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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday 7 April 1926

Text: Matthew 6 v 33

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His
righteousness and all these things
shall be added unto you"

We should be very great christians if our hearts and lives were conformed to this chapter, if we were to pray as directed, if we had a more secret, a more private, powerful religion. If we were more graciously independent of public opinion and sought the smile, the approbation of God in our consciences. More secret prayer would mean oftener shining faces, oftener blessed answers according to this scripture, but we are very much occupied, alas for us, with the things that perish, with time, which is but a speck between two eternities, and a little speck indeed. But, through our unbelief in God, we see this speck to be bigger than God, better than all other things, are occupied with the things that perish. Not "what will the Lord do with me, and for me? but what shall I eat and what shall I drink and wherewithal shall I be clothed? Not, "Thy kingdom come Thy will be done" but, may I be established in this and succeed in that and prosper? By our fall, by our wicked hearts working, we turn things upside-down. I believe every living soul will agree with me in these confessions concerning ourselves. We are poor christians. We are poor believers and the truth appears to have very little effect upon us. The gospel appears to do very little for us. Instead of being conformed to the Lord, we are very much conformed to the world of which the Lord thus speaks - "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the spirit of your minds". There is very little of that that is exhorted to in the Romans - "I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service" and if we perceive this to be our sad case, are we rightly affected by it? Are we humbled by seeing ourselves to be so contrary to the Holy word of God, so contrary

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to that image of godliness the scripture shows to us, and so little conformed to Him whose will is said to be "good and perfect and acceptable?" And if we had more grace, we should prove it to be as the Apostle says there - "proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" and this is according to the word of prayer in this chapter - "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done" Done on earth even as it is in heaven. Unquestionably done in heaven, not often unquestionably done on earth. But Christ kindly corrects us, He corrects us by His word and He corrects us by His Spirit, for which correction may we render praise. He tells us what is the right thing to do, what is the right course for us to take, how to live, how to pray, when and where to pray, what to do - wait on God. Then He makes promises of a shining face, that is, a gracious answer to prayer. "When thou prayest enter into thy closet" turn aside. The religion of the Lord Jesus is not noisy, not public. It is not for everybody to gaze on as to its root. The fruit will be seen, the root never. God sees it, they feel it, in whom it is, but the fruit of it is seen indeed. He shows us that we can never effect anything by our much thought. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature". All the doings, the efforts of our minds and of our tongues, of our plans and schemes will never add anything to us according to this word. Therefore, seeing that we cannot do what we aim at, that we are absolutely dependent on God to succeed, in working or to blow upon anything, seeing that it is so, why take ye thought for raiment? Why take ye thought for the fashions of this perishing world? O the penetration of this question when the Spirit of God uses it, is very solemn. It takes us to our minds, our thoughts, our ambitions, our conformity to this world. "Why take ye thought for raiment?" Why are you so anxious to appear as others? The practical part of religion is very solemn when it is brought home by the Holy Ghost and set before the eyes of people. The fashions of the day are very foolish and very perishing. Wherefore, seeing you are so helpless, seeing that providence is such as that you cannot turn it, seeing that all your doing and all your thinking and all your aiming and scheming can effect nothing really, that you are, whether you like it or not, dependent on God, that you are just clay in the hands of the

potter, seeing these things, and that also God does clothe nature without labour on its part, take no thought, commit it to Him whose you are and whom you serve. Commit your ways, your families and your business, commit all to Him in whom you live and move and have your being. This is a passage that may try us when, by the side of it, we put out minds and our thoughts and our wishes and our endeavours. We see that they are all in the other direction and that we are a long, long way from being in accord with that scripture, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass". "If God so clothe the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you O ye of little faith?" I take it that the Lord, by these words, intends His kind dealing with us in providence, that if we have but faith to commit our way and our things to Him, our necessities and our gifts and possessions and commit everything into His hand and use everything wisely in His holy fear, we shall see Him working for us. "Shall He not much more clothe you" And this rebukes that that the Lord speaks of elsewhere. He speaks against being surfeited and drunken with care. Some of us have often been drunk with care. Sober indeed, mercifully, in other respects, but very drunk with care. "What shall we do? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be provided for? What about tomorrow?" Therefore, seek not these things, for the Gentiles seek them, and this points to a separation. If the Gentiles seek the things you are told not to seek in that inordinate way it points to a separation. "Come out from among them". Gross idolatries and gross living we mercifully are not to be accused of, but may not we sometimes have to confess that we live as Gentiles do? Do you always find yourself separated? Is faith always active? Do you commit to the Lord everything? Do you feel you can leave things in His hand? The Gentiles never do. We do not. We do it just like them. But why should not we? Is it not lawful to be careful? Yes, it is lawful, but lawfulness in this (not the law of Moses) but a lawfulness in this, means that you just walk in the fear of God and commit things to Him which are lawful for you to attend to. But why should not we seek these things? This is the reason given here by the Lord Jesus - "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these

