

## THE PERSECUTED (vv. 10-12)

<sup>10</sup> *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

<sup>11</sup> *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

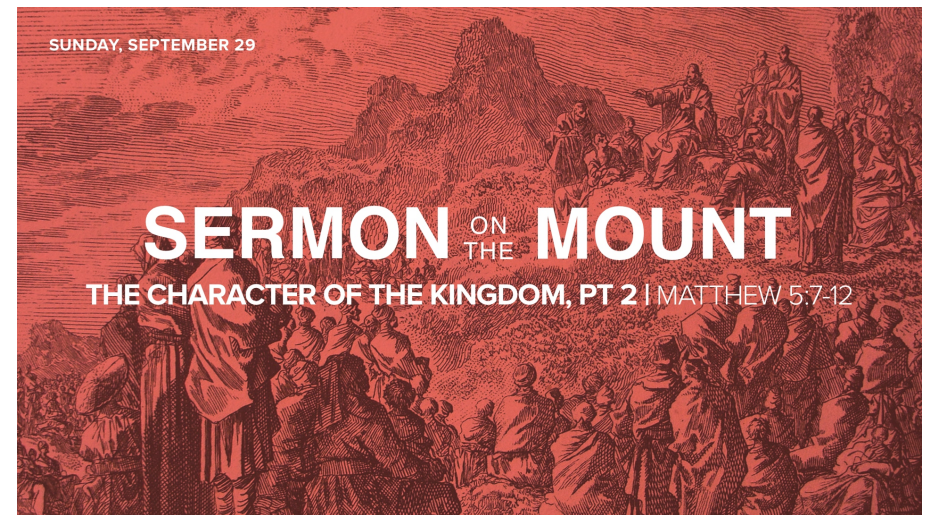
One of the most surprising reveals in the beatitudes is that those who pursue authentic heart righteousness (in spite of their humility, meekness, and mercy) will be persecuted. Jesus warned his disciples that following him would not necessarily make them popular with the world.

*"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 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. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. (John 15:18-20)."*

1. Why would people possibly hate Jesus?
2. Why would they hate those who love Jesus?
3. What kind of persecution are we most likely to experience if we identify with Jesus?
4. How should we respond when persecuted? Why? What is at stake?
5. Why should we rejoice when we are persecuted?

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The first four beatitudes invite us to look deep into the depth of our brokenness, to mourn innocence lost, to humble ourselves before God and each other, and to long for something far more vibrant, far better.

While the first four beatitudes describe how we should respond to our brokenness, the last four describe how we should respond to the brokenness in the world. We should be merciful, genuine of heart and character, devoted to the things that bring peace, and willing to suffer to make things right.

In short, we should respond to the brokenness in our world with the same grace our Lord responded to ours.

## THE MERCIFUL (v. 7)

<sup>7</sup> *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

Mercy is a big deal in the gospel of Matthew. In the Lord's prayer, we are taught to pray, *"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors (Matthew 6:12)."* Jesus quickly adds,

*"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Matthew 6:14-15)."*

He tells the Pharisees, *"Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice. (Matthew 9:13)."* Finally, Jesus tells the story of an unmerciful servant—a man who was forgiven an overwhelming debt, yet refused to forgive a far smaller debt owed him. The ruler who had forgiven his debt was enraged by the servant's lack of compassion. He locks the man in the darkest dungeon and throws away the key. The story ends with a vivid warning.

*"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart (Matthew 18:35)."*

1. How would you describe mercy?
2. How have we received mercy from Christ?
3. Who are the people around you in need of mercy?
4. What are some practical ways we demonstrate mercy?
5. Why do you think Jesus links our experience of God's mercy with our capacity to show mercy to others?

### **THE PURE IN HEART (v. 8)**

*<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

In Matthew's gospel, the Pharisees are the chief antagonists. They oppose Jesus every step of the way. The Sermon of the Mount describes righteousness that is qualitatively and quantitatively different from the Scribes and the Pharisees. The Pharisees emphasized ritual purity. Jesus emphasized heart purity. Toward the end of the gospel, Jesus announces a series of woes on the Pharisees.

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.*

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.*

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness (Matthew 23:23-28, There are a few more woes in listed chapter 23 if you care to look).*

1. What happens when we major on the minors and minor on the majors?
2. According to Jesus, what are the majors and what are the minors?
3. What happens when we pursue the appearance of righteousness rather than genuine heart righteousness?

4. How do we cultivate genuine heart righteousness?
5. What does Jesus promise those who approach him with a pure heart?
6. What do you think it means to see God?

### **THE PEACEMAKERS (v. 9)**

*<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

When we think of peace, we think of the absence of conflict. In the Old Testament peace is the overall sense of well being that results from being rightly related to God and one another.

Isaiah described the coming Messiah as the *"The prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6)."* He describes the heralds of the Messiah as those who proclaim peace. *"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns! (Isaiah 52:7)"*

Paul describes Jesus as the ultimate peacemaker. *"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility (Ephesians 2:14-16)."*

In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-19 ESV)."*

1. How would you describe the difference between being a peacemaker and a peacekeeper?
2. How was Christ the ultimate peacemaker?
3. What is the one thing that leads to peace?
4. How can we help others reconcile to God?
5. How can we help them to reconcile with each other?
6. What is significant about the fact that we shall be called "children of God?"