

Matthew 6:25-34 (NKJV)

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"

28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?"

31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

Seek first the kingdom of God.

What does that look like? How is it done? Where does it start? I am going to depart from the text this morning and we will hop around scripture looking at this. I was telling Carla recently that the more I am studying the sermon on the mount, the more I see the principles everywhere in scripture. It may be worded differently. It may be looking from a different perspective. But it is essentially saying the same thing.

Let's start here with an initial decision a person makes about the Kingdom of God. This is from Jesus later in Matthew.

Matthew 13:44-46 (NKJV)

44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,

46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

This passage describes a weird person. He sees the same field as everyone else, but its value captures his attention. And he sees this value and pursues this value with all he has. This revelation of the kingdom is not **added** to his current life. It **replaces** it. It is **worth** everything and he is willing **to spend** everything for it.

Note that these illustrations don't have characters who are feeling **victimized**. These are not people who are saying, this is pretty miserable but I guess I need to do it. Look at the mentality. This is **kingdom** mentality. It says, **look at what I found**. I am the most blessed person alive. I had this glorious opportunity for profit laid in my lap. I give **this** (which does not have great value) to get **that** (which has eternal value). And that which I **get** is always vastly superior to what I **give**.

You don't see a picture of the emphasis of the **cost**. In fact the picture is one of the emphasis of the **payoff**. What we **get** is worth infinitely more than what we **give up**.

Ok. Now what else? What else do we see that is so valuable? What else is lofted up as **great treasure, great profit, great pleasure?**

Psalm 19:7-11 (NKJV)

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.

Look at the mentality again. God's word, God's revelation is **better than gold**-the most valuable **commodity**, or **honey**, the sweetest **food**. Isn't that what Jesus has been talking about? Mammon and food? Isn't He saying that we cannot serve Christ and mammon. We cannot seek first the Kingdom and food?

And what is the evaluation? Poor me. **I need to give up some stuff?** No. It is always the stuff of God is **better**. The stuff of God holds **GREAT REWARD**. Not just **ample** reward. Not just **adequate** payoff.

It is **great** reward, far exceeding the cost. That is always the mindset of faith that is based on the truth.

Now look at this. What is it that is more valuable than Gold or sweeter than honey? It is **God's revelation**. It is what the good eye sees. God's word which directs us.

OK

So we are humans who wake up to days full of drudgery and responsibility. Diapers don't change themselves. Dishes don't wash themselves. Bank accounts do not replenish themselves. We are creatures of down to earth sweat and labor. The curse touches us every moment.

So what about this **other kingdom seeking** we are to do? What is it going to look like for real? Look at the next verse in Psalms 19. David describes to us what the process looks like.

12 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.

Yes, this is the reality. We are a mess. We want to be better than we are. But at the end of the day we cannot even see who we are clearly.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 (NKJV)

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

David understood what Jeremiah said. David understood that even David was not the best judge of his own behavior, of his own motives. He had problems that he was not even aware of. Maybe others could see them. But he could not. And he probably would not have believed it if anyone other than God revealed it to him.

Look at what David said a few chapters earlier.

Psalms 15:1-2 (NKJV)

1 LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart;

We want to know how to seek this Kingdom. And Jesus keeps talking about the heart. Then we move on to David and he too is talking about the heart. Because the heart and mind is where all the spiritual work is being done. And look what David says here. The person who will live in the presence of God, in

God's kingdom, has some traits that are **visible**. But there is much that is **invisible**. I love this phrase. **He who speaks the truth in his heart**. No one can **make** us do that. You could argue with me until you are blue in the face. You can lay out all the evidence. You can lay out a convincing argument to show me my guilt. But I can always come up with an alternative reality that I prefer. You cannot **make me** believe truth. And I cannot **make you** believe truth.

Kingdom seekers have this unusual trait. They are willing to **go where the truth goes**, even when it hurts them to the bone. Even when it makes them look far worse than they prefer looking. These people **love truth**.

In the church, we trust that God is doing this work. We have all dealt with people who we believe are **not doing business** with the truth of their own lives. It is frustrating because there is nothing we can do. But ultimately it is not our problem. It is God's.

But a believer has this remarkable trait. The truth matters **more** than the **opinions of others**. The truth matters **more** than the **blame it might bring** our way. The truth matters **more** than the **negative consequences** it might bring upon us.

