

Rewards

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Date: 01 October 2017

[0:00] Verse 11. It says, Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, about the types of rewards.

And firstly, we see here in Matthew 5, verse 11, our Lord says, Blessed are you. He says there's a joy, there's a blessing, when men shall revile you, they'll hate you and shall persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely.

For my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

It's interesting here, isn't it, that the Lord is actually telling us when you're persecuted, it's a good thing. It's actually a blessing for you. It's actually something you should be glad and rejoice in.

Why? For great is your reward in heaven. It's telling you, brother, sister, don't hold back to be radical for God, even when it seems that you're going to cop some flack, you're going to face some challenges.

[1:36] He's saying he can go the distance. The radical, the righteous, those who stand for Christ, they will be targets. We know that we can be targeted as a Christian.

In a workplace environment, in a secular setting, the Christian is fair game. We know that the media, the world, often has a go at Christians.

We're always in the target sites, aren't we, as Christians? We know that. And it's easy to kind of blend in and try not to ruffle any feathers. But we should rather not be afraid.

Do not be afraid to stand for Christ. Do not be afraid to swim against the tide, to go against the majority, to be willing to stand your ground, to be true to your convictions. Our Lord is saying, you will be tested.

You will be mocked. You will be scorned. You're going to have to go through the flame. He says, do not be ashamed of him and his words. And there's Christians who, they're cops and flack.

[2:41] I heard, as I referred to this morning, in fact on Saturday, someone mentioned how they were wearing a particular slogan, and they were kind of picked on for that.

Because they had a Christian kind of slogan. And there was a Christian girl, who's just a school girl, in California, and she was wearing a shirt that said, tolerance is the virtue of believing in nothing. That's quite true, isn't it? And then it went on to say, truth is truth, homosexuality is wrong. And she was told she had to change the shirt or leave school. There's quite a lot of truth in that T-shirt slogan.

Tolerance is the virtue of believing in nothing. The world is very tolerant, except when it comes to Christianity, they're intolerant. But be encouraged, Christian folk here today, to be radical, to be radical, to be willing to stand up for Christ.

Our Lord says, face persecution, great is your reward for that. So, it's telling us that persecution will have a reward, a blessing, in persecution.

[3:49] Matthew 6, our Lord goes on to describe rewards. And the context here is, again, in that context of the Sermon on the Mount, and he's telling people about giving.

He's saying, be real. Be real here. Don't be a phony. When people aren't looking, how are we really? On the inside of us. Are we real before God?

And how is our giving? Matthew 6, it tells us here, what our Lord says about giving. He says, take heed, that you do not your arms before men, to be seen of them.

Otherwise, ye have no reward of your Father, which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine arms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.

Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest arms, when you give it, he says, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine arms may be in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself, shall reward thee openly.

[5:13] It's telling us here, there's a reward for our giving. But let it be giving that's not done, to show off, or to be a vain show, but giving that is done, quietly, and secretly, privately.

You may not get too much credit, here, but that's okay. Our Lord's saying that these ones, these Pharisees, these hypocrites, who are kind of, blowing trumpets, literally, as they announced that they were walking into the room, and then they made a great show, of their giving, of offerings, and such, to get some kind of credit, and some kind of recognition, and some kind of praise.

But our Lord says, don't give like that, rather give privately, quietly, secretly. And God sees what we do in secret. In Matthew 10, verse 42, soon, our Lord, again, says about rewards.

He says, and whosoever shall give, a drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water, only, in the name of a disciple, proudly I say unto you, he shall, in no wise, lose, his reward.

Now that's the really, basic thing, that our Lord is, saying this is something, noteworthy. Just giving someone, a cup of cold water, in his name.

[6:39] Talking about little ones, means, I guess, tending to the children, that we're here, and providing some practical, support to them. Sometimes the little ones, can be discounted, can't they?

We can overlook the children. But, we're all important to God, and, and, I think it's really important, as a church, that we, encourage young mums and dads, we encourage, little children, and such, because they're watching, and learning, every time they come to church, aren't they?

They'll remember, how were they treated, as a little one, growing up, were they overlooked, and, discounted, or, sneered at, or, or, told off, and, badgered, or, were they loved, by the whole congregation?

Was there, a receptivity there, towards them? And, the Lord says, that even giving a cold water, a drink of cold water, to a little one, there's a reward for you, for that.

