

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 05 February 2023
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: Seek Shine Go
Title: Seek first the kingdom of God
Passages: Matthew 6:25-34
Outline: **Why DON'T we?**
How DO we?

- I don't know how you are with new year's resolutions...
- Some years I just **ignore** the whole concept, knowing that I've failed **dismally** in the **past...** and lasted all of a **day** in eating better or exercising daily... so I decide not even to try *anything!*
- Other times I think – **well** – it's a good **opportunity** to try again... to **reset**...
- And yes – I know new year's day was over a month ago... but it is **now** – in **Feb** – with **school back** and church activities beginning in **earnest again** – I think **now** is a good chance for us to **consider** - across the **diocese**... a kind of a **year-launch... resolutions – challenges** - which will set us up for the year ahead as we seek to share **Jesus for life**...
- **Why?**
- **Because as Canadian minister Don Carson has said:**
 - "People do not **drift** toward holiness.
 - Apart from **grace-driven effort**, people do not gravitate toward **godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight** in the **Lord**.
 - We drift toward **compromise** and call it **tolerance**;
 - we drift toward **disobedience** and call it **freedom**;
 - we drift toward **superstition** and call it **faith**.
 - We cherish the **indiscipline of lost self-control** and call it **relaxation**;
 - we slouch toward **prayerlessness** and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped **legalism**;
 - we slide toward **godlessness** and convince ourselves we have been **liberated**."
 - That's the sad reality
- So in the knowledge that our tendency is to drift **away** from **God and godliness**... I want to spend these three Sundays before Lent begins, on some themes which will help us – protect us – from that trend to drift away from God.
- **Here's where we are heading:**
 - Feb 05 **SEEK** First the Kingdom of God
 - Feb 12 Let your light **SHINE** before others
 - Feb 19 **GO** and make disciples of all nations
- So today – *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness....*
- And I have just two simple points -
Why **DON'T** we?
How **DO** we?

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1. WHY DON'T WE?

- please look with me to Matthew 6 vv25ff...
- *Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear... is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?*
- Now, we live in a society where only a **minority** actually wonder how to feed their children and where their next meal is coming from; but we also live in a society that spends a lot of time being **very anxious** about these things!
- where a lot of attention is given in **vanity** to **what** we should **wear** and what makes us look **good**.
- Where you can go to **conventions** and have a **consultant** to help you discover what your **colours** are.
- where **eating** and **drinking** and **clothing** figure on commercial after commercial on the TV, radio, and on social media.
- we live in a culture that encourages some people to be **SO anxious** about what they **eat** or **don't eat**; **so anxious** about their **looks**, that young people can actually **die** trying to get the right look - trying to look like the **models** in the **magazines** - trying to find **acceptance** - even trying to be the **envy** of their **peers** - trying to **be** someone - trying to be **noticed** by their **looks**!
- So much so that someone who wants us **NOT** to worry about these things and to **love** our bodies as they **are**, ends up **Australian** of the **year!** //
- and because we as Christians **live** in that **culture** - it very easily rubs **off** on us and we are caught up in it all before we **notice**.
- we often **measure ourselves** daily against **others** by these things
- of **course** we are worried - **anxious** about them. ///
- And that is a **key reason** our mind is **not** filled with the matters of Jesus' **kingdom** and his **righteous**...
- We're distracted by the **trivial** and the **mundane**... by the **superficial**... by the things of this **world**... ///
- and this morning we are being confronted with Jesus' exhortation to **STOP** //
- but **how?** //
- first - see them in **perspective**
- look with me at v25 - *is not life **more** than **food** and the **body more** than **clothing**?*
- in **other** words - Jesus says - **come on - wake up** - see that life **itself** and our **bodies** - consist of much more **significant** stuff than what we put **IN** our bodies or what we put **ON** them!!
- let's stop being **superficial**!! //
- **second** see God's **provision** - that God will take **care** of these **needs**
- ie - we have food and drink to put **into** our bodies and clothing to put **on** them **because** **God's wills it to be so!** //
- all of us here this morning had enough to eat last week because of God's **provision** - in answer to our prayers – *Give us today our daily bread!*
- ...therefore... don't make your life **all about these things!**
- **They are not what life is about!!... /**

