

"Blessed Are The Persecuted" Matthew 5:10-12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 September 2022

Preacher: Nate Taylor

[0:00] We're going to be in Matthew chapter 5, verses 10 through 12. This is the last little bit of the Beatitudes. Final reminder, the Beatitudes, they're these surprising descriptions of the blessed life and what it looks like.

And it's upside down. It flips the world's values on its head. A few weeks ago, I came across an article by a pastor named Kevin DeYoung. And he talked about if the world was going to write some Beatitudes, and if we're going to be honest, what we're often tempted towards thinking the blessed life is, it might sound something like this.

I wanted to read it to you. Blessed are the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of pleasure. Blessed are those who feel good about themselves, for they shall be confident. Blessed are the aggressive, for they shall control the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for recognition, for they will be noticed. Blessed are the demanding, for they will receive what they demand. Blessed are the sexually liberated, for they shall be free to live as they please.

Blessed are the scheming, for they shall be called children of the powerful. Blessed are those who are praised by the world, for theirs is the kingdom right now. Blessed are the kingdom right now.

[1:21] Blessed are the kingdom right now. Blessed are the kingdom right now. It's not what's in there, right? It flips things upside down. And so there's this challenge within the Beatitudes to value and treasure what the world calls pitiable, and to scorn the things that the world calls desirable.

and I know what you were thinking you came out this morning, you went home you had a nice Sunday lunch perhaps you even had a nap and before you go to the workplace tomorrow you really wanted to come just one last time into here and you really wanted to hear about suffering just a perfect way to finish your weekend and get ready for a Monday so I heard you, I understand I knew what you were thinking and so that's what we're going to do this is our last beatitude blessed are those who are persecuted for theirs is the kingdom of heaven let me pray for the preaching of God's word Lord God we ask that as we listen to your word you grow in us a desire for your kingdom to come your will to be done in our hearts in our church, in Glasgow and on earth as it is in heaven we ask this in the name of Jesus

Amen 12 seconds of silence it might not seem like that much but on television that is an eternity what's just happened is the host Amir Adib of this news show in Egypt is silent he just sits there stunned searching for words this man whose job is to speak words can't find any see one of his colleagues has just interviewed the widow of a man named Nassim Fahim Nassim Fahim he was a guard at St. Mark's Church a Coptic Church in Alexandria Egypt and on Easter of 2017 a suicide bomber strapped 25 pounds of explosives on him and he rode on a motorcycle and he headed straight for St. Mark's Church and ended up killing a bunch of people there 16 people died in the explosion including Nassim Fahim and he at the last minute kind of diverted the motorcycle and saved dozens and dozens of lives so

Amir Adib is sitting there his colleagues just interviewed the widow of Nassim Fahim and the reason that he's stunned silent is because this widow she's just spoken through tears about the forgiveness of God that her and her deceased husband believed in and not just that but how they actually wanted to also offer forgiveness to those who had committed these atrocities if you can still find the video online I'm sure it's on YouTube and Amir Adib this news host he is just absolutely overwhelmed and he doesn't know what to say 12 seconds of silence and you kind of see going across his face there's this mixture of emotions of wanting to weep and being confused and trying to search for words to say and he finally says this he says the Copts in the Coptic Church of Egypt the Copts are made of steel they're made of a different substance and he goes on his voice starts to crack he says how great is this forgiveness you have if it were my father

I could never say this but this is their faith and their religious conviction it's kind of like he was saying you're just being persecuted and there's something different about you instead of looking at you and seeing this woeful pitiable life it's like in the midst of this tragedy tragedy blessing and goodness is shining through something else is going on it's like that there's this treasure that you have that cannot be taken away and I don't get it this good life is emanating from this widow you know it's interesting because you go through these beatitudes and Jesus will not let you go it's like he grabs you by the shirt and says listen you must grapple with this if you are going to understand the kingdom of heaven

[6:12] I'm going to read it again 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 can this really be the blessed life persecuted reviled two questions for our outline last time doing this what does it mean to be persecuted and then the second question is what is the promise attached to this beatitude what does it mean to be persecuted and first off we want to answer that question by saying what does it not mean because there can be all sorts of misunderstandings if we just fill in the blanks and don't think deeply about God's word first off this beatitude doesn't mean that you have to search out persecution like somehow if somebody isn't uttering all kinds of evil about you and against you today that you're doing something wrong in your life okay there is simultaneously an attractiveness to the gospel and an offense to the gospel okay if we're proclaiming the king the true king and his kingdom it is both going to draw people in and repel people at the same time

