

How Can God Rule in My Life?

Thomas Robinson, *New Year, Epiphany*, January 6, 2019

Matthew 6:19-34

¹⁹ “Don’t **treasure up treasures** for yourselves **on the earth**, where moth and rust make things disappear and where thieves break through and steal. ²⁰ But **treasure up treasures for yourselves in God’s realm** (heaven), where neither moth nor rust is ruining things and where thieves are neither breaking through nor stealing. ²¹ For **where your treasure is, there also will be your heart** (mind/purpose)!

²² The **lamp of the body is the eye**. So, if your eye is **simple** (generous, in focus), your whole **body** (person) will be **bright**, ²³ but if your **eye is evil** (envious, greedy), your whole **body** will go **dark**. Then if the **light** that’s in you is **darkness**, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ **No one can serve two lords**, for they’ll either **hate** the one and **love** the other, or be **devoted** to the one and **despise** the other. **You cannot be a servant to God and to Mammon**.

²⁵ **Because of this fact**, I tell you, **refuse to be anxious any more about your life** (*psyché*), what you’ll **eat** or what you’ll **drink**, or about **your body** (*soma*), what you’ll **wear**. Isn’t **your life** (*psyché*) **something more** than **food**, and **your body** than **clothing**?

²⁶ **Look at the birds of the heaven** (God’s realm): they aren’t **sowing** or **reaping** or **gathering** into barns, and **your heavenly Father is feeding** them. **Aren’t you more important than they are?**

²⁷ And which of you by **being anxious** can add a single arm’s-length to how long you live?

²⁸ And about **clothing**, why are you **anxious**? **Examine those lilies** in the field. How do they grow? They neither labor hard nor spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you, not even **Solomon in all his glory** was dressed like any one of them. ³⁰ But if **God is clothing the grass of the field** in this way, though it’s here today and tomorrow is thrown into an oven, is he not **much more clothing you?** **You of little faith!**

³¹ Therefore **refuse to be anxious**, saying, ‘What are we going to **eat?**’ or ‘What are we going to **drink?**’ or ‘What are we going to **wear?**’ – ³² the **nations**, of course, are avidly **seeking** all these things. Why refuse? Because **your heavenly Father knows that you need them all**.

³³ But **seek first God’s kingdom** (rule) and **his righteousness** (faithful justice), and **all these things will be his additions to you**.

³⁴ Therefore **refuse to be anxious as you anticipate tomorrow**, since tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for each day is its own trouble.”

Matthew 7:7-8

⁷ “**Ask**, and it will be **given** to you. **Seek**, and you will **find**. **Knock**, and it will be **opened** to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

Proverbs 28:22

²² “**A man with an evil eye** (a greedy/envious person) is in a hurry to get rich and doesn’t know that want will overtake him.”

Matthew 20:15

¹⁵ “Isn’t it permitted to me to do what I want with what is mine? Or **is your eye evil** (are you envious) because I am **generous?**”

Matthew 5:44-45, 48

⁴⁴ "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who oppress you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." ... ⁴⁸ You therefore will be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Matthew 6:10

¹⁰ "Let your kingdom come, let your will be done, as in heaven, so upon earth."

A New Year – Under God’s Rule!

Epiphany – The Magi come seeking the new king. Herod urges them to seek that king so that he may ‘worship’ (kill) him. Mt wants us to think intently about Jesus as God’s Messiah, King. “God’s kingdom is arriving” – breaking in. This is God’s work. Can we participate?

New Year – We stand in the crowd listening to Jesus: “Seek first God’s kingdom, God’s rule and God’s righteousness!” Good! I want God to rule in my life. But it sounds strange.

I don’t have to seek Herod’s rule or Rome’s. They impose it. God’s kingdom comes, but it relates to me as no other kingdom. Jesus says, “Seek it.” I say, “Just tell me the rules – sacrifices, rituals, purities, things forbidden, boundaries, who’s in/out, rules of worship, rewards, punishments.” Jesus looks at the rag-tag, expectant crowd: “Sure, that’s what I’ve been doing. Love God, neighbors, enemies. No anger. No sexual dominance, Speak truth. Don’t resist evil people, but turn your cheek. Don’t show off piety. Pray simply. Give generously. Don’t judge. Give to others what you’ve been given. Don’t worry about your life!”

I say, “But those aren’t good rules, good boundaries. They exclude me! They’re impossible.”

Jesus says, “That’s why I said, Seek!” Our life’s a quest to find the kingdom that already surrounds us but is always beyond us. That gives the only lasting meaning to our life.

Treasure, Vision, Service

Jesus talks us/the crowd through it in very down to earth images that take people seriously.

You (impoverished people) are treasure keepers. Where’s what you worry about, what matters to you? You live in this world and also in God’s realm. Put treasure there. SoM!

You have eyes to see, seek, perceive! If perception is clear, generous. Your life is bright. But if you become envious, coveting, comparing (evil eye), then darkness falls. “Greed clarifies”!?

Jesus identifies the two gods. God, whose kingdom you have to seek. Mammon, money, stuff, all the gods we create, power, sex, celebrity, ethnic dominance, control, family, etc. The god of the real, practical. He’s out there, selling us all the time. I’ll fulfill your dreams, secure you from your worries. You just need a little more of me, and more. We make our little god.

Anxiety and Vulnerability with Extras

Our anxiety makes Mammon very attractive. But Mammon is not a god, just stuff we make, like all idols. We serve/worship stuff and become stuff. Jesus: You’re “something more”!

Jesus tells the truth: Every day has trouble. You’re going to die like flowers and birds. That’s our world. But God cares for and delights in even passing creatures. You’re more. You can seek! Seek God’s very heart: kingdom, faithfulness. You have little faith! But you have faith!

Fight mammon’s sales pitch. Refuse anxiety! Stop the darkness. Open eyes can see God!

Seek boldly! Ask! Knock! God knows your needs. The stuff of mammon is generously added.