

Beatitudes

Part 6.

Blessed are the Persecuted

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Text: Matt 5:1-12 (ESV)

Matt 5:1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

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

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

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

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

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

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.

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Kingdom Expectations

- Dramatic language Dan 2:44 & ch 7; expected God's kingdom to destroy Rome
 - "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near" (John & Jesus)
 - Kingdom addressed 7 times in the SOM alone (Matt 5-7)
 - At least 10 times, Jesus draws kingdom comparisons (kingdom is like) in Matt
- Luke 17:20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst (within) of you."

Luke 19:11 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable...because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. (10 minas)

Luke 24:21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.

Act 1:6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

- WTP? Many (high to low) hoped/believed Jesus would be the mighty king/ruler to smash the Romans and set up the everlasting earthly kingdom.

Righteous on the Outside

- Beatitudes focused around the kingdom. How to enter and how to live.
- Jesus (and John the Baptist) dismantled the misconceptions regarding righteousness, the kingdom, the Messiah, true greatness, etc.
- In Jesus' day, Judaism has been mostly reduced to a superficial, external, ritualistic religion

Matt 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.'

- Jewish leaders trusting in their own outward achievements and credentials to get them into the kingdom.
- What's the true issue? Condition of the heart.
- Matt 5:21-7 Jesus addresses actions, but first addresses the heart..

What Sort of Kingdom?

- Various Jewish perspectives on the Messiah:
 - Pharisees: tradition, legalism, patriarchal obedience
 - Sadducees: focus on present, modernism, liberalism, progressivism
 - Essenes: separatist, purity by isolation
 - Zealots: political revolutionaries, military strength
- Common thread: all focus on an earthly kingdom, which require a focus on overthrowing Roman oppression (albeit in different ways).
- Pilate asks Jesus if he was the king of the Jews. John 18:33

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is not of this realm."

- Jesus discussed politics and civil matters almost never (and there was plenty to discuss!). He often took on the religious class to correct perversions of God's law.
- God's kingdom would be populated by the poor, mournful, humble, hungry, merciful, pure, peacemakers and persecuted..

Review: Messiah's Mission

- John's message was repentance and the messiah will bring judgment

Matt 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. (*don't count on your pedigree*)

10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

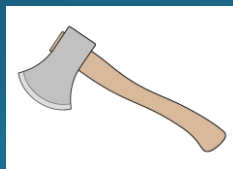
- The axe was starting to fall. Judgment begins with destroying the false pretenses held so dearly by the Jews. (1 aspect of Jesus' ministry)..

...And Planting

- In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus reads from the Isaiah scroll in Nazareth.
vs 21 "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

- Describes Jesus' ministry as a ministry of planting oaks.
- Jesus is both chopping down trees of false ideas and planting trees of righteousness and truth.



Chop and Plant

- Beatitudes are full of chopping and planting.
 - Dismantling false ideas and firmly teaching truth in its place
- Poor, mourning, meek, hungry...not their picture of greatness
- Merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers...not their picture of the mission
- Persecuted...not their picture of the outcome

Text: Blessed are the Persecuted

Matt 5:10 “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.

- G1377 dioko- A prolonged form of a primary verb diō (to *flee*); to *pursue*. Biblical uses: 1) To prosecute, persecute, pursue with repeated acts of enmity, 2) To follow or press hard after
- “For righteousness' sake” - not persecution for any reason, but persecution for faith in Christ, obedience to Christ, belief in the truth, upholding righteous convictions, standing against Satan, etc.
- Beatitude explained in 3 parts (possibly because it was extreme)
 - What (persecution)
 - How (revile, false accusations, like the prophets)
 - Result (reward)

Upper Room Teaching on Persecution

John 15:18 “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. 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.

