



SERIES: Walking with Jesus
SPEAKER: JACOB WIRKA
Friday, November 10, 2023
Scripture: Matthew 5:10-12, Isaiah 53:7
TITLE: Blessing and Suffering

Today we are finishing up Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, commonly known as the "Beatitudes," which means the "Blessing."

What comes to mind when you think of blessings? Often times I'm convinced that we think of people getting the things they most want. If you search the hashtag blessed on any social media site, you'll most likely find posts about extravagant vacations, cars, or even people flexing at the gym!

A better definition of blessing would be "finding favor or approval from God." Let's keep that idea in mind as we look at Matthew 5:10-12 together.

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' powerful explanation of what it looks like to live on Earth as a citizen of Heaven. To this point, Jesus has been explaining how God's people recognize their spiritual poverty, mourn their sin, are gentle and meek, desire to live righteously, show mercy to others, desire to live for Him with pure motives, and who seek to make peace.

All of these reflect the nature and character of Jesus, especially displayed on the cross! With all this in mind, Jesus finished His sermon this way:

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

So Jesus is saying that there is blessing and being persecuted. That doesn't seem right. When people turn against us, say bad things about us, or even try to harm us, we should rejoice? We should be glad?

We have to remember that blessings aren't just getting things we want. Blessings are the approval, the favor of God. Therefore, we can rejoice and be glad when the world that doesn't know God begins to turn against us. This is a sign that we're doing the right thing! This persecution is coming on God's account, not based on our ideas or our ways of doing things. God is in control, and because this is happening to us on His account, He will right every wrong one day.

The reality is that good has always been opposed to evil. The way of God has always been opposed to the way of the world. Remember, we aren't alone in our suffering. When we suffer

for our faith, we join the saints who have suffered before us. Most importantly, we join Jesus. If we want to join Jesus and His righteousness on our behalf, we must also be willing to join Jesus in His suffering.

So how do we respond to persecution? Look to Jesus' example. Isaiah 53:7 says this:

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”

When Jesus was put on trial, evil lies were said about Him; He was falsely accused, He was beaten, He was mocked, and yet He said nothing. Jesus isn't asking us to do anything He hasn't already done himself. Remember, when you are being persecuted for your faith, you're following in the footsteps of Jesus!

We have to go through this Christian journey with eternity in mind. Persecution and suffering are extremely difficult to endure, and it will look differently for every believer, but we remember that there is a reward for us in eternity!

When we embrace the Gospel message by faith, He begins to transform us. Jesus is showing us in The Sermon on the Mount that God's way of doing things and God's motivations are very different than the way of this world. We should be joyful as we see our hearts begin to change; we should be joyful when the world, which doesn't know God, turns against us because it is evidence that we know God and we are His people! That is the greatest blessing!