

Message Eight

Seeking First the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness

Hymns:

Scripture Reading: Matt. 5:20; Psa. 89:14; Phil. 3:9; 2 Cor. 3:8-9; 5:21; 2 Tim. 4:8a

- Matt. 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.
- Psa. 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; / Lovingkindness and truth go before Your face.
- Phil. 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
- 2 Cor. 3:8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?
- 2 Cor. 3:9 For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.
- 2 Cor. 5:21 Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
- 2 Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

I. The Father's kingdom is the reality of the kingdom of the heavens today, the reality of the church life today, and will be the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens in the coming age—Matt. 5:3; 13:43:

- A. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth...But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven"—6:19a, 20a
1. The basic attitude of every believer should be to not love money—Heb. 13:5; 1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:2.
 2. If we store up for ourselves treasures on the earth, we will always be serving mammon and not God—Matt 6:19a, 24.
 3. The governing principle is that to store up treasures on the earth is against God's economy and expresses a kind of unbelief in His mercy and care—vv. 32b-33,
- B. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"—v. 21.
1. Our heart always follows its treasure.
 2. No matter what we may say, our heart will always be where our treasure is.
- C. "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon"—v. 24.

1. Our heart must be single in order to serve God; we cannot serve God and mammon (riches) at the same time—Luke 16:13.
 2. The unrighteousness of mammon is related to its nature (vv. 9, 11); as something invented by Satan, the nature of mammon before God is completely incompatible with every aspect of God, so in God's eyes its nature is unrighteous.
 3. The controversy of the universe is whether man will worship God or mammon—Matt. 4:9-10; 6:24.
 4. Deliverance from mammon is the first and foremost condition for one to serve God—vv. 21, 24; Luke 16:13, Heb. 13:5.
- D. "Do not be anxious for your life...For all these things the Gentiles are anxiously seeking...Do not be anxious for tomorrow"—Matt. 6:25a, 32a, 34a:
1. Our human life is a life of anxiety and is constituted with anxiety—v. 32a.
 2. There is no anxiety in the divine life and the divine nature; God's life is a life of enjoyment, rest, comfort, and satisfaction—Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:7.
 3. As we are fulfilling our human duty to work to sustain our living, we should not do anything for the sake of our anxiety, because we have a divine life that knows no anxiety—Luke 12:25.
 4. The kingdom people should never live in tomorrow but always in today—Matt. 6:34.
 5. Concerning our living, we have the heavenly Father Himself to take care of us; as He takes care of our material needs, He dispenses His element into us, and we experience the divine dispensing through the Father's care for our physical necessities—vv. 32-33; John 16:27a; Eph. 1:3.

II. The Father's righteousness is the righteousness expressed by the keeping of the new law of the kingdom (Matt. 5:20); this righteousness is Christ, who is lived out by the kingdom people:

- A. According to the New Testament, righteousness has four main aspects:
1. Righteousness is being right with persons, things, and matters according to God's righteous and strict requirements—Matt. 5:20.
 2. Righteousness is the outward expression of the Christ who lives in us as the life-giving Spirit—2 Cor. 3:9, 18; 1 Cor. 15:45b:
 - a. The Spirit is the essence of God living, moving, and acting within us, and righteousness is the essence of God manifested outwardly as God's image to express Him—Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10.
 - b. The divine essence that has been inscribed into us will have a particular expression, and this expression is righteousness—2 Cor. 3:3, 9; Matt. 5:20.
 3. Righteousness is a matter of God's kingdom—6:33:
 - a. God's throne is established with righteousness as the foundation—Psa. 89:14; 97:2.
 - b. Righteousness issues from God for His administration and thus is related to God's rule and government—Isa. 32:1.
 - c. Righteousness first issues in the image of God and then establishes the kingdom of

God—Rom. 8:4, 29; 14:17.

4. Righteousness is a matter of being right with God in our being—1 Cor. 15:34, 2 Cor. 5:21:
 - a. To be right with God in our being is to have an inner being that is transparent and crystal clear—an inner being in the mind and will of God—Rev. 21:11, 18b, 21b; 22:1.
 - b. To be righteous in this way is to become the righteousness of God in Christ—2 Cor. 5:21.
- B. There are two aspects of Christ being righteousness to the believers:
 1. Christ is the believers' righteousness for them to be justified before God objectively at the time of their repenting unto God and believing into Christ—Rom. 3:24-26; Acts 13:39; Gal. 3:24b, 27.
 2. Christ is the believers' righteousness lived out of them as the manifestation of God, who is the righteousness in Christ given to the believers for them to be justified by God subjectively—Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 2:24a; James 2:24; Matt. 5:20; Rev. 19:8.
 3. These two aspects are typified by the best robe and the fattened calf in Luke 15:22-23:
 - a. The best robe typifies Christ as God's righteousness given to the believers to cover them outwardly as their objective righteousness before God.
 - b. The fattened calf typifies Christ as God's righteousness given to the believers as their life supply for them to live out God in Christ as their subjective righteousness
- C. "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day"—2 Tim. 4:8a.
 1. The crown, a symbol of glory, is given as a prize, in addition to the Lord's salvation, to the triumphant runner of the race—1 Cor. 9:25.
 2. In contrast to salvation, which is of grace and by faith (Eph. 2:5, 8-9), this prize is not of grace nor by faith, but is of righteousness through works (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).
 3. The believers will be recompensed with such a reward, not according to the Lord's grace but according to His righteousness, hence, it is the crown of righteousness—2 Tim. 4:8a.