

Matthew 6:19-6:34

OPEN: We showed the following youtube clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93LY5O7E5bU>

(An interview with Jase & Missy Robertson of Duck Dynasty where they described what their home life is like)

What you just witnessed was an interview with Jase and Missy Robertson (of Duck Dynasty) on K-Love Radio. What I found interesting about that interview was Jase's last comment. He meant it to be humorous, but it struck me as being the main focus of their message in the interview.

And his comment was this:

"That's our story and we're sticking to it."

So, what was their story?

What were they talking about here?

Well, their story was that they had "core values" and a foundation they'd built their family on. And as I was listening to the interview I found that those core values they described fit right in with what Jesus was teaching in Matthew 6.

In the sermon on the Mount Jesus said: "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33

That's what the Robertson's were saying was their foundation.

Now, what does that mean though?

What does it mean that you seek 1st His kingdom and His righteousness?

It means that your priorities begin FIRST with God.

So, let's think this through: Whose Kingdom is it? (God's)

That's right, it's God's Kingdom!

And for every Kingdom, there's a King and subjects.

Who's the King in this Kingdom? (God)

That's right - God is the King - it's His kingdom.

He gets to set the standards and to say what is "right" and what is "wrong."

And every kingdom has subjects. Who are the subjects in God's Kingdom? (We are)

That's right. If we belong to Jesus Christ, we are His subjects.

Because if we aren't the subjects of His Kingdom, then we belong to the other guy's Kingdom.

And that's not an appealing concept.

So, how do I seek first His kingdom?

Well, we'd have to decide to agree with the Robertson's.

They said: "we trust in God and we believe His way is the better way in all things in life."

If we seek first His Kingdom then we believe His way is the better way in everything

So if God's way is the best for us... why wouldn't we want to seek His kingdom first? (Pause)

Well, the problem is, I want things MY WAY. After all, it's MY LIFE... it's not His.

He may be God... but I have to pay the bills.

He may be God... but I want this promotion/ position/ place in the group. People may not want me around if I chose God's way... so maybe I won't seek His Kingdom first.

There can be a price to pay that I may not want to pay.

ILLUS: Just to prove the point, last week we talked about A&E suspending Phil Robertson for his comments about homosexuality. What I didn't realize until I began to do research for this sermon series was that originally Phil was not the only family member in the room when the interview began. In fact, the entire family – and some of the rest of the cast – were in the room to begin with. But the reporter was so confrontational that everybody just got up and left... except Phil Robertson, who wanted to tell this reporter about Jesus. But more about that next week.

As you know A&E was not pleased with Phil's comments and so they suspended him.

A&E reasoned that the rest of the family would continue with the show.

They reasoned that no one would give up the popularity of such a show for their principles.

They reasoned that this family would care more for the money than they did for their God.

They reasoned wrong.

Immediately after the suspension, the family put out a news release: "We have had a successful working relationship with A&E but, as a family, we cannot imagine the show going forward without our patriarch at the helm. We are in discussions with A&E to see what that means for the future of 'Duck Dynasty.'"

You know what they were saying?

They were saying: "You suspend Daddy, you've suspended all of us.

You can roll those cameras all you like, but we won't be there to do the show."

They were saying: "We agree with Dad and we agree with God. And if we need to... we'll say goodbye to A&E."

In their case, A&E backed down... but it doesn't always work that way

ILLUS: Just recently Home and Garden Television (HGTV) canceled a do-it-yourself program hosted by a couple of Bible believers Jason & David Benham. They had spoken out about their view on issues like gay marriage and abortion and HGTV didn't like that... so they fired them.

But these were men of such integrity that they didn't care.

They were willing to seek first God's Kingdom... not theirs.

They were willing to pay the price for choosing God over their paycheck.

And Jesus said this would happen.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:11-12

Jesus said this was going to happen.

And He wants us to know that He's got our back.

"... seek 1st his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33

God knew the day would come when we'd have to make a choice, and He wanted you to know He watches for that and seeks the opportunity to reward you for taking that choice for His Kingdom and His righteousness.

