

Matthew 5:10 The 'Be' Attitudes "Blessed Are the Persecuted"

11.1.15

1. Matthew 11:28

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

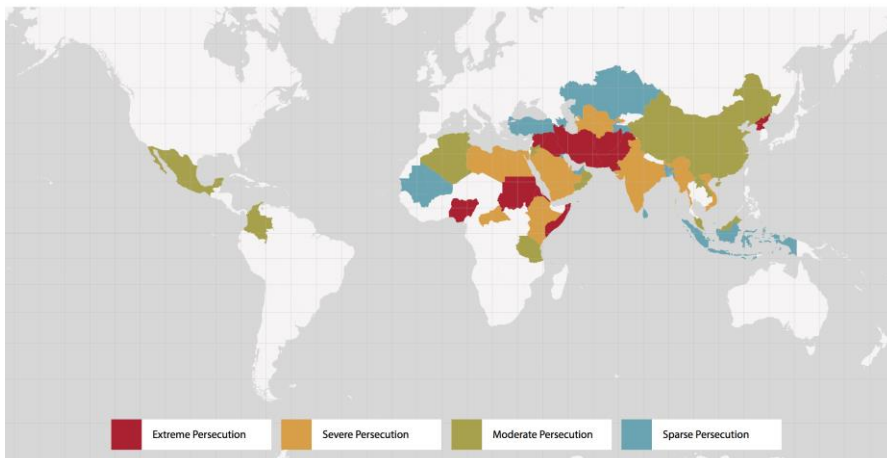
Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Matthew, chapter 5, verse 10.

We have made it to the last beatitude and it's so rich and so deep in it's culmination that it encompasses not just one phrase as the others did...but, Jesus gives us three (3) verses in order to express His teaching and instruction.

Matthew 5:10-12

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Amazingly, today is the International Day of Prayer for the persecuted Church. No coincidence. Did you know that more than 180 Christians are killed each month throughout the world for their faith in Christ? Take a look at this map. It shows extreme persecution of Christians in dark red...followed by...



SEVERE persecution in orange, MODERATE persecution in green and SPARCE persecution in blue. Do you know what I believe? I believe at the rate we are going in this country, we'll soon be in blue.

The message this morning is for everyone, as all messages from this pulpit are... Yet, this message is one in which I really want the young people in the room to listen to very intently. Why? Because it's those of you in the room who are preteens and teenagers who are going to face the most severe persecution this country has ever known for being a Christian.

I want to begin this morning with three examples. I want to show you a picture of a football coach in Washington State.



Have you heard about this man? That's Bremerton High School Assistant Football Coach, Joe Kennedy. He's in big trouble. Why? For doing this...



After each game, Coach Kennedy goes to the middle of the field and takes a knee and prays...thanking God for protecting the team and looking after them. Well, Washington State Education Superintendent has told him to stop doing that. In essence Coach Kennedy was told he could be fired if he continued praying.

Now understand this. Coach Kennedy has been going (by himself) since the 2008 season (after he saw the movie "Facing the Giants"). Inspired from that point forward, Kennedy went to the 50-yard line at the end of games to pray. He never asked any of the team to come join him. He went alone... Yet, over time, most of the team chose and ASKED to go with him and listen to him as he prays and thanks God for blessing the team (win or lose).

But, of course that offended someone and he was told to stop. Yet, he continued to go anyway... Do you want to know if he has the support from the team and the community? You better believe it. Take a look...



Yet, the Superintendent and the school district says that he must now pray in private. They have offered him a space to let him pray after games, under this one condition: that it will be in a place that is "not observable to students or the public." The School District insists, "Any further violations will be grounds for discipline, up to and including discharge from District employment." And on Thursday, Coach Kennedy was placed on paid administrative leave and is not allowed on campus. He was told: quote: "You may not participate, in any capacity, in BHS football program activities."

Folks, that's persecution if I've ever seen it. Wouldn't you agree? Considering all that's happening in our schools with the shootings and all the violence...you've got to be kidding me... A coach

praying in the middle of a football field thanking God for blessing the teams is reason and cause for a man to lose his job! Are you serious!!! And this is what it's come to in America. Amazing!

