

THE BEATITUDES

MATTHEW 5:10



OPENING

- Spend time in prayer for persecuted believers around the world. Consult *The Voice of the Martyrs* (persecution.com) or *Open Doors* (opendoors.org) to inform your prayers.

SERMON REVIEW

- If we don't apply the principles of the Beatitudes, nothing will change. We've got to ask the Spirit how to do and be these things, surrendering our lifestyle to the Lord.
- What we find in Matthew 5:10 can be troubling. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
- Persecution is oppression and abuse, not just misfortune or difficulty.
- Christian life does not entail perfect, problem-free existence.
- We get excited by Jesus' command to "follow me," but ignore the command to "take up your cross." (Matthew 16:24)
- The hunger and thirst for righteousness will bring us to persecution!
- Jesus came to offer love and life, and they hated him for it. If they hated the master, how much more his disciples? (Matthew 10:24-25, John 15:18)
- "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)
- God promises to walk with us, even to carry us through persecution.
- *How should we respond to persecution?* Love. Pray. Keep Going.
- "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)
- "Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Mark 13:13)

DISCUSSION

- Why does Jesus end the Beatitudes by addressing persecution? How is it's placement logical, even while leaving the reader/hearer feeling uncomfortable?
- How is persecution a natural consequence of following Jesus?
- Read John 15:18-20. Why do we tend to be caught off guard by reports of persecution around the world, or even persecution in our own lives?
- What consolation does God's promise to be with us offer in the midst of persecution?
- Why are we so scared of persecution? After answering the question together, read Matthew 10:28.
- Discuss the second half of this Beatitude - that "the kingdom of heaven is theirs." What significance does this have?
- How are love, prayer, and perseverance effective and Christ-like responses?

CHALLENGE

- Respond to any persecution with love, prayer, and perseverance.

PLAN AHEAD

- Memorize the Beatitudes!
- Prepare your group members to answer “How has this passage of Scripture impacted your life?” during next week’s meeting.