When I was growing up, Christianity had such an influence on society that it generally honored God. But these days we're increasingly being faced with a culture that not only doesn't honor God, it is growing progressively and openly hostile to Him.

But it's in this kind of society and culture that we are called by God to Seek 1st His Kingdom.

It's in this culture that God calls us to choose Him over the world.

Jesus said "No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve BOTH God and Money." Matthew 6:24

You've got to choose.

And Jesus says: "Choose God."

Well, someone might say: "Well that's easy for the Robertson's. They've got all that money and everything is going well for them."

But that's not true.

First, they didn't always have "all that money".

In that interview Jase noted: "We were raised poor."

And he concluded "I was just as happy when we had nothing"

And Missy added "We've been very happy for 22 years before the money started coming in."

So for 22 years, Jase and Missy were happy... and financially they had nothing.

In fact, in another interview they expressed concern that their popularity and riches might prove to hurt their children and they've sought ways to counteract that pull away from God.

And life hasn't always been good to them.

Jase was one of the 3 kids that Phil kicked out of his home when his wife went to church. He was a very young boy when his father rejected his family. That's hard for any kid.

But then, when Jase & Missy got married, and they had 4 kids.

One of those children died in child birth (miscarried)
And the fourth child (Mia) suffered from birth defects - a cleft lip and palate - that required 5 very difficult surgeries to fix.

When his daughter was born, Jase confessed: "Here I am, worried about what she's going to look like, while the doctors aren't even sure she can breathe on her own. From that moment on, I stopped being so superficial. It's been a life-changing experience for me and Missy because of how shallow we used to think."

My point is this... this family struggled in life just like most of us have. And yet, they dealt with those struggles by believing God would be there for them. Their life was a lot like what Paul described in Philippians: "... I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
Philippians 4:11b-13

My point is this: the Robertson story is based on Matthew 6. They have literally built themselves around the idea of seeking first... God's Kingdom.

But they also built around the idea of seeking first God's righteousness.

Jase & Missy have made no secret of the fact that they were virgins when they got married. For them this was about choosing God's RIGHTEOUSNESS in their lives. They knew sleeping together before they got married would be wrong so they didn't.

(Now, if you didn't do it that way, the Bible teaches that He forgives all our sins, and rebuilds our lives and makes us like we've never sinned. But from the beginning of their lives, Jase & Missy made that choice to choose first God's righteousness.

But there are many in this world, who not only DON'T choose God's righteousness, but openly mock it. When GQ magazine interviewed the family that led to Phil Robertson's comments about homosexuality, the interviewer was openly hostile to the Christian lifestyle.

Jase noted: "(The interviewer) was using four-letter words, a lot of F-bombs, he was making fun of some of the things we hold true. The first statement of the whole process was, he looked at me and said, 'Do you actually expect people to believe that you waited until you got married before you had sex?'"

(http://cnsnews.com/news/article/michael-w-chapman/duck-dynasty-s-jase-robertson-gq-interview-it-felt-more-attack?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=Marketing&utm_term=Facebook&utm_content=Facebook&utm_campaign=N-Duck-Dynasty-GQ)

For those of who have not been raised in the church that dedication to God's righteousness doesn't make any sense. Why would anyone pass up enjoying the fun of drunken parties and sleeping with whoever would go to bed with them?

But what's really frustrating for God is that this kind of righteousness sometimes doesn't make any sense EVEN to Christians.

ILLUS: David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group wrote a book entitled "UnChristian" where he noted that "In virtually every study we conduct... 'born again' Christians fail to display much... evidence of transformed lives.

For instance, based on a study released in 2007, we found that most of the lifestyle activities of born again Christians were statistically equivalent to those of unbelievers. When asked to identify their activities over the last 30 days, born again believers were just as likely to as non-Christians to:

- visit a pornographic website,
- take something that did not belong to them,
- consult a medium or psychic,
- physically fight or abuse someone,
- consume enough alcohol to be considered legally drunk,
- use illegal drugs,
- say something to someone that was not true (lie)
- get back at someone for something he or she did,
- and to have said mean things behind another person's back."