Jesus just says right after this section in the beatitudes he's going on about being a city set on a hill and he calls the people the citizens of his kingdom he says to let your light shine before others why so that others might see your works and give glory to your father in heaven right so there should be this this idea of people are going to look and say wow that God is their God is different their God is good their God is gracious their God is amazing there should be a beauty in our lives that points to Jesus and leads people to give glory to God right but this is simply saying then the same light that can be attractive and beautiful can also expose the evil deeds of this world and people don't like to feel exposed they like to go and hide in the darkness and so they can push back against that light at the same time both can be true and remember we said the opposite of these blessings in Matthew 5 are the woes that Jesus speaks and so this is

Jesus' words in Luke 6 26 woe to you when all people speak well of you for so their fathers did to the false prophets did you hear the contrast in our section that we just read blessed are those who are persecuted for theirs is the kingdom of heaven and then it says hey if that's happening to you if you're being reviled if you're being persecuted you stand in good company because in the old testament it was the prophets who that happened to God's faithful messengers and then and then he flips it around in Luke 6 and says hey listen woe to you if everybody speaks greatly about you that's what they did to the false prophets the ones who were not speaking God's word they were just saying what people wanted to hear and of course everybody loved them okay also this is very important it does not mean it doesn't simply say blessed are the persecuted it doesn't just say that right there's a qualifier what is it for righteousness sake right it is possible dare I say that you can be reviled because you're being a jerk right we can suffer because we're being insufferable that is a possibility

Aaron and I met at the University of Florida and there in kind of the middle of the quad where a lot of people would gather these street preachers would come and preach the gospel and they'd stand up they'd find some place so they could amplify their voice and you know there's just thousands of university students walking by and every once in a while there was like a good like they were really preaching the gospel even if it was a hard message they were saying God's truth they were saying it in a way that was trying to win people but most of the time they were abrasive they would literally point out people's sins even if they didn't know them as they walked by and call them all sorts of names and basically they would be the stumbling block not the gospel of Jesus and I really think in the midst of that they probably thought they were living out Matthew 5 verses 10 to 12 right everybody's against me right therefore

I must be doing something right but people would shout also they'd debate them back and they'd shout all sorts of mean things at them it got really nasty you would just kind of want to keep walking but they weren't being persecuted for righteousness sake I'm not against public street preaching I

just like to see it replicate the New Testament examples right and more than street preaching how we live as Christians should be public and we're always going to seek to serve God over man but we don't have to be obnoxious about it just a simple point just a simple reminder and to add to that it's not saying that there's something inherently happy or good about being persecuted again it's being persecuted for righteousness sake that Jesus holds up as precious we want to make it sure it's actually Jesus and his gospel and the ethics of his kingdom that are doing the offending and causing people to revile us not because we're being as obtuse as 179 degree angle okay so that's what it doesn't mean what does it then mean to be persecuted for righteousness sake the point being made here in this beatitude is if you live in light of the beatitudes you're not going to have to seek out persecution it will seek you out one pastor put it this way he says you know how do you actually know if you're being persecuted for righteousness sake and it's actually helpful in this last beatitude to think through the other beatitudes that came before it right so you know what are the things that the world reviles us for believing in a big one nowadays is our sexual ethic our anthropology what is a human being what does it mean to be male or female people don't like that what the church says right so if we're going to be reviled for that right let's try our best to be poor in spirit meaning we enter into these conversations with humility and not just that blessed are those who mourn we mourn our sin because we have broken

[13:12] God's commands in these areas and we mourn the sin of the church because we know we haven't always been faithful witnesses in this we haven't always followed what we believe you know we long for righteousness in this area not to win an argument but because we actually believe this is where true human flourishing exists in following God's and his commands and we know that we too need mercy so we're going to approach people who we disagree with with mercy and then we first we don't submit them to purity of heart we first submit ourselves to purity of heart and examine our heart and we don't expect someone who doesn't believe the same things that we do to hold to this is what the pure life looks like and we're going to extend the peace of Christ offering them a relationship with God actually desiring a right relationship with them you know again they're not just this problem they're a human being that you want to approach and have peace with and if at the end of that we're hated then blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake now I ought to point out too that Jesus what he ties it to he mentions the prophets being persecuted and in the