And so, we might think, in the context of, our own lives, different ministries, and activities, I know there's some, that go out of their way, to visit people, through the week, and show care, and practical concern, and, there's no great, recognition, there's no great, publicity, about what they do, they just go about it, quietly, and, unto the Lord.

[8:05] And, you know, get a pat on the back, for that work. There's others, that are doing work, around the, around the property, and around the, behind the scenes, kind of things.

Our Lord's making a point here, that even the little things, that we do, there's a reward to come. Even the little things, matter to God. Are we generous, and giving?

Are we big hearted, and bountiful? He's saying, he'd be real, in your giving. And, our giving is, beyond just, what goes into play, as it were. It's that practical, Christianity.

It's living the life, isn't it? Living for Christ. It's, that natural way of living, that, we're constantly, giving. We're giving out, that, love of Christ, to others.

We're being, we're being generous, where we can. We're being selfless. We're doing things, behind the scenes, without, necessarily, getting much, praise for it. In a way, that's better, that it is that way, because the praise, will be to come.

[9:09] And, we're doing things, without show, or pride. Someone has said, when we stand, before the judgment seat, of Christ, to render an account, of our stewardship, we will fervently, regret, giving so little, since it is, as inescapably true, what we spend, we lose.

What we keep, will be left to others. What we give away, will remain, forever ours. Let's, try to invest ourselves, in the kingdom of God. To bless people, where we can.

Bless your soul, grow your faith, invest in your, spiritual reward, with God. And get some, good Christian material. Grow your, Christian faith.

Be bountiful, where you can. There's a story, of a grapevine, in London, that apparently, is about, 1000 years old, is grapevine.

And some of the branches, are 200 foot long. And because of, skillful cutting, and pruning, this vine, produces several tons, of grapes each year.

[10:19] Even though, some of the smaller branches, are 200 feet, from the main stem, they bear much fruit, because they are, joined to the vine. And allow the life, of the vine, to flow through them.

And when we, and so we can, picture that, as the word of God, says in John 15, that Jesus says, I am the vine, and ye are the branches. And when we need pruning, the goal is always, more fruit. You know, we know that, we know that, the master, the vineyard keeper, the, the gardener, our Lord, of the vineyard, he, he prunes the vine, and, he shapes it, so that it can be, more fruitful. And, that's what we need to be, to be, receptive, to the Lord's pruning, and the Lord's, um, testing of us, so times.

So, we see that, there's much blessing there, in giving. Another area, is in praying, Matthew 6, again, in the same kind of context, the same, location of, of the, Sermon on the Mount.

[11:32] Our Lord, again, talks about, a reward, and, and of what, we will be rewarded, for what, we will be rewarded. And he says here, in Matthew 6, verse 5 through 6, and he says, And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be, as the hypocrites are, for thou do not pray, to pray standing, in the synagogues, and in the corners, of the streets, that thou may be seen, of men.

Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward, but thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee, openly.

So, it's telling us here, about, how do we pray? How is our praying? Do we pray? Do we really pray? When it's just you, and God.

Just you, and God. You can pray, while you're driving, to work, when it's just you, and God, can't you? In those quiet moments, where it's just you, and the Lord, and bring those needs, before him, those people, that you have, on your heart, those, spend those, special moments, between you, and the Lord, to take time with him.

Now, praying, it's not, meant to be, put on, a showing off, as the hypocrites, were here, they were praying, standing in the, synagogues, in the corners of the streets, and they used to make, a big show, about their religiosity, but, our Lord says, they have their reward, and they've got their recognition, down here, but he's saying, rather for us, that believe, our spiritual, personal prayer life, is something that, we'll have a reward, one day.

[13:22] He says that, your father, will see, and he shall reward you, he shall reward you. It goes on, in Matthew 6, verse 16, of another act, that we can, partake in.

Matthew 6, verse 16, Moreover, when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men, to fast.

Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward, but thou, when thou, fastest, anoint on head, and wash thy face, that thou, appear not unto men, to fast, but unto thy father, which is in secret, and thy father, when seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

So again, it's another example. We've seen the giving, we've seen the praying, we see the fasting here. Our Lord, makes this contrast, with the way the hypocrites, did these things.

And he's saying for us, rather, it's that secret, life, that secret, work, it's those, spiritual, acts of devotion, of spiritual life, that we be real, that we be real, before God.

[14:45] And let it be that natural, work up flowing, of our devotion, to the Lord. Not for man to see, but between you and God, between you and God. Nurture that, that between you and God, nurture that, that, that devotion.

