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Matthew 5:10-12 | Persecution: Living the Beatitude Life
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WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 5.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

We have been studying the Beatitudes within the *Sermon on the Mount* for the last several months.

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' first public sermon to His disciples.

And its in this sermon that the Lord taught His disciples how to be happy.

And that includes us today.

So, my question to you this morning is...are you?

Are you happy?

Have you been blessed by learning and applying these Beatitudes to your life?

Now, as a disclaimer one of the many things we've wrestled with is changing our definition of happiness.

Because our definition of happiness usually depends on outside circumstances.

We're generally happy based on our comfort level.

Is my health okay? Am I feeling okay? Check, I'm happy.

Do I have enough money? Are the bills paid? Check, I'm happy.

Are my spouse, my kids, and my friends—are they all okay? Check, I'm happy.

And yet Jesus didn't talk about any of those things in the Beatitudes.

He said if you want to be happy and blessed:

Become poor in spirit—confess your sin and acknowledge your spiritual bankruptcy before a holy God.

Jesus said, ***mourn your sin***—grieve the love you have for yourself and your selfishness. Repent from all that and turn around.

Jesus said if you want to be happy—***be humble/mEEK*** and lay down your pride. Stop complaining and demanding things in life, and start serving.

Jesus said that if you want to be happy—***hunger and thirst*** not for the temporary things of this world, but for ***righteousness***. In other words, search and live out the truth.

If you want to be ***blessed, be merciful*** to others. Show people the same mercy that Jesus has shown you.

Jesus said, ***blessed are the pure in heart***. As Christians, we can't mix the world into our lives. If you want to be happy, you've got to turn the world off and open your Bible—serve the people around you.

And finally— from last week, Jesus said that if we want to be ***blessed*** we must not be peacekeepers, but ***peacemakers***. We must address and call sin, sin.

We looked at a Biblical definition of peace and said that peace is not the *absence* of something—like conflict— but rather the *presence* of something.

LW KEYPOINT #1

Peace is the presence of righteousness.

We discussed the heavenly dichotomy of this Beatitude and said that the presence of righteousness usually leads to conflict. Why?

LW KEYPOINT: #2

A peacemaker addresses sin.

When sin is confronted | restoration can follow.

One of the many great things about preaching verse-by-verse through the Bible is that we can't ignore texts like this that are uncomfortable.

We must choose to deal with the things that we don't like.

Jesus preached the Beatitudes for a reason. *Each Beatitude is impossible for us to do apart from Him.*

He intends for us to hear and learn from Him and then apply these principles to our lives. *- not perfectly but increasingly.*

The Beatitudes are about priorities.

And if and when you apply these Beatitudes to your life, you probably won't be surprised by this last Beatitude that we're going to study today.

INTRODUCTION:

If we live a Beatitude-style life, Jesus says we will be persecuted | at some level because of it.

We've learned in our study that these Beatitudes build upon one another.

So what Jesus is saying is that if you actually apply the first seven Beatitudes, you will encounter the eighth.

And the eighth Beatitude deals with persecution, insults, and slander.

*Being persecuted for our faith in Jesus is not something we like to talk about - But we must. Why?
Because Jesus does.*

What does it mean to be persecuted for righteousness in our day? Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:10-12 CSB

Matthew 5:1— When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Matthew 5:2— Then he began to teach them, saying:

Matthew 5:3— "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Matthew 5:4— Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matthew 5:5— Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the Earth.

Matthew 5:6— Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Matthew 5:7— Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Matthew 5:8— Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Matthew 5:9— Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Matthew 5:10— Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Matthew 5:11— “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me.”

Matthew 5:12— Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

***This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.*

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 5:10— Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

“Blessed” in Greek is *makários* (ma-car-e-ohs), which literally means “happy,” “carefree,” and “fortunate”— all at the same time.

Why are these people happy in verse ten?

Matthew 5:10— Blessed are those who are persecuted

Persecution in Greek is *diōkō* (dee-o-ko): which means to harass someone.

To harass, oppress and pursue people to drive them away.

“Happy are those who suffer persecution because they do what God requires.”

YLT—***‘Happy those persecuted for righteousness sake—because theirs is the reign of the heavens.***

Persecution is seen in nearly every book of the Bible.