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- and Jesus points to what ought to be a basic and fundamental difference between the **Christian** and the **non-Christian**.
 - Jesus says – have a look with me at v31 - *so do not worry, saying, 'what shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink?' or 'what shall we wear? For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them....*
 - Those who **aren't** Christians – leave it to them to **pursue - food and drink and clothing... tragically** for many people – that is **ALL** their life **consists of!**
 - For US who know better – spending OUR life **running after them** as a priority, is **incompatible** with trusting Jesus. /////
 - **Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness** says Jesus...
 - Why **don't** we? - to recap?
 - Because **often** – without even **noticing...** we allow our **lives** – and our **head space** - to be filled with the **vain** and the **superficial.... //**
 - We are easily **distracted** – pulled **away....**
 - So let's look secondly
2. **HOW DO WE?** –
- **how do** we seek first his kingdom and righteousness...?
 - First, let me try and explain what it means.
 - we usually think of a kingdom as an **area** or sphere where a **King rules**.
 - we think of it more in **geographical** terms...
 - ...but when it comes to **God's** kingdom – it is not a **geographical area** under his rule, but **hearts and lives** under his **rule**.
 - So to seek first God's kingdom is to have as the **central desire of our life** - that our own **lives** come **completely** under his **rule** - are **totally submitted to him** - - our **home, family, personal morality, educational priorities, professional life, bank balance, our properties or business, our education, relationships** – **all under his rule and pleasing to him...** , - - and **second**
 - to have as our great desire that **God's rule** extend over **other** people's **hearts and lives** who are still currently busy throwing their energy behind **food** and **clothing** or **status** or **power** or **career....**
 - it's to see **OURSELVES** under God's rule and to **want** to see – **OTHERS** also come under his **rule**. /////
 - and to seek his **righteousness?** //
 - seeking his righteousness means you will be seeking to be in **right-relationship** with the **Lord Jesus**.
 - by admitting you're completely **dependent** on him....
 - saying **"sorry"** for going your own way – **forgive me, cleanse me, transform me....**
 - And expressing that **hunger** and **thirst** to live a **godly, stand-out** life that **pleases** him and **honours** him...
///
 - It's seeking a deep **walk** with the help of his **Word** which changes your **life by the power of the Holy Spirit...!**
 - It's seeking to rid your life of those habitual **sins** you've grown too **familiar** with or begun to **excuse...**

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- It's a desire to be **generous** and **kind** and **patient**.... **slow** to become **angry** and **compassionate** and **self-controlled** – as the Lord **Jesus** is...
- To seek his righteousness means you'll be more concerned for the **inward** **beauty** of a **gentle and quiet spirit**, then the **outward** **adornment** of **jewellery** and fine **clothes**! **////**
- Friends – if **only** we would see the **importance** of **this**...
- If only as much energy went in to our desire to see God's rule **expand** and our **character grow**, as into our **wardrobe**, our **fridge**, our **pantry** or our **holiday** or **party** plans... **//**
- **How** do we? **///**
- We **reset**... **recalibrate**... **restart**...
- We make what **IS actually important**, **// most important //**

- this message this morning ought to be **liberating**... - - we are **free** from the **rubbish** that the world carries on about - **materialism**, self-**discovery**, self-**sufficiency** - self **this** and self **that**!
- we've been **rescued** from a life of anxiety about the **trivial** and the **meaningless** and the **absurd**, - to live life in the **service** of the **King** and the **pursuit** of what is **important** and **real** and **vital** to **Him** **///**
- so here is a **challenge as the year is now fully under way**... to seek **first God's Kingdom** and his **righteousness**...
- and the **promise**? – he'll take **care** of the **rest**... you can leave that with him.... **//**
- finish with **two stories**.... **//**
- First... The father of a boy killed after he was hit by a car on Christmas Day back in 2016, embraced the man charged over his death, and extended him an offer of **forgiveness**.
- Josiah Sisson, 9, died in hospital from horrific injuries sustained in the crash, while he was out looking at Christmas lights with friends.
- Police said the accused driver, Adrian Murray, took a corner too quickly and lost control of his car, hitting Josiah.
- People comments on the Facebook post couldn't cope with this...
 - *What rubbish The idiot was driving recklessly including speeding, being intoxicated and being a hoon, as a result he killed a little boy. And the father gives him a hug and says it will be alright mate. No wonder the place is stuffed. Loony religious nuts!!!*
 - Or this: my favourite so far: *I can't even remotely think of how you could do that. He's a drunk who was driving and killed an innocent child, yet you forgive him? Christ almighty. To which I responded that Christ Almighty was precisely the reason this guy could forgive..*
- Josiah's father – in hugging the man and offering forgiveness.... Was seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness....! **////**
- My second story – 18-year-old daughter of someone I know in ministry.... In Fiji in June-July on a mission trip in 2016... she had a **stroke** and had to be medically evacuated back to Australia... she lost **speech** and **coordination**...
- Slowly – after many months of intense therapy – she made great progress.
- Here's what she wrote on her Facebook page at the end of that year...

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- *2016 wasn't the year I expected.*
- *I was expecting to work, both at my church doing ministry and at my part time job. I was expecting to be close to finishing a Diploma of Christian Studies. I was expecting to get my green P's, go out to bars with my friends and enjoy my first year out of school.*
- *It didn't end up being the 2016 I expected. Believe it or not, it was **better**.*
- *I grew closer to God - He helped me **grow** and brought me through the **storm** of this **year!***
- *I grew closer to my **family**. And I have made amazing friends from church and the mission team and countless others who have made this year **the best year of my life**.*
- *I also grew to know **myself** - one of many incredible blessing of this year.*
- *I've become more comfortable in my own skin, but most of all I have come to understand my identity as a **daughter** of the **King** - an identity that will **never change**, not even if there has been a loss of **language** or **understanding** or **sensation** or **vision** or **movement**.*
- *I'm looking forward to a new year. I'm excited to start my university degree - I'll be heading to Sydney Uni to study Psychology. I'm looking forward to going back to work and doing ministry again at my church. But most importantly, I'm also feeling at **ease**, knowing that no matter what happens in **2017**, "**it is well with my soul!**"*
- That's a **person** who is **seeking first God's kingdom** and **his righteousness**... //
- May that be **OUR aim**... our **new challenge**... to seek first God's **kingdom** and God's **righteousness**... and to then to **see**, how everything **else**, falls into **place**... !

Next week – Matthew 5:13-16 – Let your light shine before others...