Not putting on a face, as these Pharisees did, to put on an act, to show, kind of show off, and to brag, on about how spiritual, they were. But, it's where, the real you, and God is, isn't it?

That really matters. And to be honest with God, ask him to make you real, in your Christianity.

Because God sees, who you really are. And one day, it will all be revealed.

And we might be surprised, won't we? When we see, those that are, rewarded, in heaven. And, not that we're, earning our salvation, excuse me, of course, nothing of that, our salvation is, bought and paid for, by the precious blood of Christ.

And, we that are saved, are saved, equally saved. Yet, there is a sense of, a difference, in rewards, at this time, yet to come.

[15:57] And, it could well be, that those secret things, that you do for the Lord, will, will be, bountifully, rewarded. The secret, will be shown. Because we know, that one day, the secrets of men's hearts, will be laid, open.

One day, everything will be revealed. There will be no hiding, the truth. Someone has said, what you are, speaks so loudly, I can't hear a word you say.

Sometimes, the real you, shines through. And, sometimes, it's not, not always good, the real, the real you, the real me. But, let's be real, before God.

Let's, let's get honest, with God tonight. The Lord looks for fruit, in our lives. He looks for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

The fruit, of the spirit. And, really, it's the fruit, of the spirit. The spirit makes, that fruit. It's not, like we have to, force ourselves, to be fruitful.

[17:03] It's the spirit of God, makes that fruit, just blossom, and grow, and abound. The fruit, of the spirit, grows in us, and lives out of us. And, our daily actions, show that we belong, to our Lord.

And, really, that's what our Lord, looks for. And, we'll reward, that spiritual fruit. Now, of course, in the word, we see, a testing of rewards, as well. In 1 Corinthians 3, we've seen, just to recap thus far, we've seen how, it talks about, our giving, our praying, it talks about, our fasting, it tells us, even persecution, one day, will be rewarded.

And, 1 Corinthians 3, tells us, that our rewards, will be tested. There'll be a testing, of the works, that we have done. In 1 Corinthians 3, and of course, the context here, is of the judgment, seen of Christ.

Christ. So, we know, for every believer, if you are a saved man, a saved woman, the Bible says, that we do not face, the judgment, for, salvation.

But, we do face, the judgment, for our works. In 1 Corinthians 3, because, our salvation, was judged, at Calvary, at the cross, in Christ's body.

[18:27] Our sin, was judged, and paid for. The penalty, wages of sin, is, death, was paid for there, at the cross. Yet, for every believer, there is a, time to come, where, that which we have done, will be evaluated.

1 Corinthians 3, verse 13. Of course, the context here, it tells, how, there is no foundation, a man can lay, other than that, which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

And it says, that we can build, on this foundation. It says here, verse 12, of 1 Corinthians 3, now, if any man, build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, work, pay, stop it.

Verse 13, every man's work, shall be, made manifest, for the day, shall declare it, because it, shall be revealed, by fire.

And the fire, shall try, every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work, abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive, a reward, there's that word again, a reward.

[19:39] If any man's work, shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself, shall be saved, yet so as by fire. It's almost like, some people, they're just going to get in, by the skin of their teeth, they'll be saved, just so as by fire.

It makes you wonder, as I've heard it put, that, some people will just have, a pile of ashes, to show, for the life, they've lived. It's just, it'll just be a pile of ashes, the wood hay and stubble, poof, just burnt up, all goes up, in a puff of smoke.

will our works go the distance, or will they be, wood hay and stubble? Rather, when that testing fire comes, when we get ready for the fire, it'll be shown to be, gold, silver, precious stones.

Rather, that be the case for us, amen, that those, that remainder, that, that, that which is to show, for the life we've lived, the works we've done, they'll be gold, silver, precious stones.

How can we have, such a, such a, reward? How can we have works, such as that, that are, substantial, that are lasting, gold, silver, precious stones?

[21:08] Can we consider that now, as we evaluate, ourselves, honestly, before the Lord? How is our heart? Are we loving, forgiving, merciful?

Are we filled with grace, and kindness? Are we fruitful? He wants us to be fruitful, such that, our life will have, something, substantial, as to what we've done.

And it tells us there, if any man's works, shall abide, which he hath built thereupon, upon that foundation, that is Christ, he shall receive a reward.

Christianity is rewarding, isn't it? It's rewarding in the life that, now is, and in the life to come. Of course, we don't, excuse me, make the claims that some, uh, would make that, becoming a Christian means, your life's going to be all rosy, and easy, and you'll have, uh, bountiful material goods.