Persecution started shortly after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden.

So we have the Creation in Genesis 1.

A closer look at Creation, specifically at man, woman, and marriage in Genesis 2.

The Fall in Genesis 3.

And in Genesis 4...

+ **Genesis 4:1**—The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.

+ **Genesis 4:2**— She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground.

Abel was a rancher, and Cain, a farmer.

+ **Genesis 4:3**— In the course of time Cain presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the Lord.

+ **Genesis 4:4**— And Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,

+ **Genesis 4:5**— but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering.

So God accepted Abel's offering ^{of animal} but rejected Cain's. ^{offering of vegetables.}

Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.

His face/countenance fell. He was visibly angry.

+ **Genesis 4:6**— Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent?"

Genesis 4:7— *If you do what is right, (righteous) won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right (unrighteous), sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."*

Genesis 4:8— *Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.*

Why did Cain murder Abel?

Because Abel was righteous and Cain was unrighteous.

Abel was accepted because of his right living according to God's standards, and Cain persecuted him for it.

In the NT Church...we see lots more persecution.

The risen Lord Jesus has a conversation with a Pharisee named Saul who later becomes the apostle Paul.

Acts 9:4— *Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"*

Acts 9:5— *"Who are you, Lord?" Saul said. "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting,"*

So persecution is not new within the Beatitudes—it's found in nearly all of the 66 books of the Bible.

The question becomes why?

Back to verse ten...

Matthew 5:10— *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,*

Righteousness is doing what God requires.

We saw this with Cain and Abel.

As we have walked through these Beatitudes over the past several months, we've all had to wrap our brains around the conflict the Beatitudes bring into our lives.

With each Beatitude, there has been a clash between what Jesus says and how we currently live our life.

But, of all the beatitudes, this last one seems to be the icing on the cake.

It is the most incompatible with our human thinking.

It certainly is the least desirable to sign up for.

And yet, Jesus says, "**Happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness.**"

Notice what Jesus is not saying: "Happy are those who are persecuted for any reason whatsoever."

And Jesus is certainly not saying, "Happy are those who are persecuted for the consequences of their own sin."

Christians who live righteously will inevitably, at some level, be persecuted for Christ's righteousness that dwells in them.

Why?

KEYPOINT 1:

Godliness triggers hostility from the world.

Righteousness

Many times there is an instant visceral reaction when someone finds out that you love and follow Jesus.

And it triggers the unrighteousness in them to lash out.

Back to our Beatitudes

Matthew 5:10— *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*

There's the promise.

So we come full circle now as Jesus wraps up this part of His sermon.

Notice that he says, "***for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.***"

That should sound familiar.

The eighth Beatitude points us back to the first!

Matthew 5:3— "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*"

Matthew 5:10— *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*

What exactly is The Kingdom of Heaven?

It's a very real spiritual and soon physical place where Jesus is king.

Jesus is on trial before Pontius Pilate.

John 18:36— "*My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus. "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."*

Today, the Kingdom of Heaven is a spiritual kingdom.

In a way, The Kingdom is the church.

The Kingdom is in our hearts and is revealed by how we treat others.

But very soon, there will be a physical and literal Kingdom where Jesus will rule and reign for all the world to see.

The next phase of Biblical history is the Rapture, where Jesus plucks the church from this world—it can happen anytime.

The world will then experience seven years of Tribulation as described in the book of Revelation.

Jesus will then return to the Earth with the church for the 1,000 year millennium reign.

And that will be the start of a physical Kingdom—so when Jesus does come back, everything changes.

Until that time, the crowning feature of a happy Christian is persecution for living out your Christian faith!

Now can you imagine the look on the Disciple's faces as Jesus uttered those words?

This Beatitude is such a shock for the Disciples. Jesus has to expand His teaching.

Matthew 5:11—“You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me.”

The last Beatitude is really two in one—that's why it's three verses instead of one verse like the previous seven Beatitudes.

Blessed is mentioned twice in verses ten and eleven, but only one attribute is given.

That attribute is persecution.

Persecution is what ties all three verses together because it's mentioned in every verse—ten, eleven, and twelve.