The people who are seeking first the Kingdom are doing this supernatural business of **internal truth telling**.

And look at where it leads. In the next Psalm we read this:

Psalm 16:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.

² O my soul, you have said to the LORD, "You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You."

³ As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."

Look at where heart truth telling goes.

It leads to a **prayerful dependence** upon the **provision of God**. My goodness does not exist on its own. In fact such a thing does not exist. My goodness is a direct result of **YOU** Lord. Does that not sound exactly like what we have been learning about the remedy for worry?

Lord, I cannot do this thing without you. I need **YOU** in order to live this life properly. I need you for everything. So instead of trusting **me**, I trust **you**. I know my heart is slippery. I have seen what my heart is like. So I call out **to you**.

And then when I see anything good, I know what happened.

Don't we all gravitate to taking credit for our virtues?

"I worked hard at being loving toward others.

I worked hard at not committing certain sins.

I worked hard at doing certain ministries.

I made some very good life decisions of which I am proud.

This good thing happened to me because of the virtue of my decisions.”

Do you see what I mean?

That is not really the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is when we tell truth in our heart. And this is what we discover. This is the conclusion to the matter.

O my soul, you have said to the LORD, "You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You."

Anything that is goodness in my life, that goodness did not arise from my wisdom or my discipline. It was not solely a result of **my resolve to not do** a bad thing or **only do** a good thing. No My goodness has the fingerprints of Jesus all over it. Even the wise choices we make are a result of God’s work in our lives. Jesus deserves **all the credit** for the **spiritual accomplishments** in our lives. The minute we start taking the credit we are headed for a fall. Now lets go back to Psalm 19. We were learning how God’s word is that stuff that is better than the world’s stuff. God’s word is that which has value greater than that which it demands we surrender. God’s word is part of the Kingdom that we should seek first. But look where it goes.

Psalm 19:12-14 (NKJV)

¹³ Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not have dominion over me.

David had just said this:

¹² Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

David admitted that he does not even fully know himself. He is saying even if I think I am perfectly clean. Even if I think my motives are perfect.

Now we see this:

Psalm 19:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

¹³ Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

We see in Psalms 19 the **beauty** and **value** of God's word. We see that if we are going to **seek first the Kingdom of God**, it will be done by loving and valuing and obeying God's word. When we seek the Kingdom First, We value God's word highest. How we treat God's word reveals what is first in our hearts.

But look what comes right after David's revelation of the beauty and value of God's word. It is the personal struggle we face between what **is true** and what **is us**. David cannot speak of the value of God's word without talking about His failure to live up to it.

I think we should find that comforting. Aren't we all in the same boat? While we may heartily agree in our heart of hearts that **God's word and will truly are so wonderful**, don't we all feel like adding a disclaimer. I love God's law but I have a **funny way of showing it**. I have a **flawed** way of showing it. Sometimes I am **absolutely hypocritical** in my display of it.

So David talks about his struggle with his own sin.

And notice that he mentions 2 kinds of sin. Secret and presumptuous.

Don't we see the same thing in our lives? There are the sins we know are sins and the ones we don't. Secret sins and presumptuous sins. Ultimately there are two kinds of the sins we commit. There are **two enemies** to us treating God's law like the **treasure** it truly is, like the **delicacy** it truly is. There are **two enemies** to us **seeking first** the Kingdom of God.

There are **secret sins** and **presumptuous sins**.

A secret sin is one **done in ignorance**.

A presumptuous sin is one done **with our knowledge**.

Now let's look at the sins done in ignorance. We are often tricky. And all of us would probably **prefer** to think of any sins we commit as being **the ignorant kind**. We can say, I just did not know any better. If I had only known that information, I would not have committed that sin.

We all certainly have those kinds of sins all day. Sometimes our motive is secret to us. We might do something for a sinful motive, but for whatever reason we do not see it.

And additionally, maybe we simply do not have biblical knowledge about the thing we are doing. We might not know that it is something God forbids, that God hates.

But there is a third category we need to think about here. The third response is where we **claim** to be ignorant, but the proof says we are not. We are tricky that way. So it is good that we apply a test.

Think about this. If the primary reason you commit a sin is due to ignorance, the assumption is that you **know nothing about the sin** and that if you knew it was a sin **you would not do it**.

Now the easiest test comes when you **find out** that something you are doing truly is a sin. If ignorance was the primary problem, when you get the information that something is a sin **two things** will happen.

