

Exploring the Kingdom of God in Matthew:
Blessed are the Persecuted...for Righteousness Sake!

Oct 1, 2017

Text: Matthew 5:10-12

Our Purpose in Matthew:

- To receive Kingdom encouragement and Kingdom strength from Matthew's Gospel...from The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) up to the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 20).

Matthew's Purpose: Explaining the King and the Kingdom:

1. This Gospel was likely written by Matthew (or Levi), one of the Twelve (Matt 9:9-13).
2. Matthew's mandate was to demonstrate the *Messiahship or the Kingship of Jesus*
3. To this point, the LORD has taught His subjects much about how to live in His Kingdom:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." (Mat 5:3-9)

4. We have learned much about the level of brokenness and desperation a true believer is called to; about mourning over our sins and the sins of the world and being truly humble in mind and spirit, about truly thirsting for those things that please the LORD, about true mercy and purity of heart, and about bringing the LORD's people together and not being the cause of disunity. Today, our LORD takes us one step further...

Blessed are the Persecuted!

"The last crowns the series of the beatitudes. From poverty to crucifixion, the Saviour's life unfolded, exhibiting all the graces, activities, and experiences here commended. He expects that the new life which begins in the hearts of the disciples in poverty of spirit will grow till it reaches that vigour of holiness, mercy, and usefulness which finds a cross and has power to bear it." -PHC

1. In this last Beatitude (or declarations of blessing), Jesus unequivocally declares that those who take a stand for Him and for the righteous things He has commanded—and are persecuted as a result—will be **rewarded!** The Kingdom of God is theirs!
2. Indeed, "The kingdom of heaven is promised to those believers who suffer for doing right. Their integrity condemns the ungodly world and brings out its hostility. People hate a righteous life because it exposes their own unrighteousness." -MacDonald
3. As a reminder, the word righteousness means, "Purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law. Righteousness as used in Scripture and theology, in which it is chiefly used, is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion." Webster 1828
4. Friends, this sort of life WILL (not might or may) produce eventual **mistreatment**. Remember Paul's words to Timothy?

*2Ti 3:10-12 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 **Persecutions**, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and **all** that **will** live godly in Christ Jesus **shall** suffer persecution.*

5. This is a **promise**. Thankfully there will be great blessings bestowed upon the righteous, but persecution and discrimination are “part and parcel” of the true Christian life.
6. So what does the Text say?
 - That there is a persecution that comes purely because of righteousness. Thank Christ for the blessing of possessing the Kingdom of Heaven! (v10)
 - Such persecution will likely include mocking and **slander**. But remember; endure “for the Lord’s sake!” (v11)
 - Indeed, the oppressed are commanded to “REJOICE, and be **exceedingly** glad!” What a perspective! How different this is from our normal reaction! (v12)
 - Why should the mistreated rejoice? Because the reward is great! (v12)
 - Where is the reward? Heaven! (v12)
 - Not only that, but the persecution of the honor of walking in the spiritual lineage of the prophets! (v12)

Yes friends, persecution and oppression is an integral part of Christian history. Unpopular? Certainly. But I’ve learned that sometimes it’s necessary. God often uses it to **sanctify** our lives and **build** our faith and trust in Him alone.

Friends, will you take a stand for Jesus? Will you be righteous even if it means being persecuted? Will you be willing to stand alone if need be to see the Savior’s will done?

Let us read this last bit of encouragement together:

1Pe 4:12-14 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

Amen!

PERSONAL DEVOTIONS/FAMILY WORSHIP QUESTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

1. Discuss modern persecution. Do some research. Did you know that many Christians live in fear for their lives TODAY around the world? (*The Voice of the Martyrs* website is a good place to start: www.persecution.com)
2. What keeps you from following Christ more fully?
3. What do you think would happen if we valued Heaven more than the world?
4. Who do you know that has taken a biblical stand for righteousness and might need some encouragement? Are you willing to reach out to them?