

Rewarded Suffering

Matt. 5:10-12

ETS: Jesus told His disciples to expect persecution and to respond with joy

ESS: Persecution results when we pursue Christ

OSS: Don't quite pursuing Christ because of persecution

PQ: Are you quitting or pursuing?

UW:

ME

Is there anyone here who likes to be in **pain**?

Is there anyone here who likes to be **insulted**?

Is there anyone here who likes to be **slandered**?

Is there anyone here who likes to be **degraded by comments**?

I don't like to **suffer**

- Epidural

I don't like to be **insulted**

- I don't like it when someone **puts me down**
- I don't like it when someone **degrades me**

I would imagine most **everyone** else in this room **feels the same way!**

Normal people don't want to hurt!

- We **don't** want to be **attacked!**
- We **don't** want to be **mocked.**
- We **don't** want to be **locked** out of **relationships** with people or family.

Suffering is not fun!

- Suffering is **painful**
- Suffering is something we want to **avoid!**

WE want to avoid suffering

- Have drugs to help us alleviate suffering
- Have gadgets to help remove discomfort in our lives

Can you avoid **suffering** if you are a **Christ-follower?**

There is a very **popular** and **prominent** teaching that says “**Yes**”

- According to this teaching if you are suffering...
 - Something is **wrong** with you.
 - You don't have **enough faith**
 - You don't **believe enough**
- According to this teaching, God is your Father and He wants to give you your *Best Life Now!*

- The idea is since we are God's children, we should always go **first class**; we should have the biggest and the best. Only this brings glory to God!
- According to this teaching, **Godliness** causes **prosperity**
 - *If you are godly, you will succeed*

Is that what the Bible really teaches?

- Does the Bible teach that God wants you to have **“Your Best Life Now?”**
- Does the Bible teach that suffering is simple the result of a **lack of faith?**
- Does the Bible teach that suffering is simple the result of a **not believing in your potential?**

We are going to end our series on the Beatitudes today

- Jesus **doesn't end His quick sayings** with a picture of **ridding off into the sunset!**

God

Turn to Matthew 5:10-12

The **disciples** are with Jesus on a mountainside

- Huge crowds of people from all over the place are following Jesus

- The crowds are bringing the **sick**, the **lame**, the **demon-possessed** to Jesus
 - Jesus is quickly becoming the **biggest celebrity** in the area.
- Disciples are listening to Jesus
 - They have a **front row** seat
 - They have been **invited** by Jesus to be on His team.

Jesus is a “**good guy**”

- He is **healing** people
- He is **helping** people
 - He helped save a wedding feast in Cana by turning water into wine!

Jesus, the “Good Guy” makes this shocking statement:

Mt 5:10-12 “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. 11 “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. 12 Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (CSB)

- Did Jesus say “Blessed are those who are **wealthy**?” No!
- Did Jesus say “Blessed are those who are **comfortable**?” No!

Jesus said: **“Blessed are those who are persecuted!”**

What does Jesus mean by the word “Persecuted”?

- Going HD the root word (*diōkō*) means **“to pursue, follow in haste; to press forward”**
 - In other words, **“Blessed are those who are pursued, or pressed”**

“You feel Pressed When Stressed!”

- When you feel that deadline bearing down, you feel stressed because you are pressed!
 - You are not at peace!

The **goal** of **“Pursuing or pressing”** someone is to **“cause them to suffer”!**

- In other words, **“Blessed is the person who is *caused to suffer*”**

If we just stopped the tape there, we could say everyone is **“blessed”!**

- WE all suffer in one way or another!
 - Some are suffering due to **COVID-19**

- **Loss of family members**
- **Loss of jobs or downturn in profit**
- **Loss of business**
- Some are suffering for other **physical reasons**
- Some are suffering for **mental conditions**
- **WE all suffer in one way or another!**

Mt 5:10-12 “**Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.**”

Jesus is NOT talking about “**persecution**” for just anything!

- **Reason for “persecution”=“righteousness”**
 - **Lit:** “**Blessed are the ones *having been pursued or pressed* on account of **righteousness**”**
 - Only those “**who are persecuted for righteousness**” are blessed!