things" Think of it. You take your handful of cares and needs and look at them till they become as big as the world almost and can these needs be really supplied? O, the unbelief of the heart! It magnifies things as against God, disturbs the mind, confuses it, and influences the sinner to turn his back on the throne of grace and seek relief in the creature. This is a great sin to which we are all, more or less, liable and to which we may be often tempted. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" and is not that sufficient? It means this, that He so knows them as that He will supply them. The Lord is not apt to say - "I know these things that you need, and have nothing to do with them" He is not apt to say this - "Now I am quite aware of all your necessities, I know perfectly well what you need, but there leave it." It means this - He so knows these things are needed as that He will supply them. It is like a promise, it is equivalent to a promise, as if He should say - "Now you need not take your needs to your friends, you need not carry them on your arm. Just turn aside, go into your closet, shut your door, pray to your Father there, who has heaven and earth at His command, to whom the cattle on a thousand hills belong, and all the gold and silver. Just tell Him all, and He will supply you." I say again this word is equivalent to a promise, and thus, as it were, abstracting them, drawing them away from time, and the things of it, He gives this exhortation - "Seek ye first". Not first, in time only, nor so much, as in importance. The first thing in importance, the first thing of vital need is the kingdom of God, and seek that first of all, be that your concern. As if the Saviour of sinners should say "let nothing come before this" and when the Spirit of God works, it is so. Nothing comes and takes the place of spiritual things, nothing has that importance attaching to it that one born again finds there is attaching to his soul's salvation and the glory of God. It is natural to us just to put things the other way. "When I have a convenient season" then, "I must needs go and prove my purchase", I must needs attend to this and to that. "I have married a wife, I cannot come." "I have bought a yoke of oxen, I must prove it". This is the spirit that belongs to us, but Christ corrects it. He says to this, His people, "Seek first". That be the first thing, Eternity. Whether we believe

it or not, whether we are taking steps toward heaven or not, we are certainly being hurried toward eternity. The kingdom of God. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God"

The kingdom of God in scripture means His people, it means His work, it means His work in the heart. "The kingdom of God is within you". "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation". This is the kingdom. God is the King. Christ is set up on God's holy hill. "I have set My King on my holy hill". And this blessed kingdom, which is an everlasting kingdom, we are to seek. Seek it first in this sense - seek the King. A kingdom speaks of a King. The King of Righteousness is the King of this blessed kingdom, and to seek this King is to seek His kingdom in your heart, that He is first. "I have set My King upon my holy hill". The heathen raged and the kings of the earth imagined a vain thing with respect to this King. They said among themselves - come let us gather together and break their bands assunder and cast their cords away from us. We owe no allegiance to this King. This is the language of fallen nature. It says "I will not have this man to reign over me". But the Holy Spirit comes into an elect person and gives him eternal life and shows him the need of union with God in Christ. Lacking it, everlasting woe. So then the first thing this sinner seeks is "God be merciful to me a sinner" and that more or less in different ways as we go on is the cry of the Lord's people - "God be merciful to us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us that Thy saving health may be known" Now here there is an exclusiveness. "There be that are called gods many, and lords many, but to us there is one God, even the Father and we by Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, and we in Him". There is an exclusiveness, not any king, not anybody, not any usurper or pretender. There are many christs who are called anti-christs, go not after them. If you believe that the kingdom of God brings people into the wilderness, then one will say He is in the wilderness. Go not after him. Look to this One who is in heaven and reigns there and who says to His people "I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isaiah 46:13). This is the language that God will have His people after. There

