

A DIFFERENT KIND OF LIFE

If This Is Happiness, Who Wants It?

TEXT: Mt. 5:10-12

INTRODUCTION: Today we come to the last of the eight beatitudes. These eight verses of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount constitute a rich vein of gold beneath the earthen surface of the Scriptures. Digging here offers to enrich our lives. These sayings, being understood and applied promise to show us the way to

- **Be genuinely happy**
- **Be more like our Lord Jesus**
- **Be one of those people in whom God works mightily**

2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those whose heart is loyal to Him. ...*"

As is often the case when a master teaches you something, the final lesson is the most difficult. The same is true with the beatitudes. Now, understand, I am not the master teaching you. I am a fellow student, seeking to learn and to practice. No, Jesus alone is our Master and our Teacher. These words are His. These truths come from Him; and I confess that when I come to this one I struggle to understand, and I am fearful to apply.

Mt. 5:10-12 ¹⁰ Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This final beatitude has a uniqueness to it. When we understand the others, we see the reward as God's natural consequence.

Mt. 5:4 Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

Mt. 5:6 Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

But admittedly, there is something about this one that is difficult to see, or understand, or believe.

Blessed are the persecuted.
Happy are the persecuted!

Not just snubbed by neighbors.
Not just the subject of false accusation.
Not just the object of evil talk.

Even bodily harm or death.
Eaten by lions
Coated with tar and used as a torch at a Roman garden party

Blessed are the persecuted.
Happy are those who are persecuted.

Today I don't want to so much examine details of this beatitude. I am going to do that next week. Today I want to ask two questions.

First, "What makes this true?" I want to get to the bottom line of what makes this principle work?

Two thrusts this morning:

I. WHY IS THIS STATEMENT TRUE?

Answer: **Because God is in control.**

A. Freedom

1. We Baptists emphasize freedom of man. Praise God.

Man is free to choose obedience or sin.
Man is free to follow Jesus or serve satan.
Man is free to receive eternal life or reject it.
Man is free to make Jesus Lord or make self lord.
Man is free to choose heaven or hell.

And in all this he is truly free. God cares and influences but never forces. He lets us decide, and we do in fact live with consequences of our choices for eternity.

B. God's control

1. But let us not forget that **even in our freedom there are limitations and boundaries that demonstrate that God is in control.**

I am free to "do what I please" but no matter how much I please I can't fly.
I am free but I can't escape penalty for sin.
I am free but I can't choose not to die.
I am free but I can't choose not to face God.
I am free but I can't choose to have another chance to trust Jesus and escape hell.

I am free but there are limits to my freedom because God is in control.

2. That's the bottom line of this beatitude.

a. **Men are free to persecute.**

Men are free to revile.

Men are free to say evil against you falsely.

They cannot only bad mouth the preacher and deacons but lay people as well.

b. But God is in control. **No matter what they do, God always has the last word.**

Brothers sold Joseph – God raised him to power

Hebrews reviled Moses – God made him a leader

Princes accused Daniel of treason – God put him in authority

Nebuchadnezzar threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, but God stepped in with them and brought them out safely.

Even for those who endured torture and pain and lost lives, God had the last word for He transformed their moment of misery into an eternity of joy, bliss, and happiness and oftentimes great blessing to those who remain upon the earth.

In one of his books, Missionary Kik Ripkin wrote, in the year 1917 in Russia, Katya was a seven year old girl who could not understand why her Pastor Grandfather had been given a one day notice that he would be arrested. The aged pastor used that single day to get his affairs in order and to bury the family Bible, so that when the authorities came for him, they could not take the Word of God away from those he loved.

The next day they came and took grandfather to a prison camp. In a few days, they sent word for his family to come say a final goodbye before winter. He stood on one side of the barbed wire fence; they stood on the other. One by one they passed by, not knowing that he would be martyred for his faith in Christ within the next two weeks. When his wife, Katya's grandmother, reached her hand inside the fence to grab her husband's hand, he forced a tiny roll of paper into her fist. She quietly slipped it into her pocket so that the guards would not take notice.