Whose “**Righteousness**” are we talking about? **God’s righteousness**

- What is Righteousness?
 - **Righteousness is the act of doing what **God requires****

Living a Blest Life May Result in Persecution

To live “Your Blest Life Now” means you are living out God’s righteousness

- Righteousness is the act of doing what **God requires**

Pursuing righteousness might very well result in persecution-

- **Not prosperity,**
- **Not in having your *Best Life Now***
- **Not in comfort**

Question: Why would someone persecute a person for righteousness?

- Why would someone want to persecute, press into, put the squeeze onto a Christ-follower?

Most of the **disciples** are **not** guys who you would think of as **being persecuted!**

- Many of them were **fishermen**
 - “Why would you want to persecute a guy who fishes for a living?”
- Okay, maybe you would want to persecute **Matthew the Tax Collector**, but you wouldn’t think of “**persecuting him for righteousness!**”

- When this guy threw a party he didn't exactly invite the "Righteous people" to attend!

This whole talk about **persecution** has to **apply** to "those people"-*the religious zealots!*

- The ones who get that crazed look in their eyes
 - **Certainly**, we are **not** talking about **normal** people-like the fishermen or the "good people" like Jesus!

Jesus gave the disciples some **clarity** in **Matthew 5:11** "You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you *because of me.*"

- In v. 11 the **language** of the beatitude's **shifts!**
 - In all the beatitudes until this point, Jesus said "Blessed are **those**" or "Blessed are **the**", but now He gets **personal** in v. 11: "Blessed are ..."

Who is the "You"?

- The **immediate context** is the "you" is referring to the **disciples!**
 - I can just see Jesus' **locking eyes** on the men as they are seated around Him as He says **Mt 5:11** "Blessed are **you** when they insult

you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me.”

- Did you count how many times Jesus said “you”?
 - I counted 4x’s!
- Do you think Jesus is trying to say something to these men? Yes!!
 - You, the **disciples**, the inner circle, the front-row ticket holders, are going to be “persecuted.”

Jesus is DIVIDING Line

Later, in **Matthew 10**, Jesus is sending out His **12 disciples** on a **witnessing mission**

- IN addition to announcing “**The Kingdom of Heaven is here**”
 - Given power to **heal diseases, cast out demons**, and more!

Think about all the GOOD they were going to be able to do!

In light of all the good, Jesus tells them that people are NOT going to like the message:

- As I read this you will see the same phrase “**Because of me**”—which is in v. 11--keep popping up!

Matthew 10:16-18 “Look, I’m sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves. 17 Beware of them, because they will hand you over to local courts and flog you in their synagogues. 18 You will even be brought before governors and kings *because of me*, to bear witness to them and to the Gentiles.

Who are the “**They**”?

- **The Jews!** The very people who should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah!

Look at what they are going to do!

- They will hand you over to local courts and flog you in their synagogues.
- You will even be brought before governors and kings *because of me* to bear witness to them and to the Gentiles.

It gets worse! Look at **verse 21-22a** “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone *because of my name.*”

Matthew 10:34-36 is unsettling “Don’t assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.”

Recently read a book “Changed” by Tom Cantor

- Tom is a Jew
- In the book, Tom talks about how his family reacted whenever Jesus name came up “What became obvious to me was that this book was a book about Jesus. This book was all about Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. That caused me to face a cross roads. I was taught that Jewish people have nothing to do with Jesus. As a I Jewish person I was raised to sht the door to anything about Jesus.” P. 46
- “in our family just to say the name of Christ or Jesus was scandalous, unless to swear. So, when Uncle Pete announced that Christians believed that Christ was the Passover Lamb, it was shocking. Immediately, my Aunt Mary shouted from the kitchen, ‘Pete, shut up!’” P. 49
- “Being Jewish still defined me. Clinging to who I am, my identity was important to me. So, I

wanted to know that if I made Jesus my personal Passover Lamb to take my sin away, would I no longer be Jewish? This was a dilemma for me. I had always been taught that people who were not Jewish were either Christians or Moslems, that a Jewish person could never be a Christian.

