

Title: Don't waste your life
Text: Matthew 6.33
Theme: Living every day for forever
Series: Matthew #38
Prop Stmtnt The only investment that counts is the Kingdom of Christ.

Read Text:

I used to enjoy watching John McEnroe play tennis. Well, actually, I used to enjoy watching him yell at the refs. I know, I'm really not supposed to like that, but I found it quite comical. It has been many years now, but that kid was one serious tennis player. It is quite amazing to not only be that good at a skill, but to be able to accomplish all that he did is, well, everyone's dream – right? Twenty years later John wrote, *“On October 1, 1984, I was standing in the Portland airport waiting to board a flight to LA for a week off, and suddenly I thought, I'm the greatest tennis player who ever lived – why am I so empty inside? Except for the French [open], and one tournament just before the Open in which I had been basically over-tennised, I won every tournament I played in 1984: thirteen out of fifteen. Eighty-two out of eighty-five matches. No-one had ever had a year like that in tennis before. No-one has since. It wasn't enough. The feeling had been building up for a while. I'd been number one for four years, and I never felt especially happy.”* Tennis is not the point of life.

A prominent businessman was speaking at a conference near Oxford University. He said, *“As you know, I have been very fortunate in my career and I've made a lot of money – far more than I could ever spend, far more than my family needs.”* But in a rare moment of honest self-revelation he added, *“To be honest, one of my motives for making so much money was simple – to have the money to hire people to do what I don't like doing. But there's one thing I've never been able to hire anyone to do for me: find my own sense of purpose and fulfillment. I'd give anything to discover that.”* Obviously, success and wealth are not the point in life.

It has been said in so many different ways for thousands of years; the one, who lives in pursuit of happiness and pleasure, never finds it. Pursuing happiness and pleasure is a fool's errand. It is the proverbial carrot on the end of the stick. You never quite get there. Solomon told us this 1,000 years before Christ. But, here is where the church has tended to muddy the message. In our concern for people, we acknowledge the longings that people have for pleasure, success and satisfaction and so, we say things like, “if you are looking for happiness and satisfaction, you need Jesus.” If you want a good marriage, you need Jesus. If you want success, you need Jesus. Then we look for famous people, professional athletes who will validate this message as if Jesus and the gospel need famous people to make it believable. And while people mean well when they say things like that, we make it sound as if Jesus is the means to happiness and satisfaction. Jesus is the train that gets you to your destination. But, Jesus is not a train that you use to get somewhere. Jesus is the destination. All of life is about Jesus. Seriously, all of life; your life, my life, creation is all about Jesus. Until you know that, you will be searching but

not finding, longing but not satisfied, hungering but never full, thirsting but never quenched. All of life is about Jesus.

If you picked up a novel and you opened it to a page about 3/4 of the way through and you read a paragraph, do you think you would fully understand everything in that paragraph? Of course not! So, when hear Jesus saying, that we are to “*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*” we need to look at where in the Bible this is. This is in Matthew 6. If we were reading the Bible from the beginning we would know that the kingdom of God is the main theme of the Bible. The reason why this is the main theme of the Bible is because this is what life is all about. So, when Jesus tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God, he is calling us to live in harmony with the story that God has written and the plan that he is carrying out. In other words, this single sentence not only summarizes this entire sermon that Jesus preached, it essentially is a summary statement of our calling in life. Your life’s call is right here in this one verse.

The Bible begins with God creating the universe and everything in it out of nothing. He does it by the power of his Word. Because God is the creator he is rightfully, the sovereign ruler to whom allegiance is owed by all of his creation. God created the human race as the apex of his creation and as such, the human race represents creation. Whatever the human race decides will affect all aspects of creation. So, in the beginning there was God (King), land and people. Land + people = domain. King + domain = kingdom. And when the king is God, it is the kingdom of God. In the beginning, the Kingdom of God was realized and experienced in the Garden of Eden. It was perfect. It was beautiful. It was stunning. It was amazing.

