

**Introduction:**

- *"Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness."* (Matthew 4:23, NLT)
- *"So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom."* (Luke 12:32, NLT)
- My attempt this morning is to connect two things: the Kingdom of God and relationship with God. In my attempt, my hope is that you will be moved beyond the entrance to the Kingdom and into a fuller understanding of it. Obviously I will not be able to explain it all in few minutes but hopefully you will become so hungry for it you will not stop looking.
- *A story is told in the tradition of the Desert Fathers. One day a young monk asked one of the Desert Fathers why it was that so many came into the desert seeking God and yet most of them did not stay, but returned to the outside world. The old monk said, "Yesterday my dog spied a rabbit in the bushes and began to give chase. He barked with joy and other dogs heard his bark and joined in the chase. Soon, however, dogs began to drop out of the hunt. A few stayed with the chase through the night, but in the morning only my dog continued chasing the rabbit. Do you understand what I have told you?" "No," replied the young monk, "please tell me." "It's simple," said the old monk, "my dog saw the rabbit." APPLICATION: In Jesus' parable of the pearl, the merchant upon seeing (discovering) this pearl sells all he has to possess it. There is nothing more valuable than to possess the kingdom of God. When we catch a glimpse of God's kingdom we recognize its ultimate worth. That realization keeps us motivated as we pursue the pearl of great price. "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!" (Matthew 13:45-46).*

**I. What Are We Seeking?**

- A. Have you ever had the challenge of looking for something that you have never seen? That alone is a challenge!
  1. Illustration: snipe hunting. Has anyone here ever been on a snipe hunt? "Although the snipe is a real bird, the *snipe hunt* is a practical joke, often associated with summer camps and other types of outdoor camping, in which the victim is tricked into engaging in a hunt for an imaginary creature. Snipe hunters are typically led to an outdoor spot at night and given a bag or pillowcase along with instructions that can include either waiting quietly or making odd noises to attract the creatures. The other group members leave, promising to chase the snipe toward the newcomer; instead, they return home or to camp, leaving the victim of the prank alone in the dark to discover that they have been duped and left 'holding the bag.'
  2. We have all been asked at some point in our lives to help find something. The first question you ask is: "What am I looking for?" We need a description in order to help assist us in finding that which is lost. II. In trying to find a missing person or someone you have never met, you ask,

- "What do they look like?" II. in trying to find car keys, you ask, "What do they look like?" Big bunch? Color? Anything unusual?
3. Now think about trying to find God. How do you describe to someone what you are looking for? You can't see Him. His voice most often is not audible. And He is not always felt, either.
- B. Jesus told us what to seek in Matthew 6:33: *"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."* (Matthew 6:33, NLT) NKJV: Seek first the Kingdom of God. III. "Alright now! That really helps me whole bunch!"
1. How do you seek something that you cannot see? cannot touch? cannot hear?
  2. This is a scripture that we quote most often in context of needing something...like money to pay the bills, a car to get to work, shoes for school, etc. We do not quote it in reference to the Kingdom but in reference to the need.
  3. The context in which Jesus speaks this to us is that the Kingdom is much much bigger than our need. Not that it is more important, it is more productive, more powerful, more sustaining than our needs.
    - a) If I have a need, I have a lack. Jesus is saying that if you have the Kingdom you have that which denies lack.
    - b) If I have a need, I require supply. Jesus is saying if you have the Kingdom you have that which has all the supply and there is no sorrow added to it. Prov. 10:22.
    - c) If I have a need I don't have the means of subsistence. Jesus is saying, if you have the Kingdom you have all the subsistence you need and more.
- C. What is it we are seeking? What is Jesus tell us to seek in Mt. 6:33? What is it that the Father is most happy in giving us?
1. We are seeking the Kingdom. What does it look like? How will I know when I find it?
  2. The Kingdom begs for definition.
    - a) A kingdom has a king, subjects to the king and the principles that characterize the relationship between the two. There is the introduction of concept of relationship.
    - b) We know that the Kingdom is both 'now' and also 'coming'. Therefore our definition or description but contain both and this is what makes The Kingdom of God vastly different from the kingdoms of men.
    - c) The Kingdom is *"God's rule/reign over everything and everybody, everywhere in eternity, past, present and future."* Jack Taylor *"The Kingdom of God is the eternal rule of God over everything and everybody, everywhere, for all time and eternity. It is above time yet envelops time; it transcends time yet endures time."* JT
    - d) This is why the gospel of the Kingdom is 'good news'...it is bigger and better than we ever thought or could fathom. Therefore our greatest reality is the Kingdom of God on earth! If the Kingdom is that big, that influential, and that powerful we must seek it.
      - (1) The Kingdom was the center of Jesus message. He spent the last 40 day on earth teaching the Kingdom to his disciples (Acts 1:3).