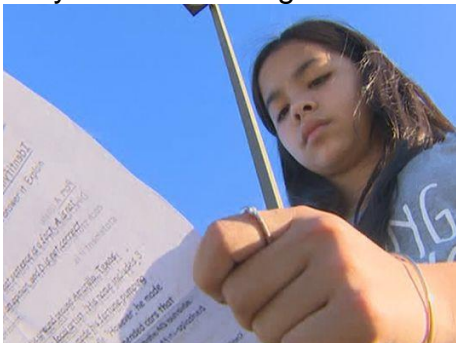
Now understand this: The school's decision isn't rooted in the law. Teachers, coaches, administrators—or public employees of any kind—don't lose their religious freedom when they step on school property. To insist otherwise is a violation of their civil rights. The Liberty Institute is defending Coach Kennedy and they are now suing the School District.

One last thing that's amazingly ironic about Coach Kennedy...

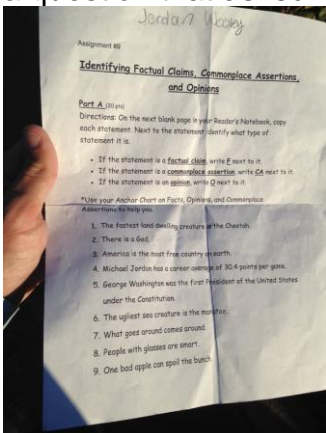


Joe Kennedy is a former Marine and is a veteran of two wars. He served and fought for our country for 20 years defending our nation's freedom only to have his stolen. He said last week, "All I wanted to do was pray -- and now I can't even pray at all." That's persecution and it's here in America.

Do you see this 7th grader from Katy, TX? This is Jordan Wooley.



She was given an assignment in her 7th grade class that included a question that asked if God was fact or opinion. Here's a copy of the assignment:

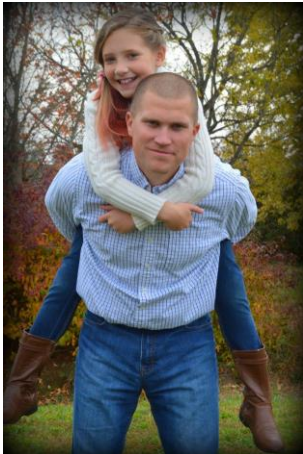


She said that God was a fact and is real. She was told by her teacher her answer was wrong and if she chose to answer the question that way, she would fail the assignment. Jordan didn't back down. She went to the next School Board meeting and protested. Here's a picture of that...

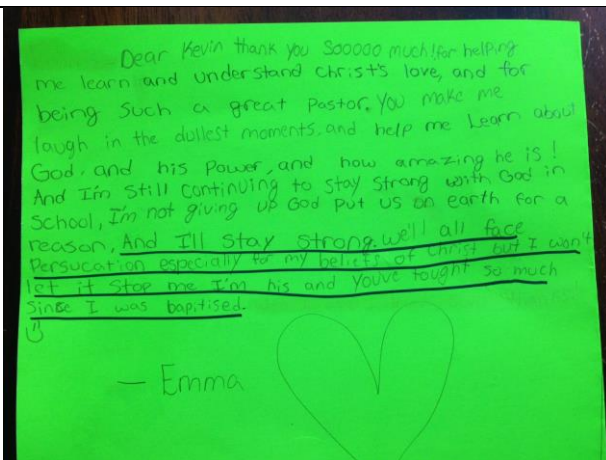


Get this, because of her courage...the School Board told the teacher the assignment was not appropriate and Jordan did not fail the assignment. That's a 13-year-old standing for truth folks! She's 13!!! How many of you would go to a School Board meeting and stand for the Lord? Hey...how many of us will take a stand for God with our friends, much less in front of total strangers.

Pastor Dale, Pastor Brad and I have been so blessed by all the kind notes of encouragement during Pastor Appreciation month. Thank you so very much! One of my favorites came from Emma Golds. This is Jessica riding on her Daddy's (Wesley's) back...



Here's Emma's note to me. I want you to see what I've underlined.



“And I’ll stay strong. We’ll all face persecution, especially for my belief of Christ, but I won’t let it stop me. I’m His and you’ve taught so much since I was baptized.” Emma

WOW!!!!

You see, on this International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, I’m tired of giving up ground to Satan. All the ground that we’ve gained as Christians that we’ve been blessed with since

the Pilgrims and Puritans came to America 400 years ago is being given up by my generation and the generation behind me... As Christians in American over the last 40 years, we've been in PUNT MODE. This is us... I want you to get this picture in your mind...



This is American Christianity. We are in PUNT MODE. And get this...we're not punting on fourth down. We punt on first down. We don't even try anymore. Why? Because we're afraid? Face the Giants. No! Hide from the GIANTS! That's our mode! Punt team! Punt team!