But sadly and therefore cataclysmically, universally, the human race rebelled against God. (btw – sidenote: the world was not cursed by the fall of Satan and the angels, but by the fall of Adam) Rebellion against the right of God to rule his own creation is the essence of sin. That is why sin is inherently self-defeating and self-destructing and delusional. You can rebel all you want against God, but he is still God. You can marshal the entire world against God, but you cannot remove him from being God. Rebellion against God always brings chaos and disorder because it is a rebellion that is always doomed to fail. For example, we are living in a time when it is fashionable to redefine marriage. You can try. You can pass laws. You can even get a statement from what appears to be the highest court in the land. But the Supreme Court is not Supreme. God is. So, when you attempt to redefine what God has defined, or live in rebellion to what God has established, you will live in confusion and dysfunction. The rebellion is the anti-kingdom.

So, the human race rebels against God, and yet God is still King. He is still Sovereign, but his rule is not acknowledged, nor accepted. So, while God still reigns as God (King), the land is now cursed by sin because the stewards of the earth are in rebellion against God. The kingdom is in disarray. The kingdom is in disorder. God’s plan from the very beginning is to have a people who love him, worship him, serve him, and who represent him by their ruling over the earth in such a perfect way that even the earth reflects the

beauty of God. So God initiated a plan of redemption. The heart of his plan is to change hardened confused rebels into joyful citizens who embrace the reign of God from their heart. When his plan comes to completion, God will have accomplished two things simultaneously. 1) He will crush the rebellion, judge the rebels, ban all evil and 2) He will redeem people from every tribe, nation and language for his eternal kingdom. So, judgment and redemption are taking place all at the same time. The judgment and the redemption are universal. But God launches the plan, locally. He picks a man, Abraham in order to establish a nation, Israel who will be a local representation of what he is going to do universally. God (King) has a people and he gives them a land. People + land = domain. King + domain = kingdom. This plan takes a long time to unfold. Eventually, this people are gathered together as a nation (Sinai) and they are promised a land where they will live as a picture of the kingdom that is coming. But, there are people who are already living in that land and these people think that they own the land. God orders the nation of Israel to march into the land and to kill the Canaanites. Now, again, if all you do is pick up a portion of the book of Joshua and read these accounts where God tells the nation of Israel to show no mercy to the Canaanites, you might think that this is some God-ordained ethnic cleansing. It is nothing of the sort. Do not forget that several hundred years later, God raised up the Assyrians and the Babylonians who basically did the same thing to Israel.

Here is the point: God created the earth as the land for the kingdom for His Son and for his citizens. And while He is patient, He will not tolerate rebels. People who refuse to live under the rightful rule of the King are squatters upon his land. Adam refused the King and was thrown out of Eden. The Canaanites rebelled against the King and were thrown out of Canaan. Israel rebelled against the King and were removed as well. What goes on in Joshua is a small, localized preview of what is going to go on all over the world. Joshua is a preview of Revelation. What we see in Revelation, like Joshua is that everything is either judgment or redemption. There is no middle ground.

But, I am getting ahead of myself in the story. Israel gets the land and for a brief amount of time they experienced, under the reign of David, a kingdom where there was safety, prosperity, respect and the pleasure of God. David moves the capital to Jerusalem and a dynasty is born. But, alas, David was not the perfect King and his son, though incredibly skilled and intelligent proved to be a major disappointment. The kingdom divided, and eventually fell. But the prophets wrote about the King who would come and who would restore the kingdom. That brings us to Matthew's gospel.

The book of Matthew begins with these words, "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David...*" In other words, here is the One who will fulfill the hopes and promises that have been recorded in the Old Testament. The King is here! The King has come! And now you can see that the hopes and promises of the Old Testament centers upon the rule of God over all creation, over all creatures, and over all kingdoms by means of God dwelling with and ruling over and ruling through his chosen and redeemed people. The establishment of the kingdom of God is taking place through redemption and judgment. God is redeeming rebels who surrender to the King and is judging those who refuse his rightful reign. While redemption and judgment occur simultaneously, the 1st

coming of Christ to the earth focused primarily upon redemption. Jesus came to save sinners. Jesus came to secure the salvation of rebels who by faith alone trust in him, by paying the penalty for their rebellion. The life and ministry of Christ on this earth was marked primarily by redemption. So, we are studying the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is the King and in the Sermon on the Mount, he clarifies exactly what it means to live as a citizen in his kingdom. This sermon spells out the terms of allegiance. He preaches a message of hope, blessing, rescue and redemption. His first coming focused upon redeeming a people.

