

Rejoice...When You Suffer...On My Account

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Preacher: Mike Salvati

[0:00] Let's start with this question. What are you willing to suffer for? What are you willing to suffer for? My family and I, my family and me, we, have been watching the qualifying trials for the Olympics.

Anybody else watching some of these stuff? The gymnastics have been phenomenal, track and field, swimming. And as I'm watching these athletes compete on the highest level, it occurs to me, man, for them to do that, they've got to suffer the loss of some stuff.

I doubt they like to eat or can eat chocolate cake as much as I do. I doubt that they're making regular Culver's runs like I do. Not only are they suffering loss, or so we think, in their diets, could you imagine what it would be like for an Olympic-level swimmer, how many laps every day someone of that caliber has to swim?

You know what? It's like, how do you deal with the boredom? Where does your mind go? And then there's the kind of just physical pain.

Whether that's injury, one has to suffer, or, I mean, if you're familiar with track and field at all, the 400 is a grueling race on the human body.

[1:32] Every race is agony. Man. They're willing to suffer. What are you willing to suffer for? Let me turn up the volume a little bit now.

These athletes suffer, they willingly suffer the loss of something for gold and glory, right? What are you willing to suffer harm for?

Not just the loss of something, not just going without, but what are you willing to suffer harm for? What are you willing to be persecuted for?

When I talk about persecution, and Jesus is going to talk about it, it shows up three times that word persecute in our passage today, verses Matthew 5, 10, 11, and 12.

I'm approaching it generally like this. Persecution is when someone is singled out and harassed for who they are or what they stand for. So persecution, generally speaking, is someone getting singled out and getting harassed for who they are or what they stand for.

[2:44] What are you willing to be persecuted for? What are you willing to suffer harm for? Now throughout the ages, people have been persecuted for a variety of reasons.

Good and evil, all in between, political, social, religious, economic, all sorts of different kinds of persecution.

It runs the gamut of human experience in history. Which just goes to show, it's a really sad commentary on the wickedness of the human heart. We've been persecuting each other for a long time.

But this morning, we are coming to the end of the Beatitudes. Matthew 5, 10 is the last stop on the line in the Beatitudes. And Jesus says, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus has something peculiar, something particular in mind when He's talking about persecution in Matthew 5, 10. What He's basically saying is this.

[4:00] If you have been called to follow Jesus, you've been called to suffer for Jesus. If you've been called to follow Jesus, you've been called to suffer for Jesus.

And persecution is not an if, it's a when. It's not if. It's when. This morning, I want to help you see who are those who are being persecuted for righteousness' sake.

And in order to do justice to this last Beatitude, we need to delve into verses 11 and 12. Because this is the only Beatitude Jesus elaborates on.

And so here we have the Beatitudes. Close out in 5, 10. And then He elaborates on the last one. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. In verses 11 and 12. He really wants us to pay attention. He's emphasizing this last one for a reason. But just to be clear, Jesus is not asking His followers in Matthew 5, 10.

[5:19] He's not asking them, hey, are you willing to suffer for me? He's telling them, you will suffer for me. And above all, He says this, when you suffer for me, rejoice.

And be glad. It's a command. And it's surprising. Your calling to follow Christ was your calling to suffer for Christ.

And all of us, if we're followers of Jesus, if we're living out the Beatitudes, if we are looking and smelling like Jesus, we're going to suffer for Him.

For His sake. And so in order to help you see this from this passage, I'm going to make three points this morning. I want you to help you to see that if you're a follower of Jesus, you're called to suffer for Him.

And I want to help you see that three ways. First, the structure of this passage. It's emphatic. There's something about the structure that helps us see that Jesus is really serious in what He's saying here.

[6:32] And then I want to hit on the subject matter of being persecuted. Okay? So structure, subject, and then we hit the surprise of the passage.

There's actually two surprises here. And so that's how we're going to cover this passage this morning. The structure, subject, and the surprise. Let's turn to the structure of this passage which emphasizes what Jesus is saying here.

So if you look at Matthew 5.10, we read, Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. And we've got to ask the question, who are those those?

