

SERMON NOTES

Sunday, November 3, 2024

Upside Down Blessings

Matthew 5:3-10

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

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

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, BECAUSE great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We want to live at peace with all people

But sometimes following Jesus causes friction in our relationships

Sometimes we are persecuted because other people are grumpy, mean, jerks

Sometimes we are persecuted because WE ARE grumpy, mean, jerks

But Jesus says we are BLESSED when we are persecuted because of

RIGHTEOUSNESS

2023 Statistics on Christian Persecution

- 365 Million Christians worldwide face high levels of persecution
- 14,700 Churches & Christian organizations were targeted by persecution
- 4,998 Christians were murdered for their faith in Jesus
- [opendoorsus.org](https://www.opendoorsus.org)



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Christian Persecution

- Persecution is normal - John 15:18 - 16:1
- Pray for those who persecute you - Matt 5:44
- Persecution feels personal but it's not about you - John 15:18, Matt 5:11
- Persecution is reserved for those in the game
- Great is your reward - Matt 5:12

Questions for thought and discussion:

1. When have you faced persecution for your faith in Jesus? Insults, jokes, separation of relationships are all forms of persecution.
2. Jesus invites us to pray for those who persecute us (Matt5:44). What causes a person to intentionally persecute Christians? How can we pray for and bless those who persecute us?
3. Reflect on the football analogy of getting into the game. In what ways can you get into the game: being more open with your faith. With whom is it most difficult to be open about Jesus?
4. Go to opendoorsus.org and look for ways to pray for the extremely persecuted church. Those are the ones whose lives are on the line every day simply for following Jesus.

