



# **MATTHEW**

The Savior-King and His Kingdom

## **Kingdom Character - Persecuted**

**Matthew 5:10-12**

Message #14 of 80 – S1044

**Sermon given on May 7, 2023**



Sunday Morning Service

**Pastor Rick Lancaster**

# Kingdom Character - Persecuted

## *Matthew 5:10-12*

### Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Matthew 5**
- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Matthew – **The Savior-King and His Kingdom**
- One of the things that causes some people to struggle with Christianity is that it contains many paradoxes.
- The dictionary defines paradox as:

**Paradox: a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true.**

- A well-known example of this is **Matthew 16:25**

**For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**

- There seems to be a contradiction here.
- As Christians, we change the dictionary definition of paradox when it comes to things in the Bible.
- **Biblical Paradox: a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true.**
- We have been wrestling with one of those paradoxes at the Wednesday night study in Exodus.
- Is God good? Is God holy? Is God righteous? Does God always do what is right? Yes, to all, right? **Exodus 4:21**

**And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.”**

- If God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, is He still good? Yes!
- When we come to these paradoxes in Scripture, they remind us that God doesn’t think or act like we do.
- He is perfect and we are not.
- When we are conflicted about something in the Bible, the problem is not with God – He is perfect – the problem is in our understanding of God and His Word.
- That excites me. It means there is more for me to learn about My God and Savior.
- Let’s pray and then look at one of those paradoxes. - **Pray**

## Teaching

- **Kingdom Character - Persecuted**

- This morning, we come to the end of this mini-series through the beatitudes.
- Let's look at our text for today and see what the Lord might want to say to us.

- **Matthew 5:10-12**

- In the previous beatitude we are called to be peacemakers.
- That means we seek to help others make peace with God.
- Even though we seek their good they will interpret it as a judgment of their lives (which it is).
- Paul talked about how our light is perceived by those walking in darkness **2 Corinthians 2:14-16a**.

**Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. <sup>15</sup> For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. <sup>16</sup> To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.**

- As Christ-followers, we carry the life-giving fragrance of Christ everywhere we go.
- To those walking in darkness, that life-giving fragrance of Christ smells like the death they will experience for all eternity if they do not repent.
- Anyone who chooses to live according to God's will is going to conflict with those who are living according to their own will.
- Paul said this is inevitable **2 Timothy 3:21**.

**Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

- Living and walking in the light will cause the light to shine out of us.
- The world does like the light, it prefers the darkness of sin, evil, and wickedness **John 3:19-20**.

**And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.**

- Those who are 'practicing evil' hate the light of your good works and Kingdom character traits.
- Their hatred may manifest in persecution.

- If you live to please God, your life will be an offence to those who choose to live to please themselves.
- Let's read verse 10 again.
- **Matthew 5:10**
- The verse does not say that all persecution is blessed by God.
- For example, it does not say that you will be blessed if you are persecuted for being a jerk.
- The blessing comes when we are persecuted for doing what is right.
- 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven' – that is how the first beatitude ended.
- These bookends remind us that all the beatitudes are to be taken together.
- Together they describe the character of a Christ-follower.
- This is how we should walk through this life while we wait for Jesus to come back for us.
- Jesus told us that this might not be easy.
- The world might object to your Christ-like character.
- Verse 11 gives us three ways the world might respond to our Christ-like walk.
- **Matthew 5:11**
- First – **Reviling**
- To revile = insult, denounce. – “to harshly criticize— to find fault with real or merely perceived faults in a harsh and demeaning manner.”
- Christians are often criticized as not caring about women because we believe it is wrong to murder a baby in its mother's womb.
- A woman who ends the life of her baby is at risk of an eternity separated from God – I care deeply about that.
- That baby, even though it didn't take a single breath, is with Jesus in heaven.
- Second – **Persecution**
- Persecution = to systematically oppress and harass. – “to be or become subject to systematic harassment and attack due to one's religious beliefs.”

- True persecution comes because the world believes we are too closely associated to Christ or His righteousness.
- Persecution of God's people by the wicked in this world began with Cain killing Abel.
- It will continue until Christ comes and establishes His kingdom.
- All through the Bible are examples of the wicked persecuting the righteous.
- The most heinous of those persecutions was the execution of Christ – the perfect, sinless Savior of the world.
- There should be no expectation on the part of a Christ-follower that they will escape persecution **John 15:18-20**.

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>

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.

- God is sovereign – He will choose who will have to endure persecution.
- And by His grace, He will help them to endure it.
- We don't need to be afraid; we only need to be faithful to God and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- God's will cannot lead us someplace His grace cannot protect us.
- Third – **Slander**
- The wicked of this world want to silence God's people.
- If they can't find something to criticize, they might just make something up.
- This is happening regularly in our culture.
- People are accusing people of evil without any regard to whether the accusation is true.
- They are hoping to ruin their reputation and silence their opposing viewpoint.
- This is going on with Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.
- The wicked part of our culture has an unnatural hatred of him because he is an African American man who doesn't line up with their perverse ideologies. Pray for him.

- Our text ends with an amplification of the paradox.
- **Matthew 5:12**
- This is not a command to enjoy persecution.
- It would be perverse to enjoy pain and suffering.
- Persecution is neither something to be enjoyed nor sought after.
- Our response to persecution because we live for Christ should be to rejoice.
- We should rejoice when we suffer persecution in Christ's name because our reward in heaven will be great.
- We don't know exactly what that reward is, but it will be great!
- We should also rejoice because suffering in the name of Christ puts us into the company of the great men and women of the Bible and history who suffered because of their faith in God and Christ.
- It means we have the unspeakable privilege of having fellowship in Christ's sufferings **Philippians 3:10**.  
... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...
- Christ suffered for us, so that we could be saved.
- We should rejoice when we are given the opportunity to suffer for His sake.
- Our suffering doesn't compare with His – not even close.
- We will close with this Scripture from Paul **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**  
**Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**
- In this world, if you choose to walk in the light of Jesus Christ, you may experience persecution.
- You should prepare yourself for that.
- If you know it is coming and you do experience persecution, you can do as Jesus tells us here, 'Rejoice and be exceedingly glad...'
- You are walking in the footsteps of your Savior, and He is right there with you.
- David is going to come up and lead us in one last song.

- While he is doing that, we would like to pray with you.
- Kelly and I will be up here in front.
- Pastor Randy and Debbie will be in the back.
- Persecution is not fun – it is miserable.
- If you are going through it because of your faith, come let us pray for you – or if you know someone who is – let us pray with you.
- Or maybe someone is being harsh with you because of your faith or maybe even slandering you – let us pray.
- Or maybe you are afraid of persecution and so you are not letting your light shine as you might feel you should – come let us pray.
- There is power when God’s people come together in prayer.
- If you are here this morning and you don’t feel as close to God as you would like to be – let us pray – up here or in the back.
- Or if you are not sure if you are a Christian – come talk with us, let us help you.
- Or if there is anything we can be praying about with you – please come – it blesses us to pray with you.
- Please stand. I am going to pray and then David is going to lead you in one last worship song.
- If you don’t need prayer because your life is perfect – then worship with David.
- Otherwise, after I finish praying – come up here – or go to the back and let’s pray together. Let’s pray!