But, when Christ returns, it will not be primarily for redemption, but for judgment. He will remove the squatters. As he has done on a limited level in history with Sodom, Gomorrah, Egypt, Canaan, Israel, Assyria, Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece, Rome, Germany, Russia, and America. He will take back that which is rightfully his. He will crush the rebellion and will judge every single rebel. And then, he will establish his kingdom and his people, the citizens of his kingdom will be established in the kingdom with Christ, forever and ever and ever.

Do you know why I just did that? This book is more than a fascinating novel, cleverly written with every detail fitting perfectly into its place. This is the story of which your life is a part. If you do not understand this story, you will never understand your life. But, I also recognize that just because you understand the story does not mean that you will accept it. Because, even though this is THE story, or THE narrative, it is not the story that most people want to embrace. We are told another story. It is not only a story that our world tells us, it is a story that our own hearts naturally want to believe. We want to believe that we are sovereign; we can make the rules and live our own way. That story is a lie and all who believe it are doomed to fail. Every kingdom and every king who sets itself against God will fall.

I. **Seeking the Kingdom of God seems unnatural.** – “But”

Seeking someone’s kingdom other than our own seems very unnatural because my nature is a sinful nature. Our sinful nature has warped us into thinking that the chief end of man is to live for his own glory. But, if you are going to live for your own glory, then that means that you are in charge; that is, you are the king. But, you and I cannot handle being the king because we are not in charge. What do you call someone who pretends to be something that he or she is not? A fraud. An imposter. If you are pretending to be something or someone that you are not, you live with the fear of exposure. If you presume to be in a position (like that of a king) that you are not capable of fulfilling, you live with anxiety. So, do you understand why Jesus commands us not to be anxious? You are anxious when you are attempting to rule something that you do not have control over? So, instead of being anxious, instead of putting your trust in your resources and fretting over what is going to happen to your life, seek first the kingdom of God.

This means that you must believe that what Jesus said here and therefore, the story of the Bible is really true. You are living in His-story right now. Your life matters. What you are thinking and planning, prioritizing and choosing right now, matters. Your decisions

matter. Your marriage matters. Your habits matter. Your work matters. Your education matters. Your personal choices matter. Your joy matters. But know this: most people do not want to really believe it, or thoroughly believe it because they do not want the responsibility that comes with that reality. Most people content themselves to live unexamined, unfulfilled, and in the end, meaningless lives pursuing trivial things because they choose not to bother with eternal issues. They waste their lives.

A. We have to be commanded. – “seek first the kingdom of God”

Seek and keep seeking and never stop seeking the kingdom of God! This is a perpetual command. I am to seek the kingdom of God as soon as I am conscious when I wake up. I am to seek the kingdom of God as I prepare for the day, as I read the Word, pray, exercise, plan my calendar, make my to-do list, identify my priorities and live out my day, converse, problem-solve, work, parent, serve, converse, encourage, communicate, etc. Every single thing that we do is to be done as a means of seeking the kingdom of God. I need to constantly preach this to myself, because my natural inclination is to pretend to be king and therefore seek my own kingdom.

B. We have to be changed. “and his righteousness”

Jesus says so much in this one verse. “But” (in contrast to what you have been doing, stop seeking your own kingdom, stop living for your own glory, stop living as if food, drink, clothes and all of that stuff is all that matters) and “seek first the Kingdom of God.” (Make my kingdom your number one priority. Choose to live for the glory of the One who is truly glorious.) But if you are going to seek the Kingdom of God, you have to seek the righteousness of God, which means - what? It means that you need the righteousness of God! Seek first the kingdom of God AND his righteousness. They go together! The kingdom of God and the righteousness of God cannot be separated. If you are going to seek the kingdom of God, you are going to be seeking the righteousness of God. If you are seeking the righteousness of God, you are seeking the kingdom of God. We are commanded to seek the kingdom of God because we do not do that naturally and we are command to seek the righteousness of God because we do not naturally have it.

Now, we all try to come up with our own righteousness, but it is not good enough. Now, again, I believe that Jesus is summarizing his entire sermon in this statement. And one of the most ground-shaking, paradigm-shattering, mind-blowing, soul-shocking statements that Jesus made in this entire sermon was what he said back in 5.20. So, when Jesus says here that you need to seek the righteousness of God, it is another way of saying that what you have is not good enough. It does not count. You need real righteousness.