I've been a preacher for over 30 years, and I have known people who've said they were "Christians" and gone to church, who have

- cursed like sailors
- told dirty jokes
- watched TV shows/movies filled with profanity and sexual innuendo
- spread malicious gossip
- have committed adultery/ or slept with their boyfriend/girlfriend

And the list could go on and on.

Why would so-called Christians act like that?

Well, they act like that because they've not sought God's Righteousness in their lives.

They figure, they're "nice people". Yes they do bad things once in a while, but they're not as bad as their neighbor/ friend/ relative.

When they compare themselves with others... and they don't look so bad.

And they believe that when they get to heaven God will compare their lifestyle with others and say "Well, you weren't as bad those folks... so you can come on in."

2 Corinthians 10:12b tells us "...When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise."

In other words, when I try to compare myself with someone else... I show that I'm not too smart.

Why? Because when I stand before the throne of God, God is not going to measure us on a sliding scale. We're not going to be compared to someone else's righteousness. We're going to end up being compared to HIS righteousness.

And if we believed we were getting into heaven on that standard, we'd be fools. If we had to depend on our own self-righteousness to get in... we'd all go to hell.

You see, God doesn't grade on the curve, He grades on the cross.
He doesn't compare us to others.
He sets the cross in front of us and tells us THIS is how you get into heaven..
You see, the cross declares that you and I don't have any self-righteousness to brag about.
We've been placed in the scale and found wanting.
The cross declares that none of us have been good enough to be good enough to get into heaven.

God doesn't grade on the curve... He grades on the cross
And it's on the cross that God forgives all of our sins... and we start out new
But we don't start out new so that we can go back to the old way of living.

Romans 5:20b tells us "...where sin increased, grace increased all the more"
In other words, by the grace of God our sins were forgiven. No matter what you've done, no matter how you've lived, no matter how messed up your life may be... nothing is too hard for God to forgive. No matter how "increased" your sin may be, God' grace increases to cover all of it. God can do that. Because He is God.

But then Paul played the devil's advocate. He basically says: If God's grace increases to cover all of our sins... then "Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?"
After all, if God enjoys forgiving our sins, why don't we sin a lot and make Him really happy?"

Then Paul continues: "By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Romans 6:1-4

We are not saved BY our righteousness.
We are saved to DO righteousness.

Once we've had our sins buried in the waters of baptism, God expects us to change our lives so that our lives glorify Him and don't bring Him shame. God forbid that we think we can get by with

- Cursing and telling dirty jokes
- Abuse the trust of others
- Sleep around OR "live together" with someone we say we love
- Do drugs/ abuse alcohol
- Or do any number of things we KNOW are wrong

Deeds like that bring shame to God, and gives satisfaction to the wicked because even they know that's not how we should live. Wallowing in sin hurts God and hurts our witness. And it damages us personally

As Jase Robertson noted: "If everybody chose to do it God's way, the world would be a lot better off. Think of all the guilt and all the disease."

Sin brings us guilt and shame... and disease.

But seeking HIS righteousness first in our lives protects us from all that and opens us up to joy and happiness.

I saw a post on Facebook last week that declared something like this:

"There's no way to happiness. Happiness is the way." (Buddha)

That's a lie.

Jesus is the way. And happiness is the destination. That is what Romans 14:17 promises:

"...the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"

I want to close with these final words from Jase Robertson. It sums up what it means to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness.

"I'm going to use whatever God blesses me with as a platform to tell the world that God is for you. He proved by sending His Jesus down here to die for us and be resurrected. And for us it gives us 2nd chances and it gives us hope. And so we spread that message everywhere. We say 'if God can use us, He can use anybody.'

That's our story and we're sticking to it."

That's your story.

That's the message you and I need to cling to and declare to the world around us. It's a message that says we aren't righteous enough to earn salvation. But we serve a God who is righteous enough to save us and change us... because God can use anybody, even us.

That's our story, and we're sticking to it.