is an exclusiveness in it, it will, in its own right, so to put it, it will shut the world out at times. It will cut the world off, it will cut self off, it will make the person blest with grace say "None but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good". This then, is that, that the people of God are brought really to seek after. Seek first. Half-heartedness in this brings barrenness, leanness, cleanness of teeth, and distance. If we are half-hearted in this, though you may be a child of God, you will find it is true what I say, it will bring leanness, barrenness, distance into your soul. He requires pure desires, all the heart or nothing. If that be true and we are enabled to put ourselves by the side of it, how many of us will there be who could say, we are just right and straight with the standard? Seek ye first the King. "Who is the King of Glory?" "Open ye the gates . Open ye the two-leaved gates that the King of Glory may come in" Can you ask Him to come in? What is it, with a spiritual intelligence, to ask the King to come in? What is it to say, with spiritual intelligence, "Thy kingdom come?". It is this, "Lord cast down the kingdom of sin, cast down the kingdom of self-will, and self-righteousness and self-wisdom and self-strength and come and be Thou my King." When people pray this honestly, there is a word that will come to them in the substance of it, if not in the letter. It will come one day - "I will be thy King. Where is there any other that may save thee? I will be thy King. What you need, I will give. What must be done for you, I will do. What must be wrought in you, I will work. The way you walk I have ordained. The strength to walk in that way is Mine. The light to see that way is Mine. I will be thy King." Seek the King, the King of Glory. Dear friends, when He comes, glory covers the sinner. When He comes the will of the sinner is subdued, self-will is really subdued. When He comes the sinner says - "Thy will be done". The most stubborn will, the most obstinate nature that any sinful child of God can possess, must give way when the King of Glory comes. O, what a privilege to be the subject of such a King! We, the subjects of this kingdom have not made laws for ourselves and we are to obey them. Spiritually, how much more is this the case. We have not made laws, we are to be subjects. The King makes the laws. He says "Believe in Me" He says "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand

of God" He says "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass". He says this - "I am the light of the world. Whosoever believeth in Me shall not abide in darkness but have the light of life". And seek the King in this too, His blessed power in the soul. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". Religion without this power is a form. "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power." Seek the kingdom of God in your own soul and as it is within a person it means this, that that person is the subject of the operations of the Holy Ghost. He quickens; He revives; He renews; He reveals the Lord Jesus; He opens the treasures of grace that are in Him. And these operations begetting faith, hope, love and obedience and the fear of God all constitute this blessed kingdom which the people of God are to seek. It is no fancy, it is just a sacred, secret reality in the soul, when this divine kingdom is set up in the heart. "Thy kingdom come", which means that the Lord reigns. We may say, and we may think we believe, "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth", but when it comes to trouble and difficulty, when it comes to your will and your imagination, and your determination, when it comes to your heart and your conscience and your understanding, and it says - "now all this must be just subjected to this King" your old nature will hesitate, then rebel, and speak against it. "What, am I to be nothing? Is no account to be taken of me? Is not my will to be taken into account? Is not my understanding to be taken into account? O yes, but this is the account that will be taken of them. As these faculties are depraved, blinded, warped, turned away from right courses, they all must be rectified, and in every case it means submitted. Is this a condition? It is a gracious way. It is not a condition for a sinner to perform to obtain life but it is the way of God with the sinner to make him an obedient person, obedient to the faith. Every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Seek this kingdom. "Never" says a proud man. Seek this kingdom. "O" says another who is blessed with humbling grace "I wish this kingdom were in my soul, that myself were subdued, that myself were brought to the dust of death, that Christ may reign in me in every respect."

Seek first this kingdom. This kingdom means the supply of

the Spirit of Christ to the soul. It means the outpouring of grace from time to time, the speaking of grace by the gracious lips of the Lord Jesus. Grace was poured into His lips that He might pour it out in divine communications to His people.

Seek this kingdom. It means glory even here. When one suffers for the Lord Jesus the loss of self - and that is one thing that has to be and is - when I say, there is suffering of the loss of self, then this is true "Happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you".

It is a great thing then to have this kingdom in your heart and that important word comes in - "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation", not with tumult, not so everybody can see it. The fruit, as I said, must be seen but the thing itself cometh not with observation. You would think with me I doubt not, that there was a great establishment of the kingdom of God in David's heart as we read in the 42 Psalm. He was very low, very troubled, cast down, (he said he was) when, suddenly, as it were, he is turned quite round, looks upon his soul, and addresses it and says - "Why art thou cast down, O my soul and why art thou disquieted within me?" What reason is there for all this? Why all this ado? Why art thou in this condition? He addressed himself thus, and there seems to have been a great reason. Some heavenly communication must have been made to him, some strengthening of his faith. Some gracious help from heaven, by the Holy Spirit, came into his heart and turned his thoughts completely away from that on which they had been dwelling and he says to his soul - "Why art thou cast down? - God lives. The Lord liveth and blessed be my rock and I shall praise Him. He is the health of my countenance." What is called in another Psalm the saving health of God. "God be merciful unto us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy saving health might be known." This is saving health. O I think David must have had a great turn, unobserved by all outside, if any people were looking at him, but it came into his heart and faith was strong enough, stronger than all his fears and foes, strong enough to say - "Hope thou in God". He will come again, He in whose hand my life is, He will come again. He who gained the victory for me

will come and get the victory in me again. "Thy kingdom come". Well brethren can we pray this? Are we enabled in any measure to do this - "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?"

