TITLE: PRIORITIES

TEXT: Mt. 6:25-32; 1 Co. 12:12-20; Mt. 6:19-21

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about priorities…

 When we talk about priority just what are we talking about?

**pri·or·i·ties**. **1.** Precedence especially established by order of importance or urgency. **4.** Something afforded or deserving prior attention.

 Everyone one of us here this morning have priorities, things that afford more of our attention than other things. Things we establish by order of importance.

 If we get up in the morning and brush our teeth before we get into the shower then we have prioritized brushing our teeth over taking a shower..

 If the lawn needs mowed and we want to go fishing and we choose to go fishing first and mow the lawn later then we have prioritized fishing over mowing the lawn.

 The question isn’t if we prioritize in our life or not, for each of us do many times a day, but the question is how do we prioritize? What do we prioritize?

 By our actions, what takes priority in our lives?

 Sometimes our priorities can get pretty messed up….

Example: On a 99-degree September day in San Antonio, Texas, a 10 month-old baby girl was accidentally locked inside a parked car by her aunt. Frantically the mother and aunt ran around the car in near hysteria while a neighbor attempted to unlock the car with a clothes hanger. But soon the infant was turning purple and had foam on her mouth.

 It had become a life-or-death situation when a wrecker driver who had been called arrived on the scene.

 When he saw what was happening and the condition of the little girl inside the car He grabbed a hammer and smashed the back window of the car to set the little girl free!

 Was he heralded a hero? He said, "The lady was mad at him because he broke the car window. His only reply to the angry woman was, Lady, what's more important--the baby or the car window?"

 Sometimes we find that our priorities can get pretty messed up, pretty out of order…

 Reminds me of the man I heard about who was driving his BMW around a curve when he realized the car was out of control and about to plummet over a cliff.

 The young man jumped out, but his left arm got caught and was severed from his body. He stood there looking down at his burning BMW and said, "Oh, no! My car! My car!" A man, who had stopped to help, said, "Mister, you have just lost your left arm, and you're crying about your car?" The young man looked down and said, "Oh no, my Rolex watch!"

 I believe all of us have trouble at times with our priorities in life, even we Christians. Maybe, especially as Christians!

 Jesus teaches us about priorities in Mt. 6…

**Matt 6:25 (NIV) "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?**

**26 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?**

**27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?**

**28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.**

**29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.**

30 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?

**31 So do not worry, saying, `What shall we eat?' or `What shall we drink?' or `What shall we wear?'**

**32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.**

**33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

 How much of our time and energy do we expend on things that don’t really matter that much? How often do we place, as top priority in our lives things which scripture assures us is temporal and passing away?

 That is what Jesus is talking about in Mat. 6!

 **Matt 6:25 (NIV) "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?**

**27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?**

**31 So do not worry, saying, `What shall we eat?' or `What shall we drink?' or `What shall we wear?'**

 Is Jesus saying that if we are hungry that we shouldn’t think about food or that we shouldn’t be concerned about our appearance, what we wear?

 NO, not at all!

 Jesus Himself says that our Heavenly Father knows that we need these things. That they are often necessary. That they are important…

 Jesus is just saying that they these things shouldn’t be the most important to us. That there is something else that we should give a higher place of priority to in our lives!

**33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

 But seek **first** His Kingdom and His righteousness!

**4412 proton {pro'-ton}**

**1) first in time or place**

**1a) in any succession of things or persons**

**2b) chief, 2c) principal**

As Christians we are to prioritize our life by making God the top priority in our lives! Make Him first in time and in place! Place Him and His Kingdom and His righteousness above everything else in this life.

 Jesus assures us that our heavenly Father knows our needs and wants and desires but that they shouldn’t be placed as a higher priority in our lives then our relationship with God.

 He says: **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

 As a Christian what is it that takes top priority in our life today?

 Are we giving God the number one spot?

 Does he take precedence over anything and everything else?

 Example: Back in the days when I used to go hunting a lot I often worked a 50 or 60 hour week. I hardly ever had a weekend day off. If I did get a Sunday off during Pheasant season I would undoubtedly stay home from Church to go hunting. I would say, well I can worship God out in nature.

 While it’s true that we can and should worship God everywhere we are, in all truth, I wasn’t doing that while I was hunting. I was simply enjoying myself without much thought going to God. What I did was place my desire to hunt in a higher place of priority than going to worship God at Church.

You see we can worship God in nature but that is not all there is to Church fellowship—God has placed me within the body for you and He has placed you within the body for me.

 We have been placed here by God for each other to corporately worship God together and come together to build up and encourage one another.

 Listen what the Apostle Paul has to say about the body of Christ?

 **1Cor 12:12 (NIV) The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.**

**13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.**

14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

**15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.**

**16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.**

**17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?**

**18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.**

**19 If they were all one part, where would the body be?**

**20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.**

 **The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.**

 If you have ever experienced the loss of a body part you know the truth of what Scripture is saying here!

 Example: Several years ago I lost use of my left arm for quite a while due to a compound fracture, I have had little use of my right arm the last several months because of a broken right shoulder and arm…..The rest of my body has picked up the slack but it has caused a strain on the rest of my body!

 I am sure many of you have experienced the same thing. That when one part of our bodies suffers the rest of our body suffers right along with it.

Paul says:

 So it is in the body of Christ!

**1Cor 12:12 (NIV) The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.**

**18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.**

And when a body part is missing it will be missed!