Old Testament it is the covenant people of God who's doing the persecution of the prophets right it's not some foreign pagans coming in it's God's people who are rejecting them and reviling them and Jesus as he goes around in the gospels is being persecuted a lot of the times by the Pharisees the religious community and so this is my point following Jesus and living in this beatitudinal way creates a friction with surface level righteousness and with people who live in hypocrisy it's going to again blessed are the merciful they're going to receive mercy we know we need mercy blessed are the poor in spirit we all realize that we struggle with hypocrisy but I'm talking about a kind of hypocrisy that is utterly blind to the kingdom of God and there's no repentance in it in other words reviling can come from within it can come from outside of the church in the world but it can also come in the covenant community with people who are more concerned about their own platform and comfort and preferences than the kingdom of God you can be reviled because of your righteousness within a church community so we need courage to do the right thing out there in the world and also in here in the church

I don't have any personal thoughts there's no examples that I'm thinking of in this way I'm just saying that this can happen and we need to be aware of it it's just true we need to hear this when you're living faithfully and differently persecution will come and when it comes you have to know God's blessing and his presence have not left you they've not we gotta let Jesus his word and his way shape how we live and the person Jesus is describing is determined to live in the way that Jesus lives I don't know if you've noticed and we've gone through all these beatitudes who does it describe who's the truly blessed man Jesus he didn't account equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself he's poor in spirit he's the one who mourns over Jerusalem he's the one who's gentle and lowly he is meek he's pure in heart he thirsts for righteousness he's full of mercy he is our peace and he was reviled and rejected and killed and as the king goes so go the people and this persecution it can take many forms right we don't need to exaggerate the type of pushback that we're facing in our lives okay there's no good in doing that we need to tell the truth alright but you also don't have to limit it to people who are actually fleeing from their homes right as

you practice righteousness it could lead to you being ridiculed by your family mocked in school gossiped about by co-workers overlooked for job promotions

Jesus says in verse 11 that the way people see you and talk about you is a form of persecution right okay and it's not just this beatitude that warns us of life as a citizen in the kingdom Jesus says in John 15 the world hated me it's gonna hate you Paul writes in 2nd Timothy 3 everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted and this beatitude it's so important it's so vital at the end of these things that did you notice Jesus changes from the third person to the second person blessed are those who are persecuted for theirs is the kingdom of heaven and then what does he say in verse 11 blessed are you blessed are you hey look this is not just out there I want to make it personal I want to draw you and listen if this is you blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely and why does he say it's happening in verse 11 on my account it gets very personal the bible never tries to bait and switch us right it's very frank and it's very open about what it means to follow

Jesus what you are signing up for and it still thinks it's wildly worth it why that leads to our second question what's the promise attached to this beatitude it's the promise attached to this beatitude and the promise to those persecuted for righteousness sake is that theirs is the kingdom of heaven i don't know if you noticed if you remember i'm sure everybody remembers every single sermon right but if you go back to the very beginning of the beatitudes in verse three this is the very first promise attached to blessed are the poor in spirit blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is what the kingdom of heaven we've come full circle blessed are those who are persecuted for theirs is the kingdom of heaven we've got this kingdom of heaven sandwich that Jesus makes in the beatitudes and it's helpful because we can note that these promises that Jesus makes they are both now and they are not yet because that's what the kingdom is about the kingdom is now and the kingdom is not yet you have the kingdom and yet you wait for its fullness to be made manifest on this earth and the command in verse 12 rejoice and be glad it's this invitation into a different way to be human it's not this fake rejoicing in the midst of tribulation but one that comes from believing these beatitudes are true they're true now and they're true in the world to come and it's going to produce a gladness that receives things with thanksgiving and rejoicing because you have a vision of the future that's now penetrating the present your hope for the future has come near because the kingdom of heaven has drawn near the kingdom of heaven is at hand that's what

[20 : 24] Jesus announces in Matthew 4 and even though Jesus is about to launch into the rest of the sermon on the mount and talk about life in the kingdom there's there's like it's like there's this little pause at the end of the beatitudes we're reminded although this world's going to reject you your king welcomes you and so you have to ask yourself which welcome do you desire more the world's or the king's it's right there it's right up front it's what the kingdom of god's about he's going to go on he's going to talk about life in the kingdom even more in the sermon on the mount but it's right there in front of us at the very beginning i'm sure many people have heard of martin lloyd jones the great welsh priest preacher he was first a doctor so he's called the doctor right a lot of times and he felt called into ministry and he had already been a doctor and he was doing really well and he had to take a 90% pay cut for that and also in his little doctor circles he was in kind of these semi-elite circles he's been a leading doctor in his field and he started to be pushed out of those circles he's kind of written off as some sort of