Who are the those that Jesus is talking about here? And that's where I want to help you see something going on in this passage that may feel like a little English lesson at first.

So bear with me. Has anybody heard the words literary structure before? Literary structure. You might have heard them in two different contexts, like literary, okay, words, structure, I think of buildings, form, but I don't tend to use those together, okay?

[7:44] So what we're talking about when it's literary structure is the form these words are taking in the Beatitudes. And they say something. The form says something.

Let me show you. Look at Matthew 5.3, the first Beatitude. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs, say it with me, is the kingdom of heaven.

Now go down to 5.10. 5.10 says, Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, and say it with me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Do you see anything familiar there between those two verses? They're bookends. And so those two last parts of 5.3 and 5.10, they serve as bookends for what Jesus is talking about.

And so what that means for us is Jesus is saying everything that comes in between is to be taken as a whole. It's taken as a composite profile of a citizen of heaven.

[8:48] And so all of this, all of the Beatitudes, they describe one person, a follower of Jesus, all of them together. And so he's saying, in light of those kind of blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

You see that? Those are bookends that help us to see that Jesus is talking about one person here. So the those in 5.10 are the beautiful ones in God's eyes.

Those who are manifesting the Beatitudes. The blessed ones. Those who are mourning their sin.

Those who are meek. Those who are hungering, thirsting for righteousness. The merciful. The pure in heart. Those peacemakers. That's the those. So, all the citizens of heaven.

Those who have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved Son through the blood of the Son. That's who Jesus is talking about in 5.10.

[10:04] Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Now, a couple other things structurally that I want you to see here.

So, there's that those bookends, right? But I've been telling you all along here when we've been going through the Beatitudes it's a progression.

They build on one another. And so, we've gotten to the last Beatitude. This is the thunder. This is what Jesus wants to leave us with.

And so, this progression because it ends on blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Jesus, by its position in the progression, Jesus is emphasizing it.

And not just that, He then elaborates on it in 11 and 12. And so, He said, just to be sure, I want you to see something, okay?

[11:07] And so, I want you to see how Jesus emphasizes this. So, verse 10, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It's third person, okay? Those people, this is what's going to happen. This is what's true of them. And then look what happens in verse 11. Jesus turns up the volume.

And this is how He does it. He says, blessed are you when you, when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

You see what He did right there? He goes from talking about them to talking about you. He dials it in on us. He's emphasizing this.

So, whatever this last beatitude is, it's where Jesus is closing out and emphasizing and we've got to know what He's talking about.

[12:14] It's important. And so, we've talked about this structure that is emphasizing this last beatitude and it has to do with persecution.

So, let's talk about this subject matter of persecution. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

What is persecution? Well, as I told you in the intro, it's getting singled out and harassed for who you are and what you stand for.

And what I want you to see right now is how it shows up three times in this passage. So, verse 10, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Verse 11, blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you.

And then in verse 12, rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Persecution is the subject matter going on right here.

[13:18] Jesus is wanting to say something to us about it. to prepare us to help us think well about it. Well, we need to ask the question, okay, that's the definition of persecution.

What does this persecution look like? Because when I, I'm guessing, when you think of being persecuted, you think about people getting burned at the stake. You're thinking about missionaries from bygone eras and even present times who suffer the greatest cost and they're put to death for Jesus.

Well, that's true. That's part of what persecution is. But it's not just that. And thanks be to God, Jesus elaborates on this.

And so, He talks about persecution in 5.10 and then He comes back in 5.11 and helps us get the gamut of persecution. Would you look at 5.11? Blessed are you when others revile you.

That means throw insults at you. When they persecute you, that means press hard on you. Pursue you. Come after you. It can have a physical connotation.

[14:29] And utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. False accusations. So when Jesus is talking about being persecuted, He's not just talking about getting beat up and killed.

He's talking about when people talk behind your back. When people make fun of you. When people cast insults on you for being a Christ follower. When people accuse you falsely for things, evil things, on account of Jesus.

And so, what Jesus means by persecution is not just this narrow kind of people dying for Jesus. It includes, but it's so much more. And I'm guessing if you're a follower of Jesus, you can relate to what He's talking about.

