

- **INTRODUCTION: 5 Minutes**
- **Hints at good things to come:** Turn with me to Matthew chapter 6. PAUSE The Title of today's message is "Seeking First." PAUSE AS THEY FIND THE PASSAGE. There is a fascinating moment of clarity that some Christians experience when they learn to trust God, and to take Him at face value. When they see fully His great and gracious providence, His blessings and realize that He has freed them to completely obey Him; well when that happens they are transported to a new quality of life. When we actually believe God's word, oh how the mundane stress that afflicts so many people simply melts away. When we trust Him and submit entirely to Him no matter where He leads, we become able to fully enjoy Him. And that happiness, that joy is a delight reserved for His faithful ones who believe His Word.
- **Describing the Problem of Wrong Priorities:** I have you in [Matthew 6](#) because, Jesus desires that our priorities, our focus be aligned with God's and not where everyone else focuses. He has led up to verse 31 describing the angst and turmoil that humanity experiences with regard to our physical needs but then He says something astonishing in **verse 31** *"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'* **32** *"For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*
- **Our Heavenly Father Knows What We Need:** Our Heavenly Father knows what we need and He will provide, perfectly! So, then we can be, we as Christians actually are, set free from the mundane, the common strain that the rest of the world labors under. We don't need to fret over our need of food or shelter or clothing - that is what godless people do. Our God, knows what we need. He made us! Does He not know what we need each day? He will make sure that *all* of our *needs* are taken care of so we can focus on the purpose for which He made us. PAUSE Let's read on as Christ declares what our priorities ought to be - He tells us the main point of the message, verse 33.
- **MAINPOINT: 2 Minutes**
- **MP1 33** *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
- **Contrasting the Main Point with Experience:** We worry about so many things, but only one thing is necessary. Some Christians choose the good part and they develop such a joy and peace, such a passionate love for Christ and enjoy blessing after blessing in their relationship with Christ. While some demand control over minutiae, some fret, develop ulcers, migraines, they complain, strain and never really come to the understanding that God provided for them even when they were babies and He will provide when they are adults.

Only one thing is necessary, only one thing is the good part. Christ says, Our Savior says, the main point found in [Matthew 6.33](#). Write the reference down because this is key. This is the message in a nutshell. **MP 2nd TIME Matthew 6:33** *““But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* PAUSE

- **ROADMAP: 1 Minute**

- Today, we will be exploring the first chapter of Haggai, which is set right after the Babylonian exile. This book starkly illustrates the consequences of neglecting Jesus' directive in [Matthew 6:33](#) to 'seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.' After we have explored Haggai then we will contrast Haggai's example with the blessings of obedience as shown in Genesis. So we started with Christ's exhortation to prioritize, we are going to a negative example to see what happens when people don't do that and then in Genesis we will see the blessings of obedience, that actually have impacted all our lives even today. The message ultimately has the goal of drawing a comprehensive picture of the importance of prioritizing God's will in our lives. Let's open in prayer

- **PRAYER: 1 Minute**

- Abba Father, we adore You because You are our Great Provider. You have given us life, You have provided eternal life and we are astonished at Your graciousness toward us. Even so Father, we need to confess that we have not acknowledged You as the Giver of every good and perfect gift - we have struggled in our own strength to provide for ourselves, we know that apart from Christ we can do nothing so ask You for Your forgiveness. We do thank You Father that You will answer all our requests because we come in Christ's name - thank You for receiving us through Him. We beg You that Your Holy Spirit might reveal truth to us today, may we be not merely hearers who delude themselves but effective doers of Your Word. It is in the name of Christ we come, amen.

- **CONTEXT 1 Minute**

- **Historical Context:** Please turn if you would to Haggai chapter 1 and while you are turning there I will give us the context, incidentally it is identical to last week. The exact same time period, the exact same situation. But briefly for those that were not here, Jewish exiles have returned to Jerusalem in Judea in 537BC and rebuilt the altar on the Temple mount. But then something strange happened, the people became distracted, distracted by fear mainly. Fear of the enemies that were around them. Fear of not having enough... and they didn't build the temple, for 17 years they have abandoned the work. Fear led them to disobey, fear of man caused them to become unfaithful, which coincidentally is the same fear that drives us to anxiety and worry about what is really reserved for God to take care of. The same fears they experienced is the same fear that we experience, that drives our worries, our anxieties... Our focus, like theirs is to be on doing what God has commanded and He will supply for all the needs.