When she got home, she unrolled it. Grandfather told her where the bible was buried and instructed his wife to gather all of the family and read them

the words he had written on a paper inserted in the Family Bible. Katya remembered that there must have been 30 family members who gathered in the little room as Grandmother began to read the words left them by her pastor husband. It was a kind of spiritual last will and testament for the family. His final admonition was that each member of the family was to read and remember

Rev. 2:10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Seventy years later Katya, now a grandmother herself, said that for all the years of her life, people of the village would come to her and thank her for the example of faith given to them by her grandfather, an example that challenged, encouraged, and strengthened his only family even to the fourth and fifth generation.

- c. Bottom line: When people persecute you for righteousness sake, you are blessed. You can rejoice and be glad for God has the last word. God is in control. God is in charge of the whole thing.

The 2nd thrust is a question for each of us individually.

II. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT? **DO WE BELIEVE GOD IS REALLY IN CONTROL? AMEN?**

The real test is not our lip response but life response.

How do we test?

There is a lot of persecution going on in the world today, but not much in America yet. It has begun, and unless the Lord changes things or raptures His church, more in coming, and soon.

But right now, there is still not much persecution going on in America.

So, how do we do a self test to answer the question, “Do I believe God is in control?”

A primary way Jesus indicated that trust level could be tested is in our management and use of our finances.

Now let me pause for just a moment to speak to those of you who are new or those of you who attend sporadically, because you are the ones who are likely to say, “Why is it that every time I go to church the preacher talks about money?”

You see, the people that attend here regularly know that I do not talk about money very often. In fact, when I stand before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, if

the Lord says, "Mike let's look into how often you preached about money matters." The result of that investigation is going to be that I preached and taught about money and finances a whole lot less than Jesus Himself did in His ministry. If I come up short concerning of preaching on money it will be because I did not do it enough, not because I did it too much.

But one thing I am committed to do. I am committed to preach what this book says. I don't skip parts. I don't just preach my favorite parts. And when I preach some part, I do not water it down, and I do not inflate it.

And that is the way it is with the question about this self test. How do we do a self test to answer the question, "Do I believe God is in control?"

The honest answer from the Scriptures is

A. The way we handle our money shows how much we really believe that God is in control.

1. Illustration – Rich young ruler

Mt. 19:16-22

¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

¹⁷ So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

¹⁸ He said to Him, "Which ones?"

Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,'

¹⁹ 'Honor your father and *your* mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "

²⁰ The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Did man need to buy his way into kingdom? No! But Jesus knew that if he really trusted God and was willing to commit his life he would commit his money. If he wouldn't put money on the line, he did not really trust.

2. That is why Jesus taught so much on financial matters. As he put it, "**Where a man's treasure is there will his heart be also. Mt. 6:21**

The person who really believes that God is in control, believes God, even when it comes to money.

B. God's promises work even in a bad economy for those who believe He is in control.

1. Prov. 3:9-10 ⁹ Honor the LORD with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your increase;
¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new wine.
2. Mal. 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,"
Says the LORD of hosts,
"If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you *such* blessing
That *there will not be room enough to receive it.*
3. Lk. 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down,
shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the
same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."
4. 2 Cor. 9:6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and
he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

We cannot outgive God.

The greater our needs, the greater our need to give.

When things are tight financially, for your sake and your family's sake, believe God is in control and still keep His promises.

If you're not tithing, start!

If you're not giving an offering, start!

The economy is bad, jobs are few, no resources in sight?

Remember your heavenly Father owns it all!

Silver, gold, cattle on a thousand hills! All the earth. No limit to His resources.

No hard times in heaven.

He is in control.

He still keeps His promises.

Listen, God does not give us these instructions as a fund raising tool for the church. If I were trying to raise money, I would be appealing primarily to those who have lots of it, not to people who have the least.

But I'm not trying to raise money. I am trying to help people poor and rich and everything in between understand how we can be blessed even when persecution

comes. Because if Jesus does not come first, persecution is coming right here in the USA.

Persecution of Christians is at the highest level it has ever been in the history of the world.

Persecution of Christians is high in most Muslim countries.

Persecution of Christians is high in most Asian countries.

Persecution is growing in Europe.

Persecution of Christians is on the rise in the United States.

How can we experience the reality of Jesus' words?

Mt. 5:10-12 ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Only by really believing that no matter what may happen, God is in control.

That's the bottom line. Do you believe it?

Conclusion and invitation: Do you need someone in control of your life?

Do you need to trust Jesus this morning?