

Sermon Title: **“BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED”**

Matthew 5:10-12

- The Book of Matthew was written during a time of terrible persecution at the hands of Emperor Nero
- 2 Key Phrases we MUST understand to comprehend the Blessing:
  1. “For the Sake of Righteousness”
    - Would you allow God to take your persecution & to use it (as you focus on Him) for the sake of righteousness?
  2. “Because of Me”
    - Jesus was persecuted (bad mouthed; hated; betrayed; rejected; etc.) – if that’s what Jesus faced, we should expect that as well)
- “Persecution” = to be Mistreated; to Trouble; to Harass; to Suffer on the Account of Someone or Something
- Overall the concept of persecution is universally considered as something NEGATIVE
  - The very reason why you are persecuted is the very reason why you can endure persecution (Jesus Christ)
- Here are 3 Powerful Truths that Change our Perspective on Persecution:
  1. God will Shield us (Nothing will happen to us that God has NOT 1<sup>st</sup> allowed to occur in our lives)
    - Nothing happens in a follower of Jesus’ life, which God does NOT 1<sup>st</sup> allow
    - God uses it ALL (the good & bad) for the purpose of conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ (His Son)
  2. God will Comfort us (we DON’T have to face ANYTHING alone ... the God of ALL comfort is with us comforting us in abundance)
    - That Affliction (suffering) ISN’T minimized (God knows it hurts, but God meets us in our hurts & comforts us)
    - Followers of Jesus will face hardships, but when we do, we are comforted & we can use those afflictions to comfort other people
  3. God will Carry us (this speaks of Israel, but is applicable to us, too)
    - We NEVER have to face ANY Persecution alone
    - ALL Persecution has an expiration date (whatever you’re facing will NOT Last Forever)
- We’ve got to understand that today’s world is NOT a friend to God & that means it’s also NOT a friend to Followers of God either
  - Followers of Christ are supposed to be different
  - The Sermon on the Mount forces us to ask the tough question – “How badly do we really want Jesus?”
  - Jesus ISN’T looking for fence riders (following Jesus means we’re fully committed & devoted to Him)