- **SERMON 1 minute**
- I have broken this text into three points which are up on the board for you to see and add to your bulletins along with your other notes and cross references. Verses 1-6 are our first point which I have titled "Experiencing the Ancient Curse." The Jews are experiencing curses that God had foretold them about, because they had abandoned the work He had given them to do.
- **I. Experiencing the Ancient Curse (v1-6) 5 Minutes**
- [Haggai 1](#) | *1 In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, (August 29, 520BC) the word of Yahweh came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest (We looked at him the last couple of weeks), saying, 2 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'This people says, "The time has not come, even the time for the house of Yahweh to be rebuilt.'"" 3 Then the word of Yahweh came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses while this house lies waste?" (Is it time to prioritize your kingdom, is it time to establish your name, is it time to seek out luxury? What is the answer? No! It has been 17 years! It is time to do what God has called you to do, it is time to use what God has supplied. He goes on in verse 5) 5 So now, thus says Yahweh of hosts, "Set your heart to consider your ways! 6 "You have sown much, but bring in little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a bag with holes."*
- God points them to their condition, a condition of being unsatisfied, not having enough. The reason why is because they have not prioritized God in their life. They are experiencing an ancient curse. You don't have to turn there but just briefly in [Deuteronomy 28](#), 1000 years previously Moses had outlined the "Blessings of obedience and the curses for disobedience." If they obeyed what God had commanded they would enjoy every good blessing, but if they denied Him they would suffer, boy would they suffer - there are 56 verses of curses listed in [Deuteronomy 28](#) (v2-4 relate to [Dt 28.38-40](#) and v5-6 relate to [Dt 28.15-19](#)) some of which directly apply to the situation that they find themselves in. They are Experiencing the Ancient Curse)
- Truly it is a sad state of affairs that these people find themselves, no doubt 17 years before as they packed up and left Babylon they recalled hearing stories of "The Promised Land" a land "Flowing with milk and honey" but when they arrived they had enemies outside and fears within and instead of doing what God had commanded they went about trying to take care of their own needs.
- **Summary: 1 Minute**

- Briefly, summarized, the returned exiles had focused on their own priorities and had experienced the ancient curses of God. God had called them to build Him a house and they had rejected Him and built their own. PAUSE
- **Transition: 1 Minute**
- Now in verses 7-11 we will take a look at the Gods road map to restoration, God is not going to leave them in their condition but is going to show them how to become restored - they are going to have to seek Him first.
- **II. The Road Map to Restoration (v7-11) 7 Min**
- *7 Thus says Yahweh of hosts, “Set your heart to consider your ways! 8 “Go up to the mountains and bring wood and rebuild the house of God, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,” says Yahweh. (The Sovereign God of the Universe declares, “think about it!!!” Now, go expend effort and not a little bit of effort but a lot, go up to the mountains and gather resources and rebuild the house of God so that He can be pleased, so that He can be glorified. He says in verse 9) 9 “You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; and you bring it home, and I blow it away. Why?” declares Yahweh of hosts, “Because of My house which lies waste, while each of you runs to his own house. 10 “Therefore, because of you the sky has restrained its dew and the earth has restrained its produce.([DT 28.22-24](#)) 11 “And I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands.” (Again, the ancient curses are mentioned from [Deuteronomy 28](#) and God says that He is the cause of the famine that they are experiencing.)*
- I have heard multiple times over the last few months from not a few people here and around town how confused they are, how empty they feel, how dissatisfied they are - these are Christians mind you. I can hear the complaining from different quarters, “this isn’t what I wanted, this isn’t what I desire, this isn’t good.” I see their striving to get ahead, to build wealth... and I hear the complaints about work, about family. I hear the grumbling, murmuring and with our mouths we have revealed our heart... it has become apparent to me in light of this text that perhaps we have gotten our eyes off the ball.
- Let me ask, in what way does the Sovereign God of all of the Universe have our absolute and unswerving worship with every beat of our heart? [Matthew 6:33](#) ““But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Is our daily delight advancing His kingdom, growing in His holiness, are we earnestly reading His Word to see what He has for us to do, is our life being poured out as a drink offering? [Romans 12:1-2](#) “Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, holy, and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

Would we experience peace in our minds? We must seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Would we have sufficient for every need? We must seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and put down our pursuit of wealth, our own glory, our own legacy.
PAUSE

- **Summary: 1 Minute**

- So to summarize our second point, God has provided a road map to restoration. In it He calls the people to consider what they have done and are prioritizing and change their route. He calls them to do what is hard, not what is easy, He calls them to go to the mountains and expend effort to build His Temple so that He might be glorified so that He might be pleased. This is good, this is a road map to restoration.

- **Transition: 1 Minute**

- Now in verse 12-15 Yahweh does not simply leave it up to the people but He stirs up their hearts to change, He changes their hearts to desire to obey and He does this through the very Word of God. Verses 12-15 are our third and final point “Listen and Fear Yahweh”

- **III. Listen and Fear Yahweh (v12-15) 3 Minutes**

- *12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, listened to the voice of Yahweh their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Yahweh their God had sent him. And the people feared Yahweh. (God came in clear on all channels and He stirred them up to respond - incidentally, that is what my prayer has been this week in preparation for delivering this message. In verse 13 the narrative continues) 13 Then Haggai, the messenger of Yahweh, spoke by the commissioned message of Yahweh to the people saying, “‘I am with you,’ declares Yahweh.” 14 So Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work on the house of Yahweh of hosts, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king. (After about 3 weeks the people responded to the word of Yahweh. It took them three weeks to listen and fear Yahweh but when they did Yahweh stirred them up to action. Coincidentally, in about 3 weeks we will roll the year over and it will be time for new priorities in 2024. It will be time to be freed from the mundane, freed from the tired rat race to build our own kingdom. It is time to do the main point [Matthew 6:33](#) “‘But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.’”*

- **Application: 3 Minutes**

- Let’s talk application now... What is to be our priority? We might say, well ‘mark, I got to work to eat, to clothe my family, to pay for my home! What should our priority of these

things be in relation to furthering the kingdom of God. Well, Christ tells us something that might come as a surprise to some of us...