Growing up, I believed that to be a Christian meant to no longer be Jewish.” P. 53

- Tom eventually found an Orthodox Synagogue in Sand Diego. He wrote: “I was not going to leave without trying to find God. Right after the rabbi’s message, I went to speak to the rabbi alone. I started by asking “Rabbi, I don’t know, but I think Jesus may have been the Messiah.” I was not completely surprised when the rabbi pulled his shoulders back, glared at me and declared “This is the first and this is the last time you will ever say that name again!”...Being Jewish I had been raised with a strong prejudice against that name.” p. 61

Reality: Following Jesus may result in persecution!

We’ve been blessed in **America** for a few hundred years!

- With all our problems, America has been unique because we have had “Freedom OF Religion.”

- Today, there are forces at work that want to make America a place of “Freedom FROM religion”
 - In fact, there is an organization called “Freedom FROM Religion” that was starting 1978.

According to their website they boast the following accomplishments:

- Removing Ten Commandments monuments and crosses from public land
- Halting the Post Office from issuing religious cancellations
- Ending 51 years of illegal bible instruction in public schools
- Ending "parish nursing" faith/health entanglements at two state universities
- Halting a government chaplaincy to minister to state workers
- Halted prayer at public schools, institutions, and public financing of nativity pageants and Easter services
- Ended a 122-year abuse of commencement prayers at a Top Ten University
- Declared unconstitutional the creation of a state post to “assist clergy”
- Stopping school subsidy of child evangelism

- Removing a nativity scene from the entrance of a city hall
- Forcing a mayor to suspend sponsorship of a Day of Prayer

Jesus' question is “Who do you say that I am?”

- To claim Jesus is a **good teacher** is **not divisive**
- To claim Jesus was a **miracle worker** is **not divisive**
- To claim Jesus is the **Only Begotten Son of God** **IS Divisive!**

Jn 14:6 “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

- I read an article about a **retired seminary professor** that called this verse “one of the scandals of Biblical religion” because it is [too] dogmatic and exclusive.

I don't want to be a **PROPHET OF DOOM**, but as America grows more and more **secular**, the teaching that Jesus is the **ONLY WAY** is going to be met with more and more **scorn!**

WHY don't People want to Hear that Jesus is the Way to Heaven?

- **The Message of the Gospel implies a NEED.**

- People don't want to need God!
 - We want to be with God on our own terms
 - We don't want to live for God—we want to live for ourselves!
- **The Message of the Gospel implies PROBLEM**
 - We don't want to acknowledge that we are REBELLIOUS people
 - We want to think of **humanity as basically good!**

Bottom line: Proclaiming the Gospel is NOT something people want to hear!

Jesus stated that the **He** would be the **reason** they would be persecuted!

- **Matthew 5:11** “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you *because of me.*”
 - At this point, **the disciples** probably couldn't fathom how this was going to happen, but **three years** later they knew that *if they continued to follow Jesus* they were going to be persecuted.

If you identify yourself as a Christian then you are saying that....

- Christ is *your* Savior
- You believe Jesus' statement: **Jn 14:6** "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (HCSB)

If you identify yourself as a Christian then you are at **risk of persecution!**

- Christ is **exclusive**: "He is the **only** way to God" and people want options so many reject Jesus being the "only way."
- Christ calls for **obedience** to God. "God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts"; therefore, **obedience to God invariable is going to cause a clash.**
- **Satan** wants to **derail** Christ's work in the world; therefore His followers-*especially those who are pursuing Christ-Satan* will try to **persecute, derail, suppress**, etc.

We can expect to be "**persecuted**" for Christ

- A woman in Houston, Texas was ordered by local police to stop handing out gospel tracts to children who knocked on her door during Halloween. Officers informed her that such activity is illegal (not true), and that she would be arrested if she continued.

Living a Blest Life May Result in Persecution

What kind of persecution may we expect?

Jesus doesn't give just a **blanket statement** about the persecution; He gets **detailed** with the **kinds** of persecution they are going to encounter!