Now, at this point in the life and ministry of Christ, he does not yet say how you do that. He is helping you understand your need. You need something that you cannot get on your own. You have a situation that you cannot talk your way out of. You have a problem that you cannot solve. You have a debt that you cannot pay. You have a weight that you cannot lift. You have an emergency for which you have no help. You need righteousness that you do not have, and if you do not get that righteousness, you will die forever. If you

do not get that righteousness you will never be part of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is only for those who have the righteousness of God and your righteousness does not count!

Romans 3.21-26

II. **The Kingdom of God is the goal.**

Seek **FIRST** the kingdom of God! Everything else is a means to that end. Did you get that? Everything else in life is a means to that end. Everything else in life means that even the good things in life are a means to the ultimate end of seeking, pursuing, and advancing the kingdom of God. Let me state this another way. The kingdom of God is not the means to me getting the American dream. I do not pursue the kingdom of God for the purpose of having a family that people respect, or a life of comfort, or a life that is protected from disease and crisis. The kingdom of God is not the train that helps me get where I want to go. The kingdom of God is the destination. My ultimate goal in life is not my marriage, as important as that is. God established marriage to a picture of himself. My marriage is to reflect God. That does not make my marriage unimportant at all. In fact, it elevates it because if you pursue anything higher than the kingdom of God, you will end up devaluing even a good thing. The Kingdom is not a means to a goal; it is the goal. Everything that is invested into the kingdom will pay eternal dividends. Everything that is not invested in the kingdom is wasted on the rebellion.

III. **How do we seek the Kingdom of God?**

A. **By living in joyful surrender to the King.**

When you live in obedience to the King, you reflect the glory of his authority. When you live in fear of the King, you reflect the glory of his might and strength. But when you live in joyful, trusting surrender to the King, you reflect the glory of his goodness. Our King is good. Our King is gracious. Our King is merciful. Our King is love. Our King is faithful. Our King is forgiving. Our King is kind. Our King is glad. Our King sings over the citizens of his kingdom.

B. **By spreading the news of the King and the Kingdom.**

How has God ordained that spreading to take place? Formally – preaching, and informally – conversations and community. There is no kingdom without the message of the kingdom, which is the gospel. Without the gospel, there are no people who are redeemed. Therefore, the advancement of the kingdom of God is dependent upon the spreading of the gospel. God has raised up the church to guard the integrity of the message of the gospel, to preach the gospel, to help guard the reputation of the gospel by guarding our lives.

God has raised up the church as the preview of his kingdom. The church is the people of God who are committed together to live under God.

C. By advancing the health and the establishment of the church.

Do you see why the church matters so much? The church is the means that God has raised up to advance his kingdom in this world. There is no advancing of the kingdom without the advancing of the church. Do you see why the planting and cultivating of healthy churches around here and around the world is so critical? This is why you live.

There is a movie that is currently playing in theaters, but apparently not for long. The name of it is 47 Ronin. It is about 47 samurai warriors who are seeking revenge to restore honor to their people. The movie has received dreadful reviews and poor attendance and may cost Universal Pictures upwards of \$175 million. The movie has spectacular sets, star power, tons of action and amazing film sequences. The problem? Apparently the writers, directors and producers could not agree on what the actual story would be. You can spend a great deal of time, money, and work in this life. But if you have not figured out the story, the whole thing will bomb and it will be far worse than a movie. This is forever.

Questions to ask:

- 1) Can I honestly say that my life is characterized by seeking the Kingdom of God above all else?
- 2) What do I really want from life? If I were to make a wish list for my life, what would I put on it? What would be #1?
- 3) Do I view my job as a means to seek the Kingdom of God?
- 4) Do I view my time as a means to seek the Kingdom of God?
- 5) Do I view my finances as a means to seek the Kingdom of God?
- 6) Do I view my retirement as a means to seek the Kingdom of God?
- 7) Do I view my family as a means to seek the Kingdom of God?
- 8) Do I view the church as being central to God's plan of advancing his kingdom?
- 9) How is my life helping to cultivate gospel-health and gospel advancement in our church?

Signing Doctrinal Statement and Church Covenant