You've suffered it. You've suffered the behind the back talking. You've suffered missing job promotions because you won't do certain things in the workplace. So, we've been talking about this subject matter of persecution.

What it is. Now, I want to be clear on that you see who this is for. Jesus does not say, blessed are all who are persecuted, period.

[15:54] He does not say that. He says, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

What does righteousness' sake mean? Well, it's what He's been talking about in the Beatitudes that precede it. Those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn their sin, those who are meek, hunger and thirst after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, those, that's the righteousness' sake.

It's very Christ-like. If you start looking at those Beatitudes, you start seeing a profile of Jesus Himself. If you live that way, you start smelling and acting like Jesus. But then, Jesus, if there's any question, He elaborates on this.

So, in verse 11, He says this, blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely.

I don't know what your version says. It may say, for my sake. My version, the ESV says, on my account. The righteousness' sake ultimately is Jesus' righteousness for His sake.

[17:16] And so, what Jesus is saying here, those who are blessed, those who are happy when persecuted, those who rejoice and can be glad are those who are suffering, being singled out and harassed for Jesus.

He says, says it's going to happen. For righteousness' sake is the equivalent of saying for Jesus' sake.

You might be like, hmm, you know, nobody told me that when I became a Christian. That would have been good information when I became a Christian.

In Luke 14, Jesus is talking to these crowds about the cost of following Him. And do you know what He says to them? Hey, before you follow me, just make sure you do the math.

He says, hey, before you follow me, you want to be like the person that when they build their house, they make sure they have enough money to cover it. You want to be like those kings who go out to battle but before they go out, they send out envoys to make sure that if they engage in battle with this other army that they can actually beat it.

[18:34] And what Jesus is saying there is make sure you know what you're getting into when you follow me. And so if you're not a Christian in this room, you need to realize that following Jesus is costly.

You suffer for Him. There's great joy in it. And if you're someone who'd become a Christian and you didn't realize it, it's like, hello!

Surprise! You're going to suffer. What the New Testament says over and over again is that to suffer for Jesus is to be expected.

It's not if, it's when. Can I show you some passages where it's very clear? In 2 Timothy 3.12, Jesus says this, oh, Jesus, Paul says this, indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

No exceptions. If you want to turn in your Bible to the book of John, John 15, and, you know, when you hear John 15, you're like, oh, yes, Jesus.

[19:46] He's the vine, we're the branches, we abide in Him and He in us, and then we bear Jesus' fruit, fruit that is, smells and tastes, feels like Jesus.

That's right. That's the passage. And then, a little later on, in verses 18 through 21, in the same passage, Jesus says this, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you're not of the world, because I chose you out of the world, therefore, because you're mine, therefore, the world hates you.

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.

You're going to get singled out and you're going to get harassed because you're a follower of Jesus. Expect it. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name.

[20:53] Verse 21. Let me bring you to one more passage. 1 Peter. 1 Peter. Chapter 4. 1 Peter.

Chapter 4. Starting in verse 12. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fire trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. but rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because of the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. And then he says, but let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler, someone who sticks their nose into other people's business. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. I'm not sure if you noticed this, but Peter says that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed. Do you know why Peter sang that? Peter was right there listening to Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus is talking about the Beatitudes.

[22:16] So when Jesus says, blessed are those who are persecuted, that burned into Peter's mind. And he knew that firsthand. When he says, rejoice and be glad, it shows up here.

It burned into his mind. So what I want to show you there is that the Apostle Paul, John, Peter, all these guys say that Christians will suffer persecutions for Christ. Jesus did. This subject matter is really important to get. Especially where we are right now as a culture.

None of us are being threatened with being killed. At least no real threats. We had something this past week that was pretty interesting. But what I want to make clear is that Jesus is saying here, it's not if you will suffer, but when you will suffer persecution for my sake.

If you've been called to follow Christ, you are called to suffer for Christ. Now I want you to see the surprise. There are actually two surprises in Matthew 5, 10 through 12.