We're scared to death to stand for Jesus. The Progressive Liberals, the media, the atheists, the agnostics...they've got us hiding in the closets. I mean we're absolutely petrified. We won't even like something on Facebook that might be the least bit controversial...even though it's taking a stand on the Word of God, because we are afraid. Most won't pray over their meal at a restaurant or the school cafeteria because of fear of being seen as weird.

Come on...Lose our job for our faith, like Coach Kennedy? Go to School Board Meeting like Jordan Wooley. No way. Let's just crouch in our holy huddles on Sundays in our churches and pat ourselves on the back because we're good little, non-offending, non-confrontational...non-Gospel sharing Christians.

Folks do you understand what is happening here? Do you understand Satan's agenda? Satan has pushed us into our churches cowering in fear. He wants to keep us trembling and confined within the walls of our churches and that way the Gospel is blunted and shut off to the rest of the world. If he can't get us to deny Jesus outright, he just hopes to shut us up by clammimg us up in fear.

Oh church family, see the words of Jesus again and watch who will be persecuted.

Matthew 5:10

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Who will be persecuted? Those who stand for RIGHEOUSNESS!

Can I ask you a question this morning? Are you ever persecuted for your stand on righteousness? Are you maligned and reviled because you stand on God's Word and the teachings of Jesus to the point that people hate you? Look at what happened to the OT prophets for their stand...

Matthew 5:11-12

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,

for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Listen to me carefully...this is so critical. If you as a Christian today in this country and you choose to stand on, believe in and trust in 2000 years of traditional orthodox teaching from the Bible, (not this flakey kind of unorthodox universalism that's being taught today), you WILL BE labeled an extremist, a bigot, a fool and now a Right wing terrorist.

Did you hear? On Monday, October 19th the Obama Administration via the Justice Department and Assistant Attorney General, John Carlin...



...announced the creation of a new czar position. I want you to guess who is listed along with ISIS, Hamas, the KKK and Al-Qaeda? Yep, you got it "fundamentalist Christians." What's a fundamentalist Christian? Someone who believes in the fundamentals of the Bible...like a fetus is actually a baby. Marriage is God-designed institution intended for one man and one woman for life. Yes...if you believe those things...you could be on the Obama Administration's Dept. of Justice potential watch-list along with ISIS and the KKK. Amazing!

Folks, do you understand what we're up against? We are living in a world and in a country that is growing more and more hostile toward Christians who believe in righteousness, teach righteousness and live righteously as the Bible teaches. Does this describe you? If not, why not?

Turn with me for a moment to John 15, verse 18.

Jesus is in the upper room and He has just washed His disciples feet. He is preparing them for what is to come. He's been training them for close to three years and now He's going to give them their marching orders. (I'll go ahead and tell you...they are ours too.)

John 15:18-22

18 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. **19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. **20** Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. **21** But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. **22** If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

"They have no excuse for their sin," and that's precisely the issue and why the persecution comes and why the world hates us. Why else would the world hate us? Do they hate us because we are the most generous and mission-sending group of people on the face of the earth? Do they hate us because we have started more food kitchens and clothing closets than any people on the planet? No!

The reason people hate Christians is because we use the words of Jesus to call people to repent of their sins. We ask people to follow Jesus by denying themselves and choosing to give their allegiance, trust and whole hearts to Him.

Listen, today in our culture there has become sort of a benign, compromising type of Christianity that is so watered down that it has no power. It's the type of Christianity that accepts everything...no matter how ungodly, unbiblical and unrighteous it might be. What's happened in many denominations and churches today is that there has been an all out effort to strip out any call for repentance and any mention of righteousness when sharing the Gospel.

Church family that can't happen here. That would go against the teaching of Jesus and this very beatitude. We've got to stand for the truth no matter the cost and we've got to help our so-called Christian friends from trying to strip the Gospel of it's impact by trying to take the confrontation out of it just so we can make it more palatable for people... because when we do this, all we are doing is stripping the truth from the Gospel to the point where it is no longer the saving truth at all.

You see, we've tried to make the Gospel inoffensive and tolerable. We've tried to remove the parts of the Gospel that call for change in a person's life and still call it the Good News. Folks, that's not the Good News, no...we've turned it into BAD NEWS. How? Because a person who can supposedly come to Christ and NOT be totally transformed by Him, to the point that the power of Christ changes their lives, their actions and their behavior, delivering them from there sin, then you know what...if that hasn't happened...they're still lost in their sin. And that's BAD NEWS! Oh, don't be guilty of wilting and being driven to timidity in sharing the true Gospel

that transforms.

Look at verse 23.