- Christ says doing God's will is more important than eating. [John 4:34](#). In His evangelism to the Samaritan woman, when the Disciples tried to get Christ to eat He said [John 4:34](#) *"Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work."* Let's hear that again... [John 4:34](#) *"Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work."* More important than eating, more satisfying than eating is to simply do God's will. We say, "I don't know God's will..." Yes we do! God has revealed it in His word. We are to read, heed and obey it! And we aren't going to develop it but there are eternal and lasting rewards for doing the work of God. Rewards that don't go to zero like our IRA's and 401K's. Rewards that last.
- And here is a negative example, you have likely heard the parable of the rich fool in [Luke 12](#). Right before Christ says "Seek first the kingdom" in another passage He explains that there was a rich fool who was busy building his kingdom, busy storing up earthly treasures toward himself and not toward God - he was set to lose everything... He would not own anything that he had busied himself to build. He had wanted to build bigger barns to store his wealth and it was all for naught because in his preparation he had neglected his own souls needs. The Lord said in [Luke 12:20](#) *"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you prepared?'"* What is going to happen to all that earthy wealth we are storing up? What is going to be the sum total of our lives lived out. Will they have lasting eternal value or not? PAUSE
- **Example: 2 Minutes**
- Can I give you two examples of how we can seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Here are two concrete examples of what it means to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.
- Firstly, When life gets busy the Lord should not be the first element to be cut - when work, or school obligations or sports events come up fellowship with the saints and worship of God should not be the first thing to go. When we sleep in or we are behind, reading God's word and letting His righteousness resonate with us and taking time to pray ought not to be what we drop to make it on time. Jesus said that accomplishing the Kingdom of God is more important even then eating.
- Secondly, seeking His righteousness involves intentionally growing in sanctification and holiness in our own life. It means sacrificially laying down those things that defile. Our home video libraries are a perfect example of something that needs a good purging. Seeking first His righteousness involves putting aside the defilement of the world and instead growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [1 Timothy 6:11](#) *"But you, O*

man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, gentleness.”

- **TRANSITION: 2 Minutes**

- Is the point clear what we are to do? Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness... Ok, let me take a moment and just say as clear as I can, that obedience in no way makes it so that God owes us salvation... That is not how it works, salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone according to Scripture alone. The intent of this message is to spur us on in our obedience.
- Ok, let me add some incentive. Sometimes a change of mind is difficult. Sometimes the work is overwhelming - overwhelming like going to the mountains to gather wood to build a temple... We need to know that Yahweh will absolutely provide and to that end, I hope we know that He cares about our eternity, even dying to secure it, will He not supply our daily needs.
- But let's turn to the incentive. The incentive is that eternal blessings that flow out of faith based obedience. Turn with me to [Genesis 22](#) in conclusion.

- **CONCLUSION: 9 Minutes**

- What I want us to take away from this text is that there are such sweet blessings in store, blessings that we cannot even consider when we obey the Lord. When Abraham took his son Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him could he know that you and I who are indeed in Christ would be beneficiaries of his obedience? Oh there is much to be said for obedience and the rewards and blessings that follow.
- [Genesis 22:1-18](#) | *1 Now it happened after these things, that God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and go forth to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there; and we will worship, and we will return to you."*
- *6 Then Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and put it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7 Then Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. (Don't miss what Abraham said, God will provide for*

Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, wait a second is he offering a lamb or his son? Yes, [Hebrews 11.17-19](#) says that He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead and he anticipated offering Isaac and then being supplied with a sacrifice that God would find pleasing verse 9)

- *9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood and bound his son Isaac and put him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 12 And He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the boy, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me.” 13 Then Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there was a ram after it had been caught in the thicket by its horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.*
- Did we catch what happened in this narrative... its the same thing that God did in Haggai, Abraham heard the word of Yahweh and because of his faith he obeyed Yahweh. It is the same thing that happened in Haggai God spoke and in the fear of Yahweh the exiles obeyed and built His temple. Its the same thing that Jesus was communicating in His sermon on the mount when He told us to prioritize God’s kingdom over our own. Prioritize growing in holiness and God will provide what is needed. That is what happened in all three portions of Scripture!!! These folks were freed from the mundane because they sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything that was necessary was provided. What a joy, lets finish up in [Genesis 22.14ff](#)
- *14 And Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh Will Provide, as it is said this day, “In the mount of Yahweh it will be provided.” 15 Then the angel of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares Yahweh, because you have done this thing and have not spared your son, your only one, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. 18 “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have listened to My voice.”*
- We who are Christians are beneficiaries of Abraham’s obedience, the Seed has come because Abraham listened to the voice of Yahweh. May it be that we will do the same and experience blessing now and the enjoyment of the Blessor