

10.26.25: Matt 5:10-12

The Character of a Kingdom Citizen: Part 3 – Righteous Rejection

Title: The Character of a Kingdom Citizen: Part 3 – Righteous Rejection

Scripture: Matt 5:10-12

Main Idea: The reward is great for those who are persecuted because of righteousness.

For too long, the church in America has been asleep.

Social contract that was beneficial to us in some way, most likely economically but also perhaps socially or politically even culturally/musically (we praised those who were able to navigate the secular music industry as Christians, but it was all predicated upon no one being able to recognize that they were Christians, in other words as we will see today, an unbiblical form of Christianity - We'll leave you alone as long as you leave us alone and we'll all just agree to disagree and it'll all be okay.

But then we continued to send our children to schools that collectively reinforced this contract and then to colleges that completely disregarded this contract, which was always only one sided anyway. They often were ill equipped to handle the pressure. By this I mean that they had a religious system that “worked” for them, but they had not been taught to think deeply on the things of God and resolve the why for themselves. Our children raised in “good Christian homes” and attending churches like this one where everyone liked them found themselves in places where almost no one liked them. And faced with the choice of personal acceptance or personal rejection, all too often chose personal acceptance over rejection for Jesus.

Then we enter the age of social media, and the driving force behind social media, the “like” button, Facebook – likes

- Kingdom Citizens
- Discipleship
- Soil of the OT
- Kingdom Character
- Beatitudes – some of the most familiar texts because of beauty and simplicity - Are profoundly simple and simply profound
- Beatitudes from the Latin *beatus* meaning blessed or happy, and our working definition of recipients of divine favor

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- Spiritual dependency – we are poor, grieving, broken, and desperate
- Relational Priority – we reflect God’s mercy, integrity/holiness, and reconciliation
- Kingdom Character part 3: Righteous Rejection

As we make our way through the beatitudes, these characteristics that combine to provide us with a composite of what it looks like to be a disciple, a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ, we recognize that with each one the gulf between the disciple and the crowd grows. As the distance between the two categories grows, we arrive at the inevitable result of the one, the unrighteous crowd who are controlled by the influences of the world and the flesh, rejecting and despising the righteous disciples who are living lives that reflect Jesus and in doing so draw a clear distinction between what is and what ought to be. People who have not been broken by their own sin do not like to be shown what ought to be. There is within us a series of automatic defense mechanisms that rise in justification of our sin and rejection of any “ought” in our lives.

To love sin is to hate righteousness.

Four truths that help us understand this most misunderstood and misapplied of all the beatitudes:

1. The NORMALCY (inevitability?) of persecution

- Normal experience of believers throughout history
 - “whenever” not “if” –this beatitude is not an afterthought, appendix, or addendum – it is an integral part of the composite whole picture presented
 - Also, not the change in verb from 3rd person in 10 to 2nd person “you” in 11 – personalizing the expectation for the disciples
 - Consider the biblical perspective

John 15:18-25

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own.

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However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word I spoke 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 they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they don't know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ The one who hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴ If I had not done the works among them that no one else has done, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: **They hated me for no reason.**

Acts 14:21-22 ²¹ After they had preached the gospel in that town and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith and by telling them, "It is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

2 Tim 3:12 ¹² In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1 Pet 4:13-14 ¹³ Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Luke 6:26 ²⁶ Woe to you
when all people speak well of you,
for this is the way their ancestors used to treat the false prophets.

2 Cor 4:9-10 ⁹ we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed. ¹⁰ We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be displayed in our body.

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- Was the normal experience of the early church – was not consistent and uniform but came in waves or episodes of varying degrees ; was one of the early churches first dilemmas/controversies – what to do with those who denied Jesus during persecution but then later sought admission back into the church
- Continues to this day
 - Nik Ripkin and his experiences and studies
 - Voice of the Martyrs: India, Laos, Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran, China, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Bhutan, Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo, Ethiopia
 - even in parts of Israel (West Bank), England, and Western Europe
- “This Christian claim remains scandalous today. Most moderns are willing to recognize Jesus as a good moral teacher, but insistence on the exclusive claims of Christianity, particularly the confession of Jesus as God, Savior, and King, remains offensive.