The reason that this Beatitude ^{CONTAINS} continues two blessings is because God double blesses those who are persecuted.

Jesus expands his teaching...

Matthew 5:11— "You are blessed ~~when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me.~~

Jesus makes verse eleven personal.

Jesus has been using a third person plural pronoun up to this point—

...they will be comforted.

...they will inherit the earth.

...they will be shown mercy.

...they will see God.

...they will be called sons of God.

But now, He gets the Disciple's attention and uses a first-person singular pronoun.

Jesus says, "**You** are blessed..."

That's a bit uncomfortable—a bit awkward.

Most of the time, when I preach, I try to be as gracious as I can, and I include myself in the preaching because I must wrestle with these principles and confess my sin before I present them to you.

So many times, in my preaching, I say, "we, us."

If I need to be more direct, I might say, "ya'll."

But if I really want to get your attention, I say, "you."

And that's precisely what Jesus does here.

+ **Matthew 5:11**— "You are blessed when..."

When, *hotan* (hoe-ton) in Greek means whenever.

+ **Matthew 5:11**— "You are blessed whenever they insult you."

Think about this...Jesus, Himself, was not *constantly* persecuted.

The apostles weren't either.

There were times of peace and even popularity throughout the Gospels.

In fact, Jesus was a rock star at one time.

So the idea here is that Christians will not be in a constant state of persecution, but whenever persecution does come, we shouldn't be surprised.

Nor should we be resentful.

We are called to endure whatever trouble comes our way.

What kind of trouble should we be on the lookout for?

+ **Matthew 5:11**— "You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you ..."

Here we see a trifecta of persecution.

These are the three things that a Christian is to expect if he chooses to live a Beatitude type of life.

First, people are going to insult you.

They are going to mock, revile and make fun of you.

They will point and laugh at you for your faith in Jesus Christ. *As Lord? Savior,*

Oneidizō (own-uh-dee-zo)— It literally means "to cast in one's teeth."

It's where they sneer at you.

Jesus knew that insults were coming His way.

He told the Disciples:

Luke 18:32— For he will be handed over to the Gentiles, and he will be mocked, insulted, spit on;

Those things happened during Jesus' trial and they also came true as He was hanging from the cross, gasping for breath.

Matthew 27:39— Those who passed by were yelling insults at him; shaking their heads

Matthew 27:41— In the same way the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him and said,

Matthew 27:42— "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! He is the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

Matthew 27:43— He trusts in God; let God rescue him now—if he takes pleasure in him! For he said, 'I am the Son of God.' "

Matthew 27:44— In the same way even the criminals who were crucified with him taunted him.

Even the criminals insulted Jesus as they were dying!

Man, talk about being hard-core calloused.

Matthew 5:11— "You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you..."

People persecute/harassed Jesus—

After Jesus preached in a synagogue...

Luke 4:29—They got up, drove him (Jesus) out of town, and brought him to the edge of the hill that their town was built on, intending to hurl him over the cliff.

harass / Persecuted

So these people harassed and pursued Jesus and drove Him away.

Matthew 5:11— "You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you..."

Back ... this is type of persecution

So people will insult us to our faces, and now we learn that they will slander us behind our backs.

Jesus experienced slander as well...

Matthew 11:19—The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

In my opinion, being slandered is the most difficult on this list.

If people want to mock or insult me to my face, fine.

If people want to run me out of town for preaching the Gospel, so what?

But people running their mouths and saying things that I never said or did...that one ~~hurts~~ *stings*.

Or people take things out of context, or they misquote you, or they hear something that wasn't said—and it spreads like gangrene.

Here's the good news:

KEYPOINT 3:

Persecution is evidence of salvation.

1 Thessalonians 3:2—And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the Gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you concerning your faith,

1 Thessalonians 3:3— so that no one will be shaken by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

Appointed to what? Affliction and persecution.

1 Thessalonians 3:4— In fact, when we were with you, we told you in advance that we were going to experience affliction, and as you know, it happened.

Christian persecution is not accidental.

Suffering persecution is part of the normal Christian life.

Today, we, living in America live an abnormal Christian life.

We have been living off the fruit of the last set of revivals—so we have not been persecuted much in our lifetime.