- (2) The nature of the Kingdom is that it is hidden so that men would seek after it. Rejoice when they find it. Live to implement it both individually and corporately.
- (3) We are to discover the Kingdom, surrender to the Kingdom and make the Kingdom a part of the very fabric of our lives in loyalty and living.
3. The test of actual possession of the Kingdom is in this: bringing forth the fruit of it. *"I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation that will produce the proper fruit."* (Matthew 21:43, NLT)
4. So what are we seeking? To have the eternal rule of God in every facet of our lives individually and corporately. That rule comes from His presence in our lives. Rule without Presence is rigorous law keeping...behavior modification,

## II. When God Is Your Reward

- A. You walk in relationship. *"After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'"* (Genesis 15:1, NKJV) Up to this point God has made some amazing promises to Abram. *"You will be great nation, famous, blessing to others and all families of the earth will be blessed through you."* All Abram did was hear and obey and God did what He said He would do.
1. He blessed Abram with sheep, cattle, servants.
  2. He made Abram strong and to be feared.
  3. He protected him from all his enemies and made those who attempt to harm him to pay.
  4. Abram became famous.
- B. When God is your reward you obtain two things: protection and everything else. Abram automatically received both out of relationships with God.
1. Protection - I am your shield. What do shields do? They hide us from harm. A shield does not allow us to be hurt because it protects us. II. Roman soldiers had shields. Star Trek's Enterprise had a shield. Millennium Falcon had a shield.
    - a) Dt 33:29 to Israel: *He is your protecting shield...* II. Death Star can't ever penetrate that.
    - b) *"But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head."* (Psalm 3:3, NKJV)
    - c) Ps 18:3 *"...My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised... So shall I be saved from my enemies."*
    - d) Shield or protection is a recurring theme in scripture.
  2. Everything else: whatever is good, excellent, praise worthy, etc. this is what God is all about! This is why He could say to Abram: "I Am!...your reward. Means two things.
    - a) I am your reward. In other words, if you seek me you get all the other stuff most people go after. Just find me and this other stuff is added.
    - b) secondly it means: your reward shall be exceedingly great. In other words you are being exceedingly blessed by me because of your relationship with me.
- C. Relationship is the reward! Note: 15:2-3. Abram actually talks back to God. This is the first recorded conversation between God and Abram. Up to now God speaks and Abram obeys. In verse two Abram says, "Love your protection and the lifestyle you have provided is great but it is all meaningless if I have to leave it to a servant."

1. God responds to Abram vs 4-20.
2. God is Abram's reward not because of things but because of relationship.

**III. Boom boom Moses is like Abram. He enjoys the incredible favor of God! "*Inside the Tent of Meeting, the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, ...*" (Exodus 33:11, NLT) Face to face speaks of friendship/relationship. It is not a FB relationship.**

1. "*One day Moses said to the Lord, 'You have been telling me, 'Take these people up to the Promised Land.' ... You have told me, 'I know you by name, and I look favorably on you.'*" (Exodus 33:12, NLT)
  2. "*If it is true that you look favorably on me, let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor. And remember that this nation is your very own people.*" (Exodus 33:13, NLT)
  3. But the context of Exodus 33 is not about Moses' favor with God but Israel's sinful worship of a golden calf. To which God replies to Moses. Take these people into the promised land. I am not going. I will send an angel with you instead. Moses does not care for that plan and says so. He wants to go with his Friend!
- B. When God is your best friend you do not leave Him behind.
1. Read 12-18 from Message Bible.
  2. Moses refused to leave without the presence of God going with Him. **To have the promise land with out the God of the promise was meaningless.**
    - a) To Abram the Presence was the Kingdom.
    - b) To Moses the Presence is the Kingdom.
    - c) The presence meant adhering to the principles of the Kingdom. By adhering to the principles you accessed what the Kingdom offers...God and all "these other things."
- C. To Moses the blessings were not the objective the relationship was.
- D. To Abram the blessing were not the objective but the expression of the Kingdom principle of relationship was. "*Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.*" (Psalm 127:3, NLT)  
On earth as it is in heaven. Relationships there...relationships here.

**Conclusion:**

- If you can but get a glimpse of the Kingdom, you will not be like all the other dogs that drop out of the hunt; because you have seen it for yourself and you will keep on going.
- If you can but understand that God and God's rule are the same/they can't be separated from each other, you will seek the Kingdom! The Kingdom is everything, everybody and everywhere under the rule of God. That cannot be a bad thing. Nor can it be harmful. It is God's way of getting us the best.
- I am reminded of my last sermon I presented here, John 6 and the feeding of the 5,000. Are you a seeker of bread or the Bread of Life?
- May God give us a greater glimpse of the Kingdom and hunger to seek after it!