

Sermon on the Mount #10
Blessed are the Persecuted!
Matthew 5:3-12

I. The Eight Beatitudes: Brief Definitions (Mt. 5:3–12)

A. Being poor in spirit (theirs is the kingdom of heaven, Mt. 5:3) – to acknowledge that we are in great need of help to sustain wholeheartedness. This is to understand, that we are in a serious dilemma (bankrupt) in needing a breakthrough (insight/power) in our heart for godliness.

B. Mourning for breakthrough (for they shall be comforted, Mt. 5:4) – to be convinced (grieved & broken) at the human condition and our personal inability to live the Christ life. To be desperate enough to be “extreme” in our pursuit of a progressive breakthrough of insight (revelation) and power (divine enablement) in our heart and ministry.

C. Walking in meekness (shall inherit the earth, Mt. 5:5) – to walk in the fasted lifestyle (voluntary weakness) or to have a servant spirit in the use of our natural strengths (time, money, energy, reputation, authority, etc.). Humility or meekness speaks of using our resources with a servant spirit, as we lay down personal rights in serving without regard for receiving the reward (honor, money) from people.

D. Hungering for righteousness (for they shall be filled, Mt. 5:6) – sustained faithfulness in seeking God with wholeheartedness through changing circumstances and seasons of our life.

E. Relating to others with mercy (for they shall obtain mercy, Mt. 5:7) – having a tender spirit in how we treat others in light of receiving God’s mercy in our many failures (Ps. 18:35; 130:3-4).

F. Being pure in heart (they shall see God, Mt. 5:8) – breakthrough of purity in our thoughts (bitterness, immorality) and motives (helping people for their benefit without any personal gain).

G. Becoming an anointed peacemaker (called sons of God, Mt. 5:9) – anointing to bring peace (reconciliation) to that which is out of God’s will (restoring relationships, bodies, legislation).

H. Enduring persecution (theirs is the kingdom, Mt. 5:10-12) – bearing the counterattack for plundering Satan’s Kingdom because we operate in the power of grace and stand for righteousness.

II. Blessed are those that are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake!

Matthew 5:10-12 *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

A. The peacemaker anointing flows out of the person that has proceeded through the beatitudes to purity of heart, thus, gaining God’s heart for God and others and coming to be known and called “sons of God!”

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

B. The hungering and thirsting for righteousness (personal) in the fourth beatitude is realized in the sixth (purity) and released through us in the seventh (peacemaker) filling us with opportunities to speak the righteousness of truth in order to bring peace, identifying us as sons of our Father. This kind of witness in the world leads to the natural consequence of the eighth beatitude (persecution).

C. As real truth hits planet earth, the status quo is assaulted as light confronts darkness. Jesus is the “Prince of Peace” yet His very presence and preaching was said to be creating conflict (Lk 23:5)! Paul was preaching the “Gospel of Peace” and yet conflict followed him and riots started in many of the cities to which the Spirit of God sent Him. This is more than a difference of opinion or different ideologies but a clash of opposite kingdoms.

Luke 23:5 *But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."*

D. Persecution is the result of righteousness entering an area of darkness and blindness and the kingdom of darkness retaliating through persecution. This can take on different forms and degrees but is consistent with our calling as disciples of Jesus.

John 15:20 *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 keep yours also.*

Philippians 1:29-30 *For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.*

2 Timothy 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 *that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. 4 For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.*

E. To persecute means to follow after, pursue or to hunt down and is described in the text as revile (lit. to cast in one's face). We are talking here of mocking insults of verbal abuse. In the passage it makes clear the idea of having all manner of evil spoken against us because of our love and service to Jesus. In this life we are subject to varying degrees of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and outright mistreatment through abuse, antagonism and accusations. Let's look at Jesus' description of the end-time scenario and what can be expected (Mt 24:6-14).

F. We who experience persecution in this life are said to be "blessed" or happy. This is because of the witness of God in our inner man and because of greatness of His reward which is described as both "great" and "eternal."

G. God invites "whosoever" or literally everyone to be great in His Kingdom. This is a primary teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). We cannot repent of the desire for greatness because God designed our spirit with this longing. We must repent for seeking greatness in a wrong way. We must also repent for neglecting to seek greatness (simply because Jesus designed and called us to be great in His sight). Without the paradigm of being on a journey to greatness, the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle is much more difficult to sustain.

Matthew 5:19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. *Heb. 11:6* He who comes to God must believe...He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

H. Jesus taught that there is a great difference in the measure of glory and greatness that we all experience in God's Kingdom. Some are called the least and some the greatest.

Rev. 19:5 A voice came from the Throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

I. Jesus revealed a new paradigm for greatness. We are to focus on being great in His sight rather than in the sight of men. We understand that this greatness will be fully manifest in the age-to come not in this age. Our greatness will be based on our heart responses not on natural gifting and resources and thus, it is available to everyone (the "whoever" of Mt. 5:19; 20:26-27; 23:12).

J. Promotion and greatness in God's sight is available to all. God invites all to greatness without regard to outward achievements but the development of their heart in love and meekness.

Mt. 20:26 Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

K. Receiving eternal reward and being great in God's sight was a major theme in Jesus' teaching. He emphasized this in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:5, 12, 19, 46; 6:1, 4, 6, 18, 20; 7:2).

Mt. 5:12, 19 Rejoice...for great is your reward in heaven, for they persecuted the prophets... *19* Whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom...

Mt. 5:46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?

Lk. 6:35 Love your enemies, do good...and your reward will be great.

Mt. 6:19-20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...

Lk. 18:22 You will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.

L. Jesus taught on God's invitation for our greatness more than any other man in Scripture. He spoke on this directly and indirectly as He called us: to become *great* (Mt. 5:19; 18:4; 20:25-26; 23:11; Mk. 10:42-43; Lk. 6:23, 35; 9:48; 22:26); to receive *riches* with God in heaven (Lk. 12:21; 16:11; Rev. 2:9; 3:18); to be *ruler* over many things (Mt. 25:21; 23); to have *authority* over cities (Lk. 19:17, 19); to have *power* over nations (Rev. 2:26-27; Mt. 19:28; 20:21-23; 25:23; Lk. 22:29-30); to sit on Jesus' *Throne* (Rev. 3:21); to inherit *authority* in the earth (Mt. 5:5); to be *first* in authority (Mt. 19:30; 20:16, 27); to gain *treasure* in heaven (Mt. 6:20; 19:21; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 12:33; 18:22); to receive *rewards* (Mt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18; 10:41-42; 16:27; Mk. 9:41; Lk. 6:23, 35; Rev. 22:12); to be *exalted* (Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; 18:14); to receive *honor* from the Father (Jn. 12:26); to be one of the few who are *chosen* for honor (Mt. 20:16; 22:14); to gain *crowns* (Rev. 2:10; 3:11); to gain heavenly *garments* (Rev. 3:4-5, 18; 16:15; 19:7-8).

M. Our reward is partially given in this life and mostly in the age-to-come. However, when God does release tokens of our reward in this life, it is mostly by a release of His Spirit in our inner man and secondarily it is increased blessing in circumstances (more honor, money and comfort). It is common for the few who do focus on receiving God's rewards to put most of their emphasis on receiving rewards in this age in their circumstances instead of their inner man.