

"SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM"  
PHILIPPIANS 4:19-20  
TWENTY-FIRST S. A. PENTECOST  
MESSIAH, BOERNE  
OCTOBER 22, 2023

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY  
SPIRIT. AMEN.

READ TEXT: "AND MY GOD WILL MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING  
TO HIS GLORIOUS RICHES IN CHRIST JESUS. TO OUR  
GOD AND FATHER BE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER.  
AMEN." (VV 19-20)

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

JAKOV SMIRNOFF, THE RUSSIAN COMEDIAN, TALKS ABOUT HIS  
ARRIVAL IN AMERICA IN ONE OF HIS COMEDY ROUTINES. HE SAYS  
THAT THE FIRST TIME HE VISITED A LOCAL SUPERMARKET IN  
AMERICA, HE WAS VERY IMPRESSED. SURE, HE WAS IMPRESSED BY  
THE ABUNDANCE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES AVAILABLE TO THE  
PUBLIC, BUT HE WAS ESPECIALLY IMPRESSED BY THE INGENUITY OF  
AMERICAN PACKAGING. HE EXPLAINS:

I WENT DOWN ONE AISLE AND SAW POWDERED MILK: JUST ADD  
WATER AND YOU GET MILK. I WENT DOWN ANOTHER AISLE AND  
SAW POWDERED ORANGE JUICE: JUST ADD WATER AND YOU GET  
ORANGE JUICE. I WENT DOWN A THIRD AISLE AND SAW BABY  
POWDER. I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, "WHAT A COUNTRY!"

WE CERTAINLY DO LIVE IN A WONDERFUL COUNTRY, DON'T WE?  
IT'S TRULY AMAZING HOW AMERICAN INGENUITY CAN PACKAGE FOOD  
IN SUCH A WAY THAT A SMALL CONTAINER OF SOMETHING CAN FEED  
MANY PEOPLE. YET, WHEN I THINK ABOUT GOD, THE MAKER AND  
RULER OF ALL THINGS, AND HOW HE SENT HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON  
INTO THE WORLD AS A BABY TO REDEEM THE WORLD, I NOT ONLY

THINK TO MYSELF BUT ALSO MUST EXCLAIM, "WHAT A GOD!" AND WHEN I CONSIDER THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND POSITIVE CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE HERE AT MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE, I NOT ONLY THINK TO MYSELF BUT ALSO MUST PROCLAIM, "WHAT A WONDERFUL GOD WE HAVE!"

OVER THE PAST FOUR WEEKS WE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING A SPECIAL SERIES OF SERMONS ENTITLED "SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM." THE SERMONS HAVE BEEN BASED ON VARIOUS TEXTS FROM PAUL'S LETTER OF LOVE AND JOY TO THE CHRISTIANS OF PHILIPPI, FOLLOWING THE THEME FROM JESUS' PROMISE TO HIS DISCIPLES, "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE ADDED TO YOU" (MT 6:33). WE HAVE CONSIDERED THE GOOD WORK OF SALVATION GOD BEGAN IN US AS HE SOUGHT US, PROVIDED FOR US, AND MADE US PART OF HIS KINGDOM. MANY OF YOU HAVE RESPONDED POSITIVELY BY MAKING COMMITMENTS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH. YET YOUR SUPPORT IS SHOWN NOT ONLY FOR OUR CONGREGATION, BUT ALSO FOR OUR WIDER COMMUNITY AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE WILLINGNESS OF SO MANY OF YOU TO GIVE OF YOUR TIME, TALENTS, AND TREASURES THROUGH YOUR PARTNERSHIPS WITH VARIOUS CHURCH AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS. ALL THIS—THE GIVING OF ONESELF IN BODY, MIND, SOUL, AND SPIRIT TO THE

LORD AND TO ONE ANOTHER—IS THE FULFILLMENT OF ALL THAT IS MEANT BY "SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM."

"SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM"—THAT'S WHAT JESUS WAS DOING WHEN HE, "BEING IN VERY NATURE GOD, DID NOT CONSIDER EQUALITY WITH GOD SOMETHING TO BE GRASPED," THAT IS, HELD ONTO AT ALL COSTS, "BUT MADE HIMSELF NOTHING, TAKING THE VERY NATURE OF A SERVANT, BEING MADE IN HUMAN LIKENESS" (2:6-7). CHRIST EMPTIED HIMSELF OF HIS DIVINE PREROGATIVE AS THE SON OF GOD, WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WOMB OF THE VIRGIN MARY, AND BECAME A HUMAN BEING, THE SERVANT OF ALL. THE STORY OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION, OF "THE WORD MADE FLESH" (JN 1:14), IS THE STORY OF HOW JESUS SOUGHT FIRST GOD'S KINGDOM FOR THE SALVATION OF ALL PEOPLE.

"SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM"—THAT'S WHAT JESUS WAS DOING WHEN HE OVERCAME THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE DEVIL IN THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA (MT 4:1-11). CHRIST DID NOT BOW DOWN AND WORSHIP SATAN, EVEN WHEN HE WAS OFFERED ALL THE RICHES OF ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD, EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A MUCH EASIER WAY TO ATTAIN HIS GOAL THAN THE WAY OF THE CROSS. INSTEAD, HE RELIED ON THE TRUTHFULNESS OF GOD'S WORD, TRUSTED IN HIS PROMISES, "HUMBLED HIMSELF, AND BECAME OBEDIENT" TO GOD'S COMMANDS. THE STORY OF JESUS' TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS IS THE STORY OF HOW CHRIST

SOUGHT FIRST GOD'S KINGDOM SO THAT HE MIGHT SUPPLY US WITH ALL THAT WE NEED IN THIS EARTHLY LIFE.

"SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM"—THAT'S WHAT JESUS WAS DOING WHEN HE ENTERED JERUSALEM TO THE SOUNDS OF PRAISE FROM GIRLS AND BOYS, MEN AND WOMEN. THE PEOPLE REJOICED THAT THEIR MESSIAH HAD FINALLY COME TO JERUSALEM TO RECEIVE HIS KINGDOM, YET THEIR JOY WOULD SOON TURN TO SORROW WHEN FIVE DAYS LATER HE WOULD BE CRUCIFIED. THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST IS THE STORY OF HOW JESUS SOUGHT FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH SUFFERING AND "DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS" (2:8), SO THAT WE MIGHT HAVE THE GIFT OF NEW LIFE IN HIM. IN FACT, BECAUSE CHRIST JESUS HUMBLED HIMSELF AND BECAME A HUMAN BEING, LIVED A PERFECT LIFE ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL, SUFFERED, DIED ON THE CROSS, AND ROSE FROM THE GRAVE ON EASTER MORNING, GOD IS ABLE TO "MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO HIS GLORIOUS RICHES IN CHRIST JESUS" (V 19).

TODAY IS THE DAY ON WHICH WE CULMINATE OUR STEWARDSHIP EMPHASIS, "SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM." NEXT SUNDAY WE WILL OBSERVE AND CELEBRATE THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION, A MOVEMENT IN WHICH LUTHER AND OTHER REFORMERS COURAGEOUSLY DEMONSTRATED THEIR FAITH AND DEVOTION TO THE LORD AND THE TEACHINGS OF HIS WORD. OF COURSE, THEIR SACRIFICES, WHATEVER THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN, WERE FASHIONED AFTER THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE OF OUR LORD JESUS WHO, "THROUGH HE

WAS RICH, YET FOR OUR SAKES BECAME POOR, SO THAT THROUGH HIS POVERTY" WE MIGHT BECOME RICH. BY OUR LIFE OF WORSHIP, OUR DAILY LIVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD, AND OUR FIRSTFRUITS GIVING, WE DEMONSTRATE THAT WE KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO "SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM."

CHRIST JESUS LEFT THE GLORIOUS RICHES OF HEAVEN AND TOOK ON HUMAN FLESH AND BLOOD. HE HUMBLED HIMSELF AND BECAME "A SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT," SACRIFICING HIS OWN BODY AND SHEDDING HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD ON THE CROSS OF CALVARY, SO THAT YOU AND I MIGHT BE "JUSTIFIED FREELY BY [GOD'S] GRACE," THAT IS, FORGIVEN ALL OUR SINS AND RESTORED AS CHILDREN OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER (ROM 3:24-25).

THEREFORE, GOD EXALTED [JESUS] TO THE HIGHEST PLACE AND GAVE HIM THE NAME THAT IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH AND UNDER THE EARTH, AND EVERY TONGUE CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER. (2:9-11)

JESUS SOUGHT FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO GIVE GOD THE GLORY, AND SO DO WE.

WE ARE LIKE THE BRICKS OF MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH LAID BY A MASTER BRICKLAYER. THE BRICKLAYER LAID A BRICK ON A BED OF CEMENT. THEN, WITH A PRECISE STROKE OF HIS TROWEL, HE SPREAD ANOTHER LAYER AND, WITHOUT A WASTED MOVEMENT, LAID ANOTHER BRICK. THE FOUNDATION GREW VISIBLY, THE BUILDING ROSE, TALL AND STRONG, AND BECAME A HOUSE OF

WORSHIP FOR ALL PEOPLE—MEN AND WOMEN, BOYS AND GIRLS. WHEN WE TAKE THE SAME ATTITUDE AS THAT OF CHRIST JESUS, THAT OF EMPTYING OURSELVES AND MAKING OURSELVES NOTHING IN SERVICE TO OTHERS, WE ARE LIKE THAT BRICK AT THE BASE OF THE BUILDING. NO ONE SEES IT, BUT IT ACCOMPLISHES ITS TASK, AND THE OTHER BRICKS NEED IT. AND, YOU KNOW, IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER YOU OR I ARE AT THE ROOFTOP OR AT THE BASE OF THE LORD'S BUILDING, HIS CHURCH, AS LONG AS WE STAND FAITHFULLY AT THE RIGHT PLACE, LIKE MARTIN LUTHER, ON THE INSPIRED, INERRANT, INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD.

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, THE GLORY FOR BUILDING UP AND FURTHERING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH ON EARTH IS NOT OURS. ALL THE GLORY BELONGS TO THE MASTER BRICKLAYER, WHO IS CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD, BOTH NOW AND FOREVERMORE. MAY GOD STRENGTHEN YOU AND ME AS WE CONTINUE TO SERVE HIM FAITHFULLY HERE AT MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH AND GO FORWARD INTO THE WORLD AS PEOPLE WHO TRULY KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO "SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM." AMEN.

WE NOW RECEIVE OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE LORD. . . .

WE NOW RECEIVE OUR OFFERINGS FOR THE LORD.