John 18:23-27

23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. **24** If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. **25** But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' **26** "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. **27** And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Jesus said, "You also will bear witness..." Will you? If you do bear witness of the true, Biblical Jesus, not the worldly, weak, wimpy Jesus, then you WILL BE HATED.

But, if you want to escape persecution, you can do that. Just approve what the world approves. Bake the cakes, make the t-shirts, issue the marriage licenses, call the unborn fetuses instead of a babies; go ahead affirm it all! Approve it all! Or worst case... just keep your mouth shut...go to your appointed closet where no one will see you...like the Washington State School Superintendent would want you to do.

So, COME ON Jordan Wooley just go along with what your 7th grade teacher says. Don't fight it Emma Golds and that way you won't be persecuted my dear little friend. Get off the field and go home and pray Coach Kennedy! Accept the world's morals, PUNT TEAM!!! We give up! And all the religious rights that were fought for and died for will go up in smoke around us.

No! Don't tell people they are sinners. Don't confront them with the fact that they are lost without Christ. Don't ever talk about Hell. Don't talk about the truths of Scripture. NO! Just be politically correct. Just keep your head down and do your thing. Keep having the attitude of "Me and mine...we're fine" and quit worrying about everyone else. Quit putting stress in your life. And let's just figure out which football game we want to watch this afternoon and what we're having for lunch.

Well, let me tell you what else Jesus said...

Luke 9:26

26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Can I remind you what the first century Christians endured for Jesus? It wasn't a bad grade on a 7th grade assignment in Katy, TX or even paid leave from a job in Bremerton, WA. This is what happened to them.



Nero wrapped Christians in pitch and set them on fire and used them as live torches to light his gardens and his parties and the streets of Rome. He had Christians sewn into the skins of wild animals and then released to be run down by dogs who ripped them apart. Christians were boiled alive. Christians had molten lead poured on the heads. Christians had hot brass plates affixed to the most tender parts of their bodies. Their eyes were gouged out. Their hands and feet were burned while cold water was poured on them to lengthen the agony.

Jesus' words are so simple...yet so profoundly gut-wrenching...

Matthew 5:10

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Christian author, A.W. Pink said this:

"It is a strong proof of human depravity that men's curses and Christ's blessings should meet on the same persons." A.W. Pink, Christian Author

Think about that. Who would have thought that Christian men and women and even Christian boys and girls could be persecuted, hated and reviled by having all kinds of terrible things said about them just because they are righteous.

Mind-boggling isn't it?

You see, when you tell the truth, the Biblical truth that will change people's lives, they will love you for it...those who truly come to Christ by repenting of their sins being set free by the grace and mercy of Christ's death on the cross. But those who reject Jesus...they will hate you and they will hate your message exposing them.

Puritan Preach, Thomas Watson said this almost 400 years ago...

"Though they be ever so meek, merciful, pure in heart, their piety will not shield them from suffering. They must hang their harp on the willows and take up the cross. The way to heaven is by way of thorns and blood. Set it down as a maxim (truth). If you will follow Christ, you must see the swords and the staves (planks). Put the cross in your creed (belief system)." Thomas Watson, Puritan Pastor

Will you put the cross in your belief system? If you do, it will offend. But, that's what Jesus did. He brought a cross. Oh church family, may we never forget...



...what happened to the nicest, kindest, most gracious person who ever lived. You want to know what persecution looks like? There it is!

Can you identify with that? That's our leader! That's our King! That's our Boss. That's our Master! Philippians 1:29 says:

Philippians 1:29

29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

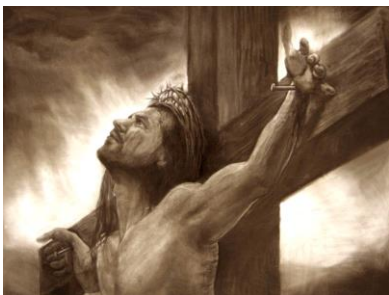
Will you suffer for His sake? You see, if you choose to identify with Jesus, you will be persecuted.

You might be told not to pray. You might be told to lie on an assignment to make a misguided teacher happy. You might even face physical harm. But guess what you get? Guess what the persecuted get? See the last part of the verse (10).

Matthew 5:10

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

You get heaven! The kingdom of heaven will be yours. Oh...it's worth it. It's worth it. You know, that's where Jesus is right now and if you could ask Him if it was worth it, do you know what He would tell you. If you asked Him if this...



...was worth it... He would **"Oh yes...it was worth because I did it for you, so that you could come be with me! Now go and share my Gospel!"**

Yes, blessed are the persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.