[23:41] Two surprises. The first one is this. You start feeling it when you go from 5.9 to 5.10. And so in verse 9, you're like, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.

And you're kind of like this. You read that and you're like, oh yeah, let's rock. Yeah, let's rock. You know those college football games where the football team is running out to the field through the tunnel and they got that thing up above them that says win one for the gipper and they're like, yeah, yeah, hit it, hit it, hit it.

Let's go out. Woo, woo, woo, woo. You know, on our doors we have, you are now going out into your mission field. Go be peacemakers. And we leave last week, we're like, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Hit it, hit it, hit it, hit it. Peacemaking mission. Woo. Beep, beep, beep, beep. And then you read verse 10. Go, baby.

Go be a peacemaker and get persecuted for it. Go. Woo. It's a little bit of a surprise. It's a little bit of a twist.

[24:50] You're kind of thinking, well, I wasn't expecting that. In fact, in my flesh, I would say seven beatitudes are enough.

Seven beatitudes are cool. Poor poverty of spirit, sweet. Mourn, sin, great. Meek, hunger, thirst, God. Merciful, pure in heart, I want that. Peacemakers, okay, that's good.

Okay, five, nine. Okay, let's just kind of scratch out 10, 11, and 12. We can go from five, nine to being salt and light in the world. That would be great. But Jesus doesn't let us do that.

He says there's going to be a cost to your peacemaking, just as there was a cost to my making peace with you. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. The irony is, those who are seeking to make peace get persecuted for making peace.

[25:52] They get singled out and harassed. Persecution is like the opposite of peace. You know, it's like this.

All right, okay. Why would anyone want to hurt, injure one of Jesus' peacemakers? Why would anyone want to do that?

I mean, they're just trying to be nice. Well, let me help you with that. The kind of peace that God is seeking to make with sinners that He sought to make with us, the kind of peace that God is seeking to make requires that sinners, the sinfulness of a sinner's heart gets exposed.

The peacemaking that we're called to do for God to make His appeal through us, 2 Corinthians 5, that appeal to sinners is you are a sinner and you need to be reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus.

And so the peacemaking that we're called to is not to kind of ignore sin or sweep sin or to appease sin or to minimize sin. It's to actually expose sin.

[27:18] Just as my sin got exposed, when I first came to Christ. So God, through the peacemaking gospel of Jesus Christ, confronts a sinner's sinfulness.

If you're starting to talk to people about their sin, you know what? Some of them say, oh man, thank you so much for letting me know that. Others will be like, will you shut up? You're a freak.

Get out of here. Okay, alright. Why would anyone want to hurt one of Jesus' peacemakers? Why would anyone want to hurt Jesus, the ultimate peacemaker?

Think about it. Jesus showed up, the God-man, the Prince of Peace, showed up, and by His very presence and His poignant teaching, He exposed sin in sinners.

Some of them fell at His feet. Others called for His crucifixion. By the time that Jesus was crucified, the Pharisees, those leaders and teachers of the law in Jesus' day, they hated what Jesus was saying.

[28:38] They hated what He was teaching. He was contradicting these men. Calling them to account. And in a couple weeks, we're going to get into that. We're going to see what Jesus says.

He's like, you have heard it say this, but I say. And He did it publicly. And so those guys, He offended them. And they hated Him for it.

Check it out. Like, these men felt threatened by the Prince of Peace. They felt attacked by the Prince of Peace. And they persecuted Him for who He claimed to be and what He taught.

Remember, the Beatitudes are a corporate profile, a composite profile of being a citizen of heaven. And as you grow in these Beatitudes and you become more and more beautiful in God's sight, you're becoming more and more Christ-like in His sight.

And so as you take on Christ's character and as you take on His cause, you're going to be more offensive to people, though more beautiful in God's sight. Brothers and sisters, when you take responsibility for your own sin against God and you mourn over it, you talk about it with other people, that can tick people off.

[30:11] And you're like, well, why? What's wrong with that? Because your honest dealing with your own sin ends up exposing the sin in them.

and there's a good chance they're not going to like that. Alright, I'm going to give you two examples here of what this could look like and what I'm guessing some of you have already experienced.