- Upper room teaching; parting words
- Why does the world (Satan’s system) persecute Christians?
 - Hatred. Which leads to persecution and hostile treatment
- Started with Jesus (vs 18), then extends to Jesus’ disciples
- vs. 20-21 Servant & Disciple persecution on account of Jesus

Objects of the World's Hatred

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- Persecution runs in the family!
 - Hate you for bringing the truth (messenger)
 - Hate Jesus for being the truth (manifestation)
 - Hate God because he is the author of truth (source)
- "Don't shoot the messenger"...that doesn't work here

Why Did Jesus Teach to Expect this?

In the next chapter...

John 16:1 "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. 3 And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.

- Chop and plant. Faithfulness to Christ will lead to persecution.
- Don't think everyone will gladly receive the message of truth. This will not be good news to evil-loving people.
- The power of the gospel does not cause everyone to bow the knee.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

- Power? Yes, but to everyone who believes. Otherwise no.
- Expect resistance, but don't let that sway you from the mission of kingdom seed planting and watering!

Paul Reiterates This

Paul understood and experienced persecution personally

1 Cor 4:9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. **10** We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. **11** To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, **12** and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; **13** when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. **14** I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

- Every apostle was persecuted severely.
- All were martyred except John.
- John was exiled to Patmos because he would not die in the pot of boiling oil (according to Tertullian)

Persecuted for Living Godly

- The price for following Jesus is not only self denial...

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

...but also persecution.

2 Tim 3:10 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, **11** my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13** while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

- Vs. 12 Promise: All who desire to live godly...
- Not everyone will be persecuted the same level
 - Ridicule and exclusion up to torture and martyrdom

Results of Persecution

Mar 4:17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

vs.

James 1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

- Persecution often results in 1 of 2 outcomes
 - Shallow roots: Apostasy, falling away, wither away
 - Deep roots: Steadfastness, greater resolve, stronger faith, deeper roots

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- Vs. 11 specifies one type of persecution
 - Revile (defame, reproach, rail against)
 - Speak evil falsely
- Verbal defamation is the worst form of persecution for a Christian.
 - Once people undermine your reputation, there's often nothing you can do.
 - False accusations often start with a kernel of truth; appearance of evil (1Th5)
 - That's why we are called repeatedly to live above reproach.

Titus 2:7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, 8 and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

- Of course, if accusation is true, we deserve the persecution

Luke's Account

Luke 6:22 "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

- Luke mentions a slightly different list of persecutions
 - Hatred
 - Exclusion
 - Reviling
 - Spurn your name as evil

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- First time Jesus taught on heavenly rewards (“reward” mentioned 8x more in SOTM)
- Persecution one of the few “great” rewards (but also mentioned in love your enemies Luke 6:35, confidence Heb 10:35)
- Obviously, the apostles remembered and believed this truth

Acts 5:41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

- Persecuted Christians seem to fall in a special category. They are on a path to happiness and great reward.

Why?

- What is the reason or purpose for persecution?
 - Why can't Christians just isolate or blend in and thus avoid trouble?
1. Great commission - Matt 28:18 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
 2. Witness - Acts 1:6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
- Witnesses: G3144 – *martus*: witness, martyr
 - To witness of Jesus includes faithfully declaring him up to death if needed. ("...Stephen your witness (martyr)" Acts 22:20)

Summary: Persecution

- We should expect persecution
 - “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12)
- Christian persecution is not the same for everyone
- Persecution (for Christ) brings with it a special “great” reward
- What if we are not suffering any persecution?
 - Our circles are friendly to Christianity
 - We do not oppose the darkness very strong (light and salt?)
 - We live a compromised life. Like the world enough to blend in. Don’t stand against evil.

Matt 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Summary: Happy Kingdom Citizens

Blessed are:

- 1. Poor in Spirit*
- 2. Mourn*
- 3. Meek*
- 4. Hunger and Thirst for righteousness*
- 5. Merciful*
- 6. Pure in heart*
- 7. Peacemakers*
- 8. Enduring persecution*

For theirs/they shall:

- 1. Is the kingdom*
- 2. Be comforted*
- 3. Inherit the earth*
- 4. Be satisfied*
- 5. Be shown mercy*
- 6. See God*
- 7. Be called sons of God*
- 8. Is the kingdom*