Lk 4:43) “But He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.”

When Jesus was at Zaccheus’ house, He said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” That is the same Greek word, zeteo, that Jesus used to exhort people to seek first the kingdom of God. We are to seek first the kingdom of God, and God is seeking to save those who are lost.

(Lk 19:10) “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

In the parable of the fine pearls in Matthew 13, Jesus said, “the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” When I first read that many years ago, I thought that I had found a pearl of great value, and I had given my life to Christ and bought the pearl. Years later, I discovered that I had it wrong. Jesus was talking about Himself. He was like the merchant that was seeking (zeteo) fine pearls. Jesus humbled Himself, taking the form of man, and left His place with the Father,

and sold all that He had, to come buy the pearl of great value. We are the pearl of great value that Jesus gave His life for. Jesus sought us out, found us, and sold everything to buy us.

(Mt 13:45–46) “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, {46} and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Truthfully, in my own life, I was not seeking God. I had some unfortunate experiences with a pastor growing up that turned me away from God and the church. I was not looking for God, but God sought me out. He sent a man named Don to my dormitory to share the gospel message with me. I was too hard to receive the message initially, but over time, God softened my heart. God found me because He was searching for those that were lost, and I was lost. While we have a responsibility to seek first the kingdom of God, we should never lose sight that God is searching for the lost, and for those who will worship Him in spirit and truth.

Earlier in Matthew 13, Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” Again, God is the One who was searching for the treasure hidden in the field, that is you and I, and Jesus, full of joy, sold all that He had to buy the field. Jesus laid down His life, paid for our sins, so that He could buy the field. We are the treasure that Jesus wanted, and it was Him that was seeking that treasure.

(Mt 13:44) “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

God is seeking the lost, and He is also seeking for those who will be true worshipers. In John 4 we have Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well, He told her, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks (zeteo) to be His worshipers. It is the same Greek word, zeteo, that Jesus exhorts us to do. God is seeking the lost, and He is seeking for those who will be true worshipers. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” God is searching out for people who will worship Him. Do you worship Him in spirit and truth? That is who God is searching out to find to be His worshipers.

(Jn 4:23–24) “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. {24} “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Conclusion and Applications

God wants us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Our seeking should be a priority, the first priority in our lives. Our seeking should be with determination, and with all our heart.

We have all sinned and were separated from God, and the kingdom of God. The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, so we were excluded. We need to hear the gospel of the kingdom, believe, and confess Jesus as our Lord. When we do that, we are rescued from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of Jesus.

(Col 1:13) “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,”

After entering the kingdom of God, we are to continue seeking first the kingdom of God. It does not stop at salvation. Our seeking is an ongoing and continual pursuit. We are to seek the kingdom of God by praying for it to come in our lives. We are to seek the kingdom of God by spending time with our heavenly Father in worship and prayer. We are to seek God by spending time in His word. We are to seek God by being part of a church that preaches the kingdom of God.

God has not asked us to do something that He is not doing. He has been seeking and pursuing us all along. He sent Jesus to seek and to save that which was lost. God is seeking out those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. We are like a treasure hidden in the field, or a great pearl with much value. Jesus was willing to lay down everything, including His life, to buy that field and that pearl. God was and is seeking us, and He wants us to seek Him also.

This morning, if you have never received Christ into your life, I encourage you to receive Him. He is the King of the kingdom of God, and your journey with Christ begins by coming into a relationship with Him. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, that He died for our sins, and was raised from the dead, then you can confess Him as Lord of your life. When you do that, you will be born again, and will be transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God. If you believe and want to confess Him as Lord this morning, pray with me.

Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You came to seek and to save that which is lost. I believe You died on the cross, took our punishment for being sinners, and were resurrected from the dead on the third day. I ask You to come into my life and to forgive me of my sins. I confess You as Lord and Master of my life today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Father God, there is so much to learn about the kingdom of God. Thank You for seeking and pursuing us. Thank You for sending Jesus to seek and to save that which was lost, which included all of us. This morning, we want to commit ourselves to seeking first Your kingdom and Your righteousness. Help us to prioritize our time with You, and our time in Your word. Help us to seek You with all of our hearts. As we do that, we remind You that You promised we will find You. We want to continually be finding You this year. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Seek First His Kingdom

Introduction (Lk 6:17–18, Mt 5:1, 7:28-29, 6:33)

- 1. What does it mean to seek?** (Lk 22:1-2, Mk 14:10-11, Lk 15:8-10, Dt 4:29, Je 29:13)
- 2. Initial Seeking of the kingdom of God** (Mk 1:14–15, Mt 4:23, 24:14, Mk 1:4–5, Ro 3:9-10, 1 Co 6:9–11, Eph 5:3–5, Mt 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50, Lk 18:9-14, 9:23–25, Mt 10:5-8, Jn 3:1–3, Lk 19:1-10)
- 3. Ongoing Seeking of the kingdom of God** (Ac 20:32, 13:2, Lk 11:1-2, Ac 19:8–10, 2 Th 2:5, 3:10, Ac 20:20-27, 28:30-31)
- 4. The Ultimate Seeker** (Jn 3:16, Lk 4:43, 19:10, Mt 13:44–46, Jn 4:23–24)

Conclusion and Applications (Col 1:13)