The first is that you will have a **memorable surprise**. Sometimes it will even be shock, when it hits you that you were doing something that displeased the God that you so wanted to please. And the bigger the sin, the more memorable the shock. You will not forget the moment you found out.

The second is that **you will stop** committing the sin. After all, if ignorance was the **primary problem**, then information will be the **complete solution**.

I think when we apply this test we find out that the shock of discovery of these supposed ignorant sins is often not as great as it should be. We may not be really **all that surprised** at all because we suspected this was not a good thing to begin with. And we may also find that the change in behavior is slower than it should be. The information alone was not the only thing missing. We may find our desire to obey being mixed with other motives.

Our hearts are tricky. I can remember half heartedly searching the Bible regarding certain topics because I really did not want to discover that the Bible prohibited the thing I wanted to do. Or sometimes we refuse to seek out information because we are pretty sure where it might go and we don't want to go there. As long as we can say **we don't know** we can claim **ignorance**, even though our suspicions were barking up the right tree the whole time. Is choosing **not to know** really ignorance. We are tricky.

The best example I can think of what I believe are truly **sins of ignorance** is found in the conversations Carla has had with college students about their casual use of God's name. Often the students are shocked to find out that God prohibits the vain use of His name. And they immediately begin to try to stop. They were not intentionally trying to sin. They truly were ignorant what they were doing was sinful. You could tell by their surprise.

We have that kind of ignorant sin all the time. Much of it is in our heart. We have wrong attitudes. We have wrong attentions. We have wrong thoughts. And as we become aware of them we are glad to replace them with truths. We just didn't know. They were secret to us. We go about telling the truth in our hearts like Ps 15 says.

Don't we wish all of our sins were **like that**, that all of our sins were **sins of ignorance**? That just a **little more information** and everything would

change. Even here David does not give much ink to the ignorant sins. Because they are not the predominant problem in our lives.

We do well to look at our lives and not give ourselves a free pass, accepting an excuse of ignorance.

How about those things we do that **prick our consciences**, even the least little bit? How about those things that we could easily **find out** if they are right or wrong, but we don't? How about those things that we cannot remember feeling shocked when we found out they were wrong. How about those things that even when we knew they were wrong, we kept doing them anyway?

Presumptuous sin can be tricky. We can pretend that **we are ignorant**, we can fool ourselves into thinking **they were unknown**, but our reactions give us away. Our **reactions** often tell more truth than our **renditions** do. It is hard to always have truth in our inmost places. But the clues are always present.

Ok so the easy sin came first. But David saves more ink for the real problem.
13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me.

So what is this presumptuous sin?

Let's look at Numbers.

We are given the warning about the **danger of presumptuous sin** and it is sandwiched between **two very clear examples** of it.

In Numbers 14 we read of the 12 spies coming back to report what they found in the land of Canaan. 2 of them focused on the **greatness** of that land that God was going to give them. 10 of them focused on the **obstacles** to obtaining that which God promised them.

2 saw things with a good eye. 10 saw it with a bad eye.

Then they came together and were ready to stone Joshua and Caleb for their leadership efforts, for their faith in God.

Then the Lord threatens to wipe all of them out and start over with Moses. But Moses argues with God appealing to **God's glory** and **reputation**. Then Moses rebukes the people. He conveys to them God's message that now, since they have been faithless, they will **not be permitted** to enter the promised land.

And what do the people do? Exactly what we would expect **children** to do.

Now that they are told they **CANNOT** do it, it becomes the only thing they **want to do**. **NOW** they are ready to go fight the giants. And they do. And they get sorely defeated.

Look at the wording in 14:44

Numbers 14:44-45 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ **But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop; nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp.**

⁴⁵ **Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.**

The word for **presumed** here in the Hebrew means **heedless**. They would not listen. That was the problem.

Then look just a little later in Numbers.

Numbers 15 is prescribing how the sacrifices are to be made.

Verse 22 says **Numbers 15:22 (NKJV)**

²² **'If you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the LORD has spoken to Moses--Numbers 15:24 (NKJV)**

²⁴ **then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation,**

Numbers 15:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ **'And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. Numbers 15:28 (NKJV)**

²⁸ **So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the LORD, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.**

Notice that the sacrifices are all for **unintentional** sins. There is no sacrifice for presumptuous sin, intentional sin.

Then look at the next thing to happen in Numbers 15.