It's not telling us that, but we know that, the reward that is to come, uh, is, going to be, wonderful. Wonderful. I love that scripture that says that, the eye hath not seen, neither hath it entered into the heart of men, the things that God has prepared, for those who love him.

[22:31] Now, we can't, really, put it into human terminology, can we? There will be a reward. Just lastly, we see the timing of rewards. We see the testing, where there'll be a fire.

But, lastly, the timing of these rewards. Revelation 22. Right at the back of your book there. Revelation 22.

It's interesting, by the way, and I was intrigued by, uh, uh, Saturday's speaker, Peter, was making the comparison between Genesis and Revelation. You see, Genesis, you know, we see death, and Revelation, we see life.

We see Genesis, we see the darkness, and then in Revelation, we see the light, the light of God that takes, uh, there'll be no more night there, no more darkness. And it's interesting, this parallel, this kind of comparison between Genesis and Revelation.

And, of course, we see that, at the end of days, in the end of time, Revelation, it's just, uh, mind-boggling, what, what is yet to come.

[23:45] And verse 12 tells us, our Lord says this, Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me. Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.

To give every man, according as his work shall be. Rewards are certain, they're promised. Now, again, I don't want people, from this message, to get the impression, that we work for our salvation. We do not work for our salvation. It is not of works, lest any man should boast. The minute we start to think, we've got some credit to claim, we've got some merit, of our own, is when we get right off track.

That's the mistake the cults make, that's the mistake that every non-Christian religion makes, that you're somehow climbing a ladder of good works, making the scale of works outweigh bad works. None of that. It's not of works. It's, according to his mercy, he saved us. And, we cannot, really claim anything, of value, of our own doings, in any fashion.

[25:00] Yet, there is this truth, that there will be, rewards to come, for a life lived, rightfully, and righteously. They are promised, they are certain.

Revelation 22, 12, my reward, is with me. Christ will reward, when he comes. So, we should, know this, we should live like it, we should live like it matters, that our Christianity matters.

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works. We've been created, to serve him. And, we should live now, in the light of eternity to come.

That, we consider the rewards, of eternal living, in contrast, to those of, earthly living. The scriptures tell us, to set not our affection, on things, below, but set your affection, on things above.

Amen. Consider the, lives and deaths, of people. It's an interesting, study. You can, look on, I'm sure you can look it up, on the internet now, and see, the famous, last words of people.

[26:11] You see that, the last words, that people have breathed, and you see that, quite often, there's very, glaring, contrast, between, those who are saved, and those who are lost.

That's right. You see the words, of those who, have, passed away, into a, Christless eternity. And they're often, crying out, screaming, in, in the, dread, of what faces them.

And yet, for those who know the Lord, there's that wonderful assurance, that wonderful, yeah, wonderful, joy, that they have, deep within, and even, in their last breath, their last words, that they speak.

So this contrast, between internal living, and earthly living. Take, for example, some of the greats, as the world would call them. People have made it big, in terms of, worldly ambition. Look at four of the, earth's greatest rulers. First, Alexander. Alexander, who when he had so, completely conquered, the nations of the earth, he went, because there were no more, to conquer. [27:17] At last, he set fire, to a city, and died, in a drunken, debauch. He died, as a, as a drunken, in a, in a, fit.

This man, who conquered the world, and wept, because there's no more nations, to conquer. Second, take Hannibal. Hannibal, the great, Carthaginian, general, who ravaged Italy, who filled, three bushel baskets, with gold rings, taken, from the hands, of slaughtered knights, who finally committed suicide, by poisoning himself. The great, supposed, great, Hannibal, committed suicide. Third, we take Caesar, he conquered 800 cities, and dyed his garments, with the blood, of a million of his foes, but was finally, stabbed, by a best friend.

Stabbed by his best friend, in the court, where he had been, where had been, his greatest triumph. Then we take, fourthly, Napoleon, he was the scourge of Europe, but was finally, defeated, and banished, and died captive, in a strange land. Defeated, banished, died captive, in a strange land. Napoleon. God says, the memory of the just, is blessed, but the name of the wicked, shall rot. Proverbs 10, verse 7, the name of the wicked, shall rot.

[28:45] Christians, you will be judged. We will be judged. We will give account. Every man, shall give an account, it says, of our life, to the Lord. We will be examined.

