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| **SERIES** | The Pursuit of Happiness |
| **BIBLE** | Matthew 5: 10-12 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. |
| **TITLE/TOPIC** | Blessed are the Persecuted for Jesus |
| **OVERVIEW** | Especially in affluent, comfort seeking America, anything remotely connected to suffering or hardships brings a strong adverse reaction. But the kingdom of heaven is not like America. In the realm where Jesus is king, suffering because we follow Jesus actually brings a special blessing. When disciples align with God’s heart, and hunger after His righteousness, and show His fruit, they will stand out in this dark world and they will suffer. How can suffering be blessed? Here’s how. |
| **SCRIPTURE BREAKDOWN** | Built on this framework:  Root -> Shoot (main supporting trunk) -> Fruit  Poor in spirit, mourn, meek - > hunger for righteousness - > merciful, pure, peacemakers  The world avoids poverty as a curse, meekness as weakness, makes excuses about sin. The world hungers after treasures in the here and now. The world values payback over mercy, individual expression over purity, and demanding my rights over peacemaking. When disciples learn to walk in the Kingdom and be formed by Jesus and His values, the world will not always accept them. In fact, Jesus said later that the world would hate them. *John 15:* ***18****“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.****19****If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.****20****Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2015%3A18%2D20&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26720a)*] If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.*  What is the Kingdom suffering that brings blessing?  **In Jesus Kingdom, true happiness belongs to those who suffer for the right cause (righteousness) Matthew 5:10.**  Persecuted – harass, mistreat, trouble, cause to flee (intimidate)  Right cause: Suffering for righteousness sake, for the causes that reflect God and being right with God.  \*Not for any unrighteous cause (your own sinful agenda, something earthly, temporary)  **In Jesus Kingdom, true happiness belongs to those who are spoken wrongly about for right person (Jesus). Matthew 5:11**  Revile you, persecute, utter all kinds of evil – defame, rail at, chide, reproach  Right person: Suffering for Jesus, the honor of His name, the purity of His character.  \*Not for any unworthy person (like yourself, your pride, other sinful people)  I Peter 4: 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name… 19 So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.  Consider how Joseph and Mary, the earthly parents of Jesus were likely spoken poorly of. Yet all their actions regarding the birth of Jesus were for the right cause (God’s redemption) and the right person (Jesus).  **The early church rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer for His name.**  Acts 5: 40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.  41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.  **In Jesus’ Kingdom, the those who suffer for His name are richly rewarded. Matthew 5:12**  “Blessed” = true happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction, contentment, rest  Theirs is the kingdom of heaven = belonging, acceptance, privilege  Great is your reward in heaven = crowns that we will throw at Jesus feet  Great is your company = the godly prophets who spoke and lived God’s truth and were persecuted (many were killed).  Church tradition teaches us that all the 12 Apostles (and the Apostle Paul) were persecuted for following Jesus. All but John died in martyrdom. Peter was crucified upside down (at his request, not worthy to be crucified like Jesus). Paul was beheaded. John died of natural causes while being exiled on the Island of Patmos.  Polycarp – church leader burned at the stake in 155 AD  Perpetua – young Christian woman who died by the beasts in Carthage, 203AD  Jon Hus – worked to translate scripture into common language, burned at stake in 1415.  Fox book of martyrs – Record of Protestant martyrs in England and Scotland 1563  Nate Saint, Jim Elliot – missionaries seeking to reach remote tribe, killed 1956  Bonnie Witherall – Graduate of MBI killed in 2002 in Lebanon. <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/21/international/american-missionary-is-shot-dead-in-lebanon.html>  Jesus Freaks – book, modern stories of those persecuted for following Jesus  Voice of the Martyrs – ministry dedicated to those who are persecuted.  Life is full of suffering because we live in a fallen creation, tainted by sin. We suffer from physical illness and disease. We suffer from the hardships of work. We suffer because of the sin of selfishness and pride others. We suffer in battling our own sin. But we should distinguish THIS type of suffering – suffering for the sake of Jesus and the name of Jesus. This suffering brings God’s special blessing and reward. |
| **GOSPEL** | How does this sermon bring people to the Gospel?  We are saved only through the righteous suffering of Jesus on our behalf. Isaiah 53 (by His stripes we are healed)  I Peter 2: **21**To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.  **22**“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=I+Peter+2&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30422e)]  **23**When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. **24**“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” |
| **NEXT**STEPS | Begin | Connect | Engage | Grow | Disciple  GROW to maturity - Embrace your call to suffer persecution for Jesus. The call to follow Jesus is a call to suffer for righteousness. Be willing to be persecuted, be spoken falsely of for Jesus. God will enable us to do this by His Spirit. I Peter 2: **21**To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. |