Just to kind of flesh this out. Guys, let's say you're with other guys and the topic of pornography comes up.

And these other guys are not necessarily followers of Jesus. And so they start joking about it. They start making fun of stuff. They start laughing about it. And it becomes very obvious that they're laughing about it, but you're kind of like, I don't know, what do I, this is awkward.

And they notice that you're not joining them. So what do they do? You don't think this is funny? Hey, Mike, you don't think this is funny?

[31:20] And then, you know, you say something like, well, I don't. Well, why not? Well, I think pornography is the exploitation of women and men.

I think that it's wrong. Oh. Okay. What else? Is there any other reason why you don't think this is funny?

And then it comes out. My Savior doesn't think it's funny. My King thinks this is grievous.

My King, my Lord, the one I follow, the one I want to be like, if He were here, He wouldn't look at pornography. He would call it exploitation. He would call it sin and wrong.

If you say anything like that in a group like that, you know what happened? You know what may happen?

[32:21] The next day, you might get emails with links to porn sites just to mock you, just to tempt you, because you're a follower of Jesus and you're seeking to walk through this world in a way that pleases Him.

and you suffer for Him. You're reviled. Evil accusations. You see how this can work? Let me bring another subject up.

Single women. You're in a group with other single women, non-Christian friends, and maybe some Christian friends, and the topic of sex comes up.

And it becomes evident that everybody is having sex except you. And someone asks you, why are you being so quiet?

And you have to say something like, well, I'm not having sex. And then you start getting these kinds of questions. Are you afraid of getting an STD?

[33:30] And you're kind of like, well, that's a good point, but no, that's not the driving reason. Do you not think that would be enjoyable? No, no, that's not it. Did something happen in your past?

And you're thinking in your mind, yes, something did happen. The Prince of Peace came and saved me. Called me to Himself. Called me to live in a way that is like Him and for Him.

And then so you have to end up saying something like, no, I don't do that. I want to obey my Savior and live for Him and live for Him in every area of my life, including my sexuality.

And so for me to fully obey Him, if I'm not married, I'm celibate. That's the way it goes. And I know that pleases Him. And so one of these other ladies says something like this to you. So what you're saying is, because I'm sleeping with my boyfriend right now, you think I'm a sinner.

And you have to say something like this. Well, you know, what God actually says, and then you're interrupted with something like, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait, wait, wait. Wait, wait, wait. Wait.

[34:42] You are saying that this guy who lived 2,000 years ago, died and was quote, unquote, raised from the dead, is commanding you to abstain from sex now because you're not married. Is that what you're saying? Seriously? Is that what you're saying?

And you have to say something like, that's a pretty good summary. Yeah? And then you hear under this lady's breath, wait until the other girls hear about this.

You are such a self-righteous prude. Anybody experience anything like that before? Because you're a follower of Jesus.

It comes out. You're walking away that pleases Him. You're beautiful in His eyes, but you're offensive in the eyes of other people. And you get singled out and you get harassed for it.

Know that Jesus is like, you are beautiful, darling. Keep on keeping on. Blessed are you. So what we see, the surprise here is that those who are blessed, poor in spirit, pure in heart, peacemakers, surprise, you get persecuted for it on account of Jesus.

[35:58] Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. That's surprise one. Let me point you to surprise two.

But before I do, do you know what flack is? Flack?

In World War II, B-17 flying fortresses, flying out of Britain, over Europe, over Germany, they would have hundreds of pounds of bombs and they would fly over German industry in order to kind of wipe out the production of war.

Planes like Hell's Angels or Sons of Fury, Memphis Bell, all B-17s, crews of 10. Well, I'm not sure if you realize this, but when they would fly over their bomb target, they would have to, the pilot would have to level out and create a stable flight platform in order for the bombardier to line up his Norden bombsite.

And so for at least five to seven minutes, they would fly straight as an arrow, making no maneuvers to avoid enemy attack. They exposed themselves to injury in order to fulfill their mission.

[37:32] And I'm not sharing this because we're going to drop bombs on our non-Christian family and friends. That's not why I'm sharing this. I'm sharing it because God has called us to fly straight and to open ourselves up to injury for his glory, for his sake.