Our works, our fruit, our works will be examined, and revealed, exposed. Yet, we can have hope. We can have a certainty of hope, a certainty of reward. Our Lord says, behold, I come quickly, and my reward, is with me, to give every man, according as his work, shall be.

So, what are we to do, in the, in the light of this? Make your life count. Make your life count. Take a close look, at our lives. Everything we do, counts for eternity. So, know the timing of the rewards. And you might think, as a Christian, look, I'm doing it tough, everything's going wrong, and, you know, we can get despairing.

[29:53] You know, my wife, at the moment, is going through, quite a dark valley, of sickness, and pain, and suffering. And, you know, we can go through times like that, and wonder, what's going on.

Our reward is not yet. It's when he comes. We will get the full recognition then. Until then, we anticipate that, that is to come.

And we consider, are we missing out, on heaven's best, because we're settling, for second best. We can settle for second best, can't we? As we see, those who, are just, misled, and steered away, and wandering, here and there, just, their life is a wandering path, that goes, all over the place. Rather take, that narrow path, and be encouraged that, the timing of our rewards, is when he comes. For the meantime, we've got to labour, we've got to watch, we've got to work, and watch, until he comes.

Every man's work, shall be made manifest. It will all be revealed. Those things, that were done, with the wrong motives, with vain glory, those things, that were done, for man's praise, for our own, prideful, ways, will be shown, for what they are.

[31:28] And those secret things, that you do, that, while you bless someone, by, by some gift, that, secret prayer, those times of, earnest, devotion, where you, you're fasting, because you, really have a burden, you saw the Lord, about something, and you never told anyone, that you did that.

Our Lord says, you will be rewarded. You will be rewarded. And even, Christian brother, sister, when you're facing, persecution, don't think, God's, far, far away, he says, rejoice, and be exceeding glad, because, great, is your reward, in heaven. Don't ever think, that God's, far, far away, the timing, of the rewards, is yet, future. So, be encouraged, in your faith, as we live, in the light, of eternity, that one day, our works, will be tested.

Let's not settle, for, wood, hay, and stone. Those, works that, are doubtful, but, despite that, which is excellent, gold, silver, and precious stones, you can think, what's, more precious, than, eternal souls, eternal souls, those people, that we, have knowledge of, that do not know, the saviour, what a precious, gold, silver, precious stone, that would be, seeing, others run for Christ, for that, quiet witness, that you have, you might not say much, but people know, you're a Christian, and you're being, witness, all the time, so let's be, encouraged in that, brothers and sisters, let's pray, dear Lord, we bless you, and thank you, you are, awesome Lord, our great God, our King, thank you Lord, that, your word encourages us, to, take heart, even when, persecution comes, even then, to rejoice, even then, to be exceedingly, to know, that great, is our reward in you, thank you Lord, for, those, little things, that we can all do, even, as some would discount, even, practical, ways, to bless others, as, as you talked about, giving a little one, a drink, a cold water, in your name, help us Lord, not to miss, that, the practicalities, of life, how we can just, show your love, to other people, help us Lord, to, not shy away, from private prayer, fasting, and giving, to do things, that, others, may never, even know about, yet Lord, we're doing it, unto you, for your glory, help us, to be a witness Lord, such that, we'll see gold, silver, and precious stones, that, we'll be eternal, for the life, that we've lived,

Lord, may we not, make the mistake, of these, earthly, greats, that, really, lived lives, that were vain, and empty, but rather, to, commit our lives, to you, pray for us, any year Lord, that are yet to, settle their eternal, destiny, that they might, find peace with you, tonight Lord, to, to rest in your promises, to know that, you can carry, our burden, of sin, and pay for it, there, at the cross, and for every believer, Lord, when we, when we face hardship, when we go through, the gut ache, and, suffering, and times of life, that, you know, that you've not left us, just, helping us get through, and that the reward, is your future, help us, Lord, to have, that, heavenly mindset, to, labor not, for the meat, that perishes, but rather, but rather, to, to, put our, to put our, treasure in heaven, as it were, and, the whole focus, of our life, will be, with that reward, in mind, and, the greatest reward,

[36:16] Lord, will be, to hear you, say to us, well done, our good, and faithful servant, enter into the joy, of thy Lord, we know that, the greatest reward, of heaven, will be, to see your face, and to, hear your voice, and, to receive your, embrace, Lord, as you receive us, into that heavenly, home yet to come, bless you, Lord Jesus, amen, amen,