Christian fanatic and before he served for 30 years in Westminster Chapel in London the first pastorate that he took was in the small blue collar community in Port Talbot Wales and a reporter once asked martin lloyd jones about all that he gave up all that he left in his promising career as a doctor is it worth it they asked and this was martin lloyd jones response i gave up and i received everything i wonder if you've heard the call of the kingdom not saying that everybody has to follow martin lloyd jones and give up their career and become a pastor it's not my point i'm just wondering if you've heard christ's call to leave it all behind all these things that we think are so valuable but looking back and said i really left nothing and to actually gain the king in his kingdom to gain all that your heart needs all that your life needs to abandon this vain search for happiness as an end in itself and to surrender to the king and to be welcomed into his kingdom there's this american missionary named jim elliott he lost his life along with three friends when he was in ecuador in 1956 he was reaching out to some indigenous people there going to this tribe and trying to share the gospel with them and swords and spears were thrown at them gave up his life for the call to the kingdom he wrote before he went there a famous line he said he is no fool who gives up what he

cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose there it is that's the good life that's the kingdom of heaven a treasure that cannot be taken away and it changes how we live it changes our witness and that witness will bring both persecution and it will bring people into the kingdom that's what the lord uses there's this british missionary named leslie newbegin he served in india in the first part of the 20th century and he tells this story about a young teacher in india who became a christian and he soon found that he was being persecuted for his faith in this educational environment and he ended up being fired from his job simply for being a christian and newbegin says this about he says the costly witness of a village boy who is willing to lose his teaching certificate rather than compromise his faith so shook the whole institution that i was soon baptizing students within the college campus this has convinced me of three things the gospel will always contradict the culture's narrative at some point there is a cost of faithful witness and there is a power of a costly witness to draw others to christ that's the upside down kingdom it can be yours you have citizenship within it it's this witness right to say listen everybody looks and they see to lose something but to know that you've gained everything second corinthians 4 17 says for this light momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison that's it the beatitudes that there is both a challenge within them and there's an invitation right to us to each every one of us they expose our hearts while also consoling them that's what I want to end with I just want to go through each one kind of ask the question that is asking challenge where it's challenging comfort you where it's comforting you and then we'll pray do you feel poor in spirit the kingdom belongs to people who've come to an end in themselves are you mourning your sin and the effects of sin in this world Jesus wants to comfort you by the power of his holy spirit are you meek do you feel sometimes like you're being trampled and wondering at times if asserting your power for selfish gain would be worth it stop that is not the good life the meek will inherit the earth are you hungry and thirsty and longing for something more out of life well the king invites all who thirst to come to him and drink and find satisfaction for your soul and his kingdom of righteousness are you seeking to show mercy to those stuck in sin and resisting condemning yourself and others well the king himself wants to forgive you and heal you and name you you're ready to receive the mercy of Jesus because his mercies are new every morning and they never come to an end are you seeking purity of heart are you tired of dividing your heart and listening to all the competing voices in the world tired of giving into lying and vanity and lust and greed well God wants to show you his very face and when you see him you'll be like him are you done avoiding conflict and done holding grudges are you seeking peace well you're doing so as a beloved child and you're bearing the image and embodying the very nature of the king himself are you persecuted do you feel the tension of being in but not of the world are you acquainted with the ways that following Christ is sometimes different sometimes odd sometimes costly well if you're there then you are sharing in the victorious cross-shaped life of our king Jesus the way up is down the way to gain your life to get your life is to die do you believe this let me pray father we thank you for both the confrontation the challenge and the comfort and consolation of these words of yours father we pray that we would live into them that we would see them as true that we would hear the challenge thank you lord that you don't you don't hide your truth but you make it known to us father thank you for our king Jesus it can be hard to follow you Jesus sometimes we have to give up a lot and it hurts we thank you that you are a king and savior though who knows what it is to empty himself and to hurt and so we trust you and we declare that we believe and we ask that you would help our unbelief to see you and to seek you and your kingdom above all else we pray this in the name of Jesus amen