What is this righteousness? To be accepted of God, it is an absolute necessity that we should be righteous. For God to receive us into friendship and to walk with us and grant us smiles of approval, it is necessary that we should be righteous, and when we are taught of God, what do we find in ourselves? Filthy rags. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" and we can enter into the solemn experience of Joshua when he stood before the angel clothed with filthy garments. What a position! Now God has provided that very righteousness which is necessary and after this we are to seek. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness". He has it to give, to impute, to impart. He has it to bestow on poor sinners and this is our mercy, and this also is our attraction to Him at times. We shall love this Person for Himself. Blessed be God if we do, but also there is this - we shall seek Him for what He has to bestow. "Come unto Me, weary ones, for the rest you need and I will give it you" So here - "Come unto Me for righteousness" "Hearken unto Me My people in whose heart is My law. Hearken unto Me ye that seek righteousness, I bring it near. Seek this". And this means that a sinner, sensible of his infirmities, shortcomings, mistakes, and failures and fallings should again and again seek to know and wear this blessed righteousness, that he may have boldness to say to his King and Lord and Beloved - "Let my Beloved come into His garden". You may be so ashamed of yourselves sometimes as to say I have not courage to ask Him to come into His garden, but if, seeking His righteousness, you get a manifestation of it, then you will be able to say - "Let my Beloved come to me, let Him consort with me, let Him condescend to me, let Him speak to me, let Him come into His garden." "His righteousness". And this may be so blessedly conveyed to you and to me as to constitute us righteous in such a way as that that word will be true of us - "This is the name wherewith she (the church) shall be called, the Lord our righteousness," and that will do for heaven. It will do for time, it will do in a day of trouble, it will stand by you in a day of temptation, it will stand against all the assaults of

the enemy. A perfect righteousness, powerfully brought home in your soul's experience, your only standing, your only justification and your only right title to heaven. Well we are directed to seek this. The Lord help us to do it. "The Spirit all the motion gives by springs of fear and love." He shows to faith the beauty of this righteousness which consists in its perfection, consists in its being divine, in its being all that can be needed in a way of justification. Nothing beyond it, nothing added to it.

And then there is a promise in the text which, when made over to a sinner, stills all his fears, tells him that he need not be over anxious about anything in this world. All these things, all the things that the Gentiles are seeking after, the things that the worldly man finds himself living in, which are his life, the things about which he is concerned when he is awake at night, after which he is seeking all the day, these things shall be added, as needed, added to what you sought and obtained, the kingdom of God in you, added to what you have sought and obtained, His righteousness. To these blessings shall be added, bread and water; to these blessings shall be added enough, as the Apostle teaches in the Hebrews, where he says - "The Lord is my helper". "The Lord is my helper I will not fear". What is the connection? "Be content with such things as ye have". When the people went to John the Baptist and asked him what they were to do, he told them. He said to the soldiers - "Do not do violence to any and be content with your wages". And the Lord may say to His poor soldiers "Be content with the wages I give you. I will give you a little now and a little then. Here a promise, a word, sometimes a feast you shall sit down to, but be content. I will give you all you need." What is it? Bread shall be sure, water shall be sure. It is a great word is it not? All these things. Enough to pay your debt if you are in debt, enough to meet the liabilities that you have, enough to enable you to pay your way honourably, just enough. More in some cases, a little, but still there the word is "all these things". O for faith to rely upon it. It is enough in itself is it not, quite enough, enough for your family, in your house, your children, everything belonging to you in this life, everything

that you have to attend to. All these things. Why, we are like creatures with many hands, holding them up for certain things in this life, poor foolish creatures and there is a good God who says - "Look to Me", a good God who says - "Seek Me first. Seek my kingdom and My righteousness, and all else I will give to you". It is not the world first and God after. It is the kingdom of God first, heavenly things first and then earthly things added as they are needed. "Our conversation, our citizenship, as the word is, is in heaven", about heavenly things, this kingdom. Our citizenship is in heaven, our walk is in heaven and our things are in heaven. Why the providence of God in some cases, at some times has been such as that it has seemed almost as if the supply has been immediately rained down from heaven, so distinct has been God's work and way in providence. But then sometimes He shuts up the hand of man, and shuts up all ways of escape from trouble and brings needs, great needs, with no appearance of supply and then the supply comes, the supply comes. God is glorified in these things. Now my dear friends, may the Lord help you and help me to seek to walk according to the directions of this chapter, and the directions of the text, and not turn things upside down as we so often have done, at least I have. Seek first in the way of importance, seek first the kingdom of God to be in your hearts, to be set up and maintained there by the Holy Ghost. Seek His righteousness, to wear that for acceptance with God in time and through Eternity. And in respect of time there is no real need that you have that shall not be supplied out of a full God, the God who has all things in His possession. May we believe it and be humbled.

AMEN.