Contemporary disciples must be willing to follow Christ faithfully and boldly affirm His identity despite the cost.” Quarles SM

- Rooted in the natural response to righteousness within human nature
 - Not all persecuted are blessed, but those persecuted for their righteousness, for manifesting Christ-like character Quarles SM
 - Doriani notes that he does not bless those punished for their sin, tactlessness, or folly, even if they somehow connect them to their faith.
 - Because of my name = because of your confession of my name – Quarles SM
 - “for Righteousness” is being persecuted for allegiance to kingdom values; “for me” is being persecuted for allegiance to the King Doriani
 - To follow Jesus is to acknowledge the dividing line between those who are in Christ and those who are in the world – the disciples from the crowd. The dividing line naturally and essentially divides.

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The light has come into the world, but the world loved the darkness. John 3:19 - What have light and darkness in common?

- We have this sense, we have been told that if we are just nice then everyone will like us and we will all get along and everything will be peaceful and glorious. The only problem with this is that it does not match the biblical teaching nor the historical record of Christians.
- We must reject this idea that if we are standing for truth and righteousness and that causes division that we are the ones responsible for the division – it is that word that when the world can find no other accusation, you're just being divisive. They can't really find anything that was not true in what Charlie Kirk said, so they just wrote articles about how he was divisive. Well, if you're into lies, then the truth seems divisive.

John 3:19

Luke 12:52-53 ⁵¹ Do you think that I came here to bring peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. ⁵² From now on, five in one household will be divided: three against two, and two against three.

**⁵³ They will be divided, father against son,
son against father,
mother against daughter,
daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law,
and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."**

1 Peter 4:3-4 on motive for persecution because of righteousness --

³ For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you don't join them in the same flood of wild living—and they slander you.

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- To love sin is to hate righteousness
- Persecution is simply the clash between two irreconcilable value-systems. Stott; as we bring our value system into the world where we study, work, vote, recreate, shop, and live, it will inevitably clash
- Those who hunger for righteousness will suffer for the righteousness they crave – Stott
- Those who strive to secure peace will endure hostility

2. The NATURE of persecution

- Insult - disparage, mock, verbally shame
- Pursuit - to run after, pursue, or run out, with the intent of violently abusing or turning over to authorities – this is Saul/Paul in Acts 8 and 9
- Slander –
 - Falsely say every kind of evil against you – slander and raise false accusations against; early Christians were accused of
 - Cannibalism
 - Incest
 - Atheism
 - General hatred of humanity
 - Still a popular tactic today – call names, place labels and dismiss

3. The RESPONSE to persecution

- What response is not
 - Not to retaliate like an unbeliever
 - Not to sulk like a child
 - Not to lick wounds of self-pity like a dog [me – rise of the triumphant victim in our culture today!]
 - Not to simply ‘grin and bear it’ like the stoics
 - Not to pretend we enjoy it like the masochist
 - Not to run from it
 - Not to fear it
- Rejoice – be filled with joy
- Be glad – exceedingly joyful even to the point of affecting the body and physical response

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- The call to rejoice in persecution demands that we reappraise our values. Jesus asks us to detach ourselves from this age and to recalibrate our ideas about time. We should tell ourselves, “Our time on earth is short; eternity is long. If we endure insults or privation in this life, they are short-lived in comparison to eternity. If we should die because of persecution, then we meet the Lord and taste his goodness earlier than we anticipated.” Doriani

4. The RESULTS of persecution

- According to the text
 - Rejoicing now
 - Confidence now
 - a confirmation of our faith;
 - persecution is a token of genuineness, a certificate of Christian authenticity – Stott
 - Reward both now and in heaven
 - Our working definition of blessed – recipients of divine favor
- According to history and Christian experience
 - Purification of the church
 - Strengthening of the church
 - Expansion of the church

Conclusion:

- Personal reflection and confession
- Prayer for the persecuted church
- Prayer for us as we encounter persecution