“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.”
(Mt 6:33)

The major preoccupation people usually have is searching for what will make their lives more secure. Perhaps this applies to you as well. If so, Jesus lays out before you his own way of looking at things and presents you with his plan of action. He requires from you a behavior totally different from what society would expect, not only once, but always. It is this: “seek first the kingdom of God.”

When you redirect your whole being toward God and do everything for his kingdom within yourself and in others (that is, ordering your whole life with his laws), the Father will give you what you need day after day.

If, on the other hand, you are preoccupied above all with yourself, you will end up caring mainly for the things of this world and fall victim to them. You will end up seeing the goods of this world as *your* real business, the *goal* of all your efforts. And therein arises the serious temptation of relying solely on your own strength and less on God ...

Jesus changes the situation. If living for him is your first concern, “these things” will no longer be the main business of your life; rather, they will be given to you “in addition” to other things or as a “surplus.”

Is this utopia? Are his words difficult for you as a modern person living in an industrialized world that is highly competitive and often in economic crises? I wish to remind you that at the time Jesus uttered these words, the concrete difficulties of life among the Galileans were no less serious than our own.

We are not talking about whether it is a utopia or not. Jesus places this fundamental choice

before you: to live your life for yourself or to live it for God.

Let us try to understand well these words: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.”

Jesus does not propose that you become passive or do nothing with regard to earthly things, nor that you be irresponsible or superficial at work. Rather, he wishes you to change being “concerned about” things into being “concerned with” things, and set you free from anxiety, fear and restlessness.

In fact he says, “Seek first the kingdom.” “First” means “above all else.” The search for God’s kingdom should be given priority and does not exclude the Christian from being concerned with the necessities of life.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” also means living in conformity with God’s desires as revealed by Jesus in his Gospel. Only by seeking the kingdom of God do Christians experience the wonderful power of the Father working in their favor.

Let me tell you a story. It took place some time ago, but I find it relevant here. In fact I know many other young people who live as this young woman did.

Her name was Elvira. At that time she was ending her secondary education. She was poor, and she could continue her studies only if she maintained high grades. She had a strong faith. Her philosophy professor was an atheist and he often presented the truths of her faith in a confused and distorted manner. On such occasions, Elvira felt a strong reaction rising up inside her, not for herself but for the love she had for God, for truth and for her classmates. She knew that if she contradicted the professor she stood a chance of getting a failing grade. In spite of this, however, she would raise her hand and beg to speak, saying, “Professor, that’s not true.” At times she did not have all the elements to present her arguments, but her words “that’s not true” embodied her entire faith, which was a gift of truth and made people question what the professor was saying.

Her classmates loved her and tried to persuade her to stop contradicting this professor, because they feared the consequences for her, but they did not succeed.

A few months later, when the grade cards were distributed, Elvira took hers with trembling hands. Then her heart leapt for joy: she got an A in philosophy! The highest grade!

She had sought, first of all, that God and his truth would reign, and then the rest was given to her.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,

and all these things will be given you besides.”

If you seek the kingdom of the Father, you will experience that God is providence for all the needs of your life. You will discover how normal the extraordinary ways of the Gospel can be.

- Chiara Lubich

If you would like to read experiences of life related to this or to past “Words of Life,” they can be found in *Living City*, the monthly magazine of the Focolare Movement (in print or online) or in books published by *New City Press*.

For information, to subscribe or to order the special issue of *Living City* dedicated to Chiara Lubich, write to: *Living City*, 202 Cardinal Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538; phone: 1-845-229-0230 ext: 181; e-mail: *livingcity@livingcitymagazine.com*. www.*livingcitymagazine.com*; www.*newcitypress.com*.

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