And what would happen is they would, German, the Nazis would fire up what's called flack. And so they would launch these things up with cannon and there would be bombs that would explode and so this melting hot metal would explode and it was designed to fly through machines and men.

Just ravage anything within its explosion. So could you imagine these flight crews of ten flying for five or ten minutes over a flight over a target zone getting hammered by flack?

We're going to get flack. If you're a follower of Jesus, you're going to get flack for it. Superheated metal designed to hurt you with words. Gossip.

We shouldn't be surprised that peacemakers for Jesus are going to be persecuted for Jesus.

Surprise too. It's the command.

[38:53] Verse 12. Rejoice and be glad. When you are getting flack, Jesus says, don't ignore the pain.

Pain's real. It's kind of scary. But then he says, rejoice and be glad. Rejoice and be glad. Blessed are you who are persecuted for my name's sake.

Rejoice and be glad. They're the only commands in the Beatitudes. This is the only command in the Beatitudes. It's emphasis. Jesus, it's popping it. It's like rejoice, be glad when you suffer for me.

And in order to wrap us up this morning, I want to give you three reasons to rejoice when the flack comes.

It might come today. It might come tomorrow. It's coming. Three reasons to rejoice. The reason number one, to rejoice when persecuted for Jesus, is found in verse 12.

[40:01] You're among good company. So they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You're in good company. Moses, David, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job even.

All these prophets suffered for righteousness' sake. And it just doesn't end in the Bible. It's all throughout church history. Hudson Taylor, John Huss, John Patton, Henry Morden, Amy Carmichael, Hudson Taylor, Adoniram Judson, all these suffered flack for Jesus.

You're in good company. You're in good company. You're in great company. Because Jesus suffered too. Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross.

He knows mocking firsthand. He knows it. You're in good company. Rejoice when you suffer.

You're suffering with good company.

Second, rejoice. Persecution is proof positive of your heavenly citizenship. It proves it. If you are willing to suffer for Jesus, it shows that you're legit.

[41:16] Your citizenship is not in this world, but in a world yet to come. In Matthew 5.10, Jesus says, Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

You've got a passport that says, Kingdom Citizen, and it's stamped with the blood of Jesus. Legit! So when you suffer for Jesus, and it's clear it's for Him, it demonstrates that your citizenship is no longer in this world, but in the world to come.

If you're taking notes, write down Hebrews 11, verses 13-16, and be encouraged by that. Reason number three. This is where Jesus goes in verse 12.

Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven. Reward. Rejoice. There's reward. When you suffer now, there's going to be reward then.

Now when you think of reward, I'm guessing you think of material things. And yes, if you're a follower of Jesus, you probably do have a mansion on the boulevard in the New Jerusalem.

[42:34] Okay? Just saying. But, that's not the greatest reward. Let me try to capture the greatest reward.

Just imagine hearing this with your name in it. Michael. Well done. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Enter the joy of your master. Come on in. Come on in. Enjoy what I have for you and with you. The greatest reward in heaven is Jesus.

He's there. Jesus Himself. Well done, good and faithful servant. enter the joy of your master.

That's the second surprise. It's weird. Could you imagine what happens when a Christian who suffers for Jesus starts to rejoice?

[43:39] Do you know what happens? People notice. And those who persecute us get a taste of the gospel that they would have never known otherwise.

We love those who persecute us. When you suffer flack for Jesus, rejoice. You're in good company. You're a citizen.

And your Savior awaits. We've looked at the structure. We've looked at the subject. We've looked at the surprises. This morning, remember, your call to follow Jesus is a call to rejoice in suffering for Him.

Let's pray. God in heaven, thank You so much that You would call us to share in the sufferings of Jesus. We're not interested.

We're not masochists. We're not seeking it out. God, we would pray for peace. We would ask, God, for our leaders would govern in such a way that we can live in peaceful ways, making peace.

[44:48] But God, I do pray that You would give us the grace to be faithful to You and to even rejoice when we catch flack for our Savior.

In Your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.