

LIFE GROUPS

Sermon Discussion Notes

'Blessed are the Persecuted – Part Two'

The beatitudes function a bit like the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. All of them are to be in operation in the life of the believer; we don't major on just one, but all are evident as we display the fruit of the Spirit. So too with the beatitudes, we don't just pick one, but neglect the rest. They are **all** to be in operation, they **all** cause us to receive blessing, and therefore they are **all** desirable – even including the last one – persecution.

Last week we had v10, '*Blessed are the persecuted for yours is the kingdom of heaven*'. Today we are looking at the next two verses. This eighth beatitude is the only one that Jesus expands upon, continuing in verses 11-12. The word count is almost as much as for all the rest of the beatitudes combined! Notice the change in language, from third person in v10 to the more direct second person:

READ Matthew 5:11-12.

Jesus references the ways that his followers will be treated – insults, mistreatment, false accusations, all because a person follows Jesus and his ways. Verse 12 even says, 'rejoice and be glad', literally 'rejoice and exult, skip and shout for joy'.

Question: Why would Jesus expect us to have such a joyful, exuberant response to persecution?

Why is persecution so tied in to our faith? It is really important for us to wrestle with, because Christians who try to avoid persecution rather than submit willingly to it can be greatly discouraged when they do experience it.

READ Matthew 13:20-21

Question: Discuss why persecution would cause the person who received the message of Jesus with joy to fall away.

1. The Spiritual Battle

READ Genesis 4:2b-8

There has been a spiritual battle going on for all of human history.

READ Ephesians 6:12

Question: how aware are you of the spiritual battle around us?

Question: Are you living your life on the right side of this battle?"

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2. There is a Purpose in it

In Australia, to this point we have seen only a little persecution. Yet in many other parts of the world, Christians are mistreated, not offered work, not sold food. And in the midst of these difficulties, many Christians still live out their lives faithfully, holding onto the message of Jesus. **And in those places, the church is growing.**

READ Ephesians 3:10

Question: what do you think God is wanting to show the 'the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms'?

Question: how is mistreatment for Jesus impacting on your faith?

3. A Witness to the World

In the OT, whenever someone looked at an Israelite, the intention was that they could get some information about God and his ways from how the Israelite lived. In the same way, you and I are ambassadors for Jesus, and when people look at us, they are to see Jesus.

READ Matthew 5:13-15.

We are the salt of the earth. Salt in ancient times was primarily an antiseptic and preservative.

Question: What does it look like for us to be an antiseptic and preservative in the world? And what does this say about the world?

We are the light of the world. Light is pleasant – we prefer the light to the dark.

Question: why would someone want to hide their faith, light placing a map under a bushel? What impact would that have on the world around them?

Going Deeper

Some further weekly questions we can ask as we aim to go deeper this year are:

Q: What challenged you most in this message?

Q: What am I going to do or change after hearing this message?

Q: How can this group pray for you this week?