For our Brothers and Sisters in church history and for those living in other countries today, Christian life is way different.

Philippians 1:29—For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,

These verses should be of grave concern for the famous Christians that are celebrated by the world today.

The rock star pastors who never talk about the depravity of sin, obedience that's demanded, or the reality of hell.

Why does the world like them?

Because they are non-offensive.

They love to read their own headlines that say how inclusive and tolerant they are.
So the world loves them.
 Jesus addresses this...

Luke 6:26—Woe to you (that's a curse) when all people speak well of you, for this is the way their ancestors used to treat the false prophets.

There were false prophets back then and false pastors today.

Do you know what false prophets did in the OT?

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel say this twice—

Jeremiah 6:14—They have treated my people's brokenness superficially, claiming, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. (8:11, Ezekiel 13:10; 13:16).

In other words, to be a popular Christian among the world is either to have compromised faith— or no saving at all.

Please know that these people are not sanctified celebrities.

A Christian celebrity compromises the Gospel at some level.

Why? Because the Gospel is offensive.

The idea of a true pastor being called famous or a celebrity is repulsive.

And it's repulsive because it's demonic.

+ **Matthew 5:11**— "You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me."

Jesus is very specific here—persecution doesn't come because you're good person or because the world perceives that you do good things.

Jesus says Persecution comes | because of Him.

+ **Matthew 5:12**— Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We are commanded to **be glad**. *for being persecuted*

That's a bit odd.

The idea here is to rejoice by getting up, jumping, and skipping for joy.

Why are we commanded to be glad?

+ **Matthew 5:12**—because your reward is great in heaven.

Rewards are something that we don't talk about much.

It's easy to fall into a works-based salvation mentality - NOT TALKING ABOUT these ~~these~~ once again. These rewards don't get you to Heaven. We are saved by FAITH alone through Christ alone.

These rewards are based on the works that we do in this world today.

And those works often times do bring about persecution of some kind.

The reason we don't talk about rewards because we don't deserve them.

We already have our reward—a saving relationship with Jesus Christ for eternity.

And yet, if that wasn't good enough.

Jesus says that we will have rewards in Heaven! *- Unbelievable!*

Question: Why does He give ^{rewards} them away in Heaven?

Because if we got them now, we might be tempted to serve for the reward rather than out of love.

Matthew 5:12— For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jesus is telling us that we are to rejoice because the world persecuted the prophets in the OT in the same way that the world persecutes us.

In other words, when we are persecuted for righteousness, we are in good company.

We're in the same company as our Biblical heroes—Jeremiah, Isaiah, Peter, James, John, and Paul.

Hebrews 11 is called the chapter of Faith. It ends by saying this...

Hebrews 11:36—Others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment.

↳ *struckle, handcuffs.*

Hebrews 11:37—They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated.

Hebrews 11:38—The world was not worthy of them.

Isn't that fascinating?

Persecution is a mark of our faithfulness to what we say and believe.

When we are persecuted, we shouldn't complain to God or others.

Instead, we should be encouraged because it's our faith working itself out for all the world to see.

The world will never get it.

The world cannot handle righteousness.

It repulses them.

No matter what the world does to us, it cannot and does not impact God's promise of the Kingdom of Heaven for you.

And it's in Heaven when a Christian is rewarded for righteous living—for living these Beatitudes out.

PREACH:

Why must we be persecuted? Three reasons:

First, God is pleased when his people prove that they value Him above everything and everyone else in the world.

Persecution is a test of our faithfulness.

Second, Christian character is matured through suffering.

Romans 5:3—but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance,

Romans 5:4— endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

Romans 5:5— This hope will not disappoint us,

The apostle James says it this way...

James 1:2—Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials,

James 1:3— because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4— And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

There is no end to how you may suffer because of your faith in Jesus.

But the persecution is not what matters.

What really matters is how you face these things.

The third reason is that when the church is persecuted it becomes purified.

Those who are not committed run out the door which leaves room for the church to do what it was commissioned to do—to make disciples and become an oasis of sanity for all who turn to Jesus.

2 Cor. 4:17—For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory.

2 Cor. 4:18— So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

PRAYER

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