

July 2002: Priorities

by Aaron Greenway

Today, we find our personal worlds so packed and so filled with things that we are not quite sure how they got there. We ask ourselves, “How did I end up here?” “How did my life become so bogged down by this circumstance or this financial situation?” And we worry about where we will be tomorrow and if things will be better. Many times, however, the things that get left by the wayside are the most important things. Jesus had some things to say in Matthew chapter six, verses 25-34 about priorities, about focusing attention on the nonessentials of life:

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 important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, **O you of little faith**? For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness**, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

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Interestingly, it is not always that we put negative things ahead of God, instead we tend to

replace God with the “good things.” Jesus never said that food and clothing were evil. Jesus never said that having possessions, goals, dreams were wrong. However, things such as money, material possessions, relationships, family, careers, as positive as these things are, can be used to shove God into a box. The problem is, God doesn’t stay in the box as much as we try to keep Him there. God likes center stage way too much to be boxed up. And it isn’t always that we wish to put God there, we just become distracted. That is the danger. This is why we need to be reminded from time to time to keep things in their proper perspective.

I have been hearing the phrase “Seek first the Kingdom of God” from various people for the past month, either in sermons, or brothers counseling me in the new directions my life is taking. Keeping Jesus at the center becomes a fight. And the reason (implied in Matthew 6, “O you of little faith”) why we concentrate so much on other things is because we do not really believe that God can take care of those things. In addition, we keep God in second place many times because we like first place too much. We want to be the masters of our own destiny. It is hard to give up control over people, circumstances, money, etc., because in doing so, we forfeit being in charge of our own lives. It becomes an issue of putting our confidence in our own abilities until the circumstances overpower us and we are left holding the pieces. The thing is, if we wish to tackle life on our own and be in charge, God will let us! God will allow us to put things in front of Him until we painfully realize that He is the only answer and the only solution to every area of our personal existence.

The priority has to be Jesus and Jesus alone. He has to become the center of attention. He has to be the One we run to even in the details of our lives. The beautiful thing is that God is interested in the smallest things that happen to us. He wants to be involved! He wants to be apart of it! When we have a joy, He wants to hear it! And when we have a pain, He wants us to share it with Him. I don’t know about anyone else, but that gives me incredible gladness in my heart, that my Heavenly Father has an active interest in my life and wants to be apart of it. Not only that, He wants to guide it! He wants to be at the helm!

Where are our priorities? Our priorities are always a road sign to our passions. And the price we pay is small in comparison to the joy we carry walking with our God every day. And somehow,

our perspective changes with the other things that used to hold that number one position. Our jobs, our families do not become “unimportant,” rather they become enhanced and enriched, because now Jesus is at the center of everything we do. What a comfort that must be to a woman who has a husband who loves Jesus more than he loves her. What a peace that man must have in his eyes that even his little three year old can see it. Jesus is not a detriment to these things! He is the source by which these relationships are maintained and empowered.

Today, we can begin by doing a priority-check in our lives. Where are my thoughts drawn to the most? What makes my blood pump more than anything? Could we pray today, “God, take every part of me until I have nothing left to keep.” We were bought with a price. Paul called Himself a “slave,” a “bondservant” of Jesus Christ. Jesus is worthy of it, isn’t He? If so, we have no recourse other than to step down from being number one and give that vacancy to our Lord.