 Whether it is in our physical bodies or the corporate body of Christ!

 If any particular part is missing the body loses the wholeness that God intended.

 The body will get by; it will still function, but not as well as it would if all the parts are present and working in harmony together.

Let me ask you this question this morning?

 What is it that will keep you from Church fellowship?

 What is it that will keep you from spending time in God’s Word?

 What is it that will keep you from spending time with God in prayer?

 What is it that will keep you from going out into the world in which you live sharing your testimony, and in that way sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others?

 If you can think of anything that will keep you out of Church fellowship or keep you from spending time with God in His Word and in prayer or keep you from sharing the gospel, then realize that you have placed that thing, whatever it may be, as a higher priority in your life then God!

 It may be something good, something even necessary, but if we choose to do it in place of God then we have given that thing, as good and necessary as it may be, a higher place of priority in our life than that of God!

 Do you know what something becomes when we place it in a higher place of priority in our lives then God?

 It then becomes an idol in our life!

 Again, it can be a something good! Family, friends, sports, hunting, fishing, golfing, cleaning the house, washing the clothes, reading a good book or a myriad of other things…

 But if we choose them above God, give them a higher place of priority in our lives then we do Him then those things have become an idol to us!

The Lord God says: **But seek first My kingdom and My righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

 If we Give God first place in our life, Give Him top priority, then he will make us a better Husband or a better wife or a better mom & dad! If we always put Him first by seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness, He will enable us to be a better friend or employee or employer!

 If we strive to Give God first place in our life in all that we do, then we will enjoy that hunting or fishing trip even more!

 As we seek His kingdom and His righteousness first in our life, He will give us the needed time and energy and time management to get the laundry done and the house cleaned and the lawn mowed!

 Giving God 1st priority in our lives will not take away from anything but will enhance everything; will make every area of our life more enjoyable and pleasurable!

 Just previous to these verses in Matthew Jesus also talks about priorities….

 **Matt 6:19 (NIV) "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.**

**20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.**

**21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

 How is this about priorities?

 How many of us place our jobs or the acquiring of more and more wealth or acquiring more and more things as a higher priority than our relationship with God and striving to advance His Kingdom?

 How many of us have prioritized the storing up of earthly treasure more than our storing up for ourselves heavenly treasure?

 It is said that Sigmund Freud's favorite story was about a sailor shipwrecked on one of the South Sea Islands. He was seized by the natives, hoisted to their shoulders, carried to the village, and set on a crude throne.

 Little by little, he learned that it was their custom once each year to make some man a king, king for a year. He liked the idea until he began to wonder what happened to all the former kings. Soon he discovered that every year when his kingship was ended, the king was banished to a barren island, where he slowly starved to death. The sailor did not like that, but he was smart and he was king, king for a year. So he put his carpenters to work making boats, his farmers to work transplanting fruit trees to the island, farmers growing crops, masons building houses. So when his kingship was over, he was banished, not to a barren island, but to an island of abundance.

 This is a good parable of life: We're all kings here, kings for a little while in that we are all able to choose what we shall do with the stuff of this life.

 We can either take this time to store up for ourselves earthly treasure that will one day pass away, will rot and decay, fall apart and become worthless and death will finally separate us from it….

 Or we can utilize this time that God has given us to store up for ourselves heavenly treasure! Treasure that will not rot or decay or fall apart! Treasure that will be waiting for us safe and secure in eternity!

 The treasure that results from having placed God first in our lives!

 The treasure of living a life sanctified and set apart for Him!

 Living a life prioritizing Him where we have given Him our all!

 As a Christian our priorities are to be the priorities of Christ Jesus!

 How did Christ prioritize His life?

 I think that it can be summed up in one phrase..

 When facing the most painful and cruel form of death, death on a cross for your and my sin, In speaking to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane He simply says, none the less, not My will but Your will be done…

 The priority of Christ is that He sacrificed Himself for you and for me…

 And He expects no less from you and I, His Church.

 To sacrificially give of ourselves for Him! To have our #1 priority in this life to be spending time with Him.

 Seeking Him and His righteousness first in our life.

Being the body part that He has called us to be within His body, the Church.

 Devoting ourselves to Church fellowship, being there to encourage and uplift, and at times admonish one another in love.

 Having a burden for lost souls and doing whatever we can to reach just one more lost soul for Christ while we still have the opportunity to do so….

 Some years ago, the publishing house of Grosset & Dunlap brought together a panel of 28 educators and historians and asked them to select the hundred most significant events of history, and then list those events in order of importance.

 After months of labor, the panel reported that they considered the most significant event of history to be the discovery of America. In second place was the invention of movable type by Gutenberg. Eleven different events tied for third place and five events tied for fourth place. The events tying for fourth were the writing of the Constitution of our country, the development of ether, the development of the x-ray, the discovery of the airplane, and the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus tied for fourth.

 If you were asked that question, what place would you give Jesus? What place does Jesus have in your life?

 By the life that you live, what priority does Jesus have?

 Is He #4, #5, #3, #2 or have you made Him the #1 priority in your life?

 Are we truly seeking His kingdom and His righteousness first in our life each and every day?

 Is the priority of Jesus being manifest in the life that we live by being manifest in the day to day choices that we make?

 How are you prioritizing your life?

 What place have you given, what place will you give to Jesus?

 He and only He is worthy of the first place of priority in our lives….

**But seek first My kingdom and My righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**