In verse 32 a man was found gathering sticks for fuel on the Sabbath day.

Moses was not sure what God wanted done, so Moses asked and God **told**

Moses. This man needs to be stoned. This was the perfect example of

presumptuous sin. Everyone knew the rule. And it was their business to

make sure they knew **what day it was**. Now if you were **that guy**, what

would you think? Yeah. This is a sin. But really. How picky can God be? I

mean it is just a couple of sticks. How could anyone be killed for such a slight infraction?

Is that now how we excuse our sin? Don't we minimize it in our heads. We just expect God will forgive it and not discipline us for it. After all, it is just a little thing.

Presumptuous sin is simply sin we choose to do while knowing or suspecting that God does not want us to do it. We choose to not heed what we **know God says** or to **find out** what God says when **we suspect God has something to say**. Sometimes these sins are sins of commission, doing a wrong thing that

God says not to. Sometimes they are sins of omission, not doing a good thing we know we should do.

And think about it. Isn't it these sins that give us the most trouble?

Look again what David said.

13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me.

First look at that word dominion. That is very similar to the concept of **master** that Jesus referred to in His sermon. Don't let them **take me over**. These are the sins that are the most dangerous to us. Rarely is a person **dominated** by a sin they are **unaware** of. No, it is the ones we tend to be **most aware of** that are the **most dominating** to us. Who is addicted to an evil and does not know it? Such a thing may be possible, but it would be rare. We **give dominion** to that which we **choose to serve**, to that which we **present ourselves** as servants.

This is what wars against seeking first the Kingdom of God. This is our enemy and the enemy is us. It is our flesh. It is that which **gives us permission** to **commit presumptuous sin**. It is that which allows the fire of the darts of the devil to spread.

Now notice the other thing. What does David say about this? **Keep back your servant** from this presumptuous sin. Does that sound familiar. **Lead us not into temptation**. We pray, God, **You must be the driving force** in this battle against sin. This is not a battle I can win apart from you. And it is not a battle I **will win** if you were to allow the enemy to have His way. I need thee, oh I need thee. Every hour I need thee.

Now what is the target?

Blamelessness. Is blamelessness sinlessness? If it is, we can give up right now. But it is **not**.

Let's look at Psalm 19 one more time.

Psalm 19:12-14 (NKJV)

12 Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

I think we have some real clues as to what blamelessness is here. It is very good to have realistic expectations in our Christian life.

David is asking for God to cleanse him from **secret faults**. It is almost like he treats them as **inevitable**. It is **impossible** to go through life without

committing sins that are not intentional. We **fail to love** as we should all the time. We **fail to be as thankful** as we should be all the time. We don't **intentionally** choose not to give thanks sometimes. It is not intentional. It just happens as we breathe.

Perfection is not attainable. John Wesley was wrong about that. We will never obliterate **secret** sins in our lives as long as we are in this world. But **presumptuous** sins, that is something different. We can be in a state at any moment of time when we are **completely intentionally obedient to God**. This is what walking in the Spirit is. It is an attitude of submission to God, saying **yes** to God, gratefully accepting **God's right** to rule our lives. As believers, we have been given the power to choose to live in this state of **blamelessness**. It is not perfection in performance, but it is **purity of intention, purity in sincerity**, as much as we can be in any moment. Maintaining a state of sinlessness **is not** attainable. We can accept that fact. But equally true is that blamelessness **IS** attainable. We cannot live in such a way where we are **never committing unknown sins**, sins we are not aware of, sins we have no clue about. But we are freed by Christ to live in such a way that we are **not actively committing a sin we are aware of**. We cannot live perfectly. But we can live **blamelessly**. And David clarified for us in Psalm 19 what the difference is.

And that is ultimately how we seek first the Kingdom of God. That is how we view God's words as being that **golden treasure** and that **delectable treat** of honey. First we determine that **this Kingdom truly is worth selling everything for**, sacrificing all else for. Jesus is worth any price. What **God has in mind for us** is better than **what we could ever provide for ourselves**. His kingdom is better than any **worldly** kingdom. And then we live in the revelation of God, making every choice in congruence for what God has already done **in us** and **for us**. It is more about **following** than leading. It is more about **dependence** than autonomy. It is more about **receiving revelation** than creating impressive insights. It is all about Jesus, not us. That is what Seeking First His Kingdom looks like. We will look at it more next week Lord willing.