

SEEK YE FIRST: A Superior Order of Values and Priorities

Matthew 6:19-34

INTRODUCTION

1. When we establish priorities, we put the things that should be in first place in their proper order.
2. Ultimate, our priorities are determined by our values.
3. What are values?
 - a. The worth of something; then that which one esteems as of great value. For example, we sometimes talk about “old-fashioned values.”
 - b. Everything has value. And everyone has values. To many, it’s money. Or popularity. Or pleasure.
 - c. We need to cultivate an “eye” for value.
4. Jesus teaches us some principles to help us know the difference. The alternatives are presented as a series of basic choices we must make.

I. TWO TREASURES: HEAVEN OR EARTH. WHICH IS MORE LASTING?

- A. This is not teaching:
 1. That we must take a vow of poverty (1 Tim. 5:8; 6:17-19; Prov. 6:6-11)
 2. That we cannot enjoy what God has given us (1 Tim. 4:3-4)
- B. Rather, it’s a warning against emphasizing or making one’s priority what will ultimately be lost. It also means we must not be overcome by selfishness, materialism, covetousness (Luke 12:15f; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10).
- C. Which treasure is more lasting?
- D. “Tell me what you are eager to buy, and I will tell you what you are.”

II. TWO VISIONS: LIGHT OR DARKNESS. WHICH IS MORE USEFUL?

- A. The eye is a metaphor for the heart (Ps 119:10, 18). Just as the eye affects the whole body, so the heart affects one’s whole life.
 1. A noble and single-minded ambition to serve God and man (a life centered on heaven) adds meaning to life and sheds light on all we do.
 2. Selfish ambition plunges us into moral darkness. This is the life that is spiritually diseased or impaired in some way. This is the life centered on earthly things. It is the life occupied with the temporal (Matt. 13:22; 19:16-22).
- B. Which is more useful? Spiritual vision and perspective (Col 3:1-2).

III. TWO MASTERS: GOD OR MAMMON. WHICH IS MORE WORTHY?

- A. The choice is between the Creator and any object of our own creation.
- B. It is impossible to serve both. We cannot serve two masters any more than we can walk in two different directions simultaneously. We must choose whom we will serve (Josh.

24:15).

- C. One who divides allegiance between God and mammon has already given it to mammon. Most people see no tension between the two but material possessions easily become a rival to God that ends up capturing our loyalty.
- D. God can be served only with an entire and exclusive devotion (Isa 42:8; 48:11).

IV. TWO AMBITIONS OR GOALS IN LIFE: MATERIAL SECURITY OR THE KINGDOM AND GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. WHICH IS TRUER?

- A. Do not be anxious (worry) about material needs.
 - 1. This does not exempt us from our responsibilities--earning a living or being concerned for others (2 Thess. 3:10).
 - 2. Nor does it exempt us from experiencing trouble (Matt. 10:29).
- B. It forbids anxiety that dominates us and “chokes” us (cf. Luke 8:14) and leaves us too distracted to function
- C. Note that Jesus’ argument against anxiety is based on values. What does God value? Our values should conform to his.
 - 1. Don’t worry because God who provides the greater (life and body) will care for us by providing the lesser (food and clothes).
 - 2. God takes care of the birds and flowers. If God provides for lowly birds and flowers, he can be counted on to provide for men.
 - 3. Worry is worthless and unproductive. It is a waste of time and effort.
 - 4. Excessive worry is a sign of lack of faith.
 - 5. Anxiety is natural for pagans who have no concept of a personal, caring Father in heaven.

V. CONCLUSION: Seek first—make it your ambition to pursue—spiritual things.

- A. Devotion *first* (2 Cor. 8:5): they first gave themselves to the Lord (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 12:1).
- B. Self-examination *first* (Matt. 7:5)
- C. Brotherly reconciliation *first* (Matt. 5:23-24)
- D. Evangelism *first* (John 1:41)
- E. Prayer *first* (1 Tim. 2:1-2)

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