Persecution by Insults

“Blessed are you when they **insult** you...”

Have you ever been insulted?

- Churchgoer to pastor, “Your sermon reminded me of the mercies of God. I thought your sermon would endure forever.”
- After dinner one evening a rancher's wife was entertaining their house guest by playing the piano. At one point she turned to the visitor and said, “I understand you love music.” “Yes,” murmured the guest politely. “But never mind. Keep right on playing.”

Those are a little humorous, but these are not...

- A 1987 artwork featuring Christ on a cross dunked in Urine
- The refusal by some companies to allow their employees to say “**Merry Christmas**”

- Jack Black's prayer to Satan on the 2009 MTV awards (He may have intended it to be funny, but it insulted many people)

What **makes** something an **insult**?

- When someone does something to **degrade** you or what you believe, you feel insulted
- When you feel "**dissed**" or put down, you feel insulted
- When someone does something to **offend** you, you are insulted

Notice Jesus doesn't say "**Blessed are you *if* people insult you**" but rather He said "**Blessed are you *when* people insult you.**"

- If you are going to follow Christ and live out His righteousness, you are going to be **degraded** by some.
 - **Expect** to be called **names** like "Holy Roller", "Bible Thumper" and "Jesus Freak"
- If you are going to follow Christ and live out His righteousness, you are going to be **dissed** by some.
 - **Expect** to be called "irrelevant," "stupid," and "absurd."

Don't forget that **Jesus** was **insulted**

- **Mt 27:44** "...the criminals who were crucified with Him kept taunting Him."
- **Mk 15:32** "[The religious leaders said] Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe."

Living a Blest Life May Result in Persecution

Persecution by Persecution

Mt 5:11 "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you..."

Did you know that it is estimated that more Christians died for their faith in the 20th century than all other centuries combined?

In the **immediate context**, the disciples were **persecuted** for their faith.

- If you read the **Book of Acts**, you will read about their **imprisonments, beatings**, etc.
- According to **church tradition**, all the **disciples-except the Apostle John**-were martyred for their faith in Christ.

In an editorial "[The truth of the Gospel is not hate speech](#)" from March 7, 2019 in Rhode Island Catholic "On Feb. 25, 2019, a viral video was made in London of a Nigerian man preaching the Gospel in

the street who then was told to stop because the content was Islamophobic. The police officers there threatened to arrest him because preaching about Jesus was offensive to those who practice Islam in the area.

All throughout Europe Christian denominations are beginning to shrink at an alarming rate. This seems to be a common theme in many countries throughout the world, because much of the secular law in all these countries has become incompatible with Christian doctrine, especially in the area of moral behavior. The religious void — brought about by the *increasing secularization of the European continent* over the course of the past hundred years — is being replaced by Islam, which is growing at an accelerated rate.

In many Middle Eastern countries, as well as in China, Christianity is being severely persecuted to the point that there may no longer be a Christian population left there in the next 10 years. On the other hand, in the Western civilized countries, Christianity is mocked and often looked upon as an obstacle for the liberalization of laws and freedoms.

Whenever the Church defends its moral teachings, it is met with resistance from the media, universities,

Hollywood, politicians and various other means of communication. Many who defend the faith are often called haters, racists, homophobes, bigots, and various other colorful adjectives. Jesus Christ came to preach the truth, whether convenient or inconvenient, to all the nations whether they wished to believe Him or not. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The Gospel must continue to be preached boldly, regardless what the world tells us or calls us, because in the end, it is what saves our souls.”

Persecution from Liars

Mt 5:11 ““You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and *falsely say every kind of evil* against you because of me.

- In 1999 this story appeared *Christianity Today*:
“Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago that "hate crimes" might result from an SBC evangelistic outreach in Chicago next year.”
 - The story went on to express concern about the sharing the gospel with people of various religious backgrounds might lead to violence!

This **accusation** that sharing the Gospel might lead to “**hate crimes**” came from the *Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago!*

- The very people who profess to know God were trying to keep the Gospel from being shared!

Does this surprise you? It shouldn't!

Living a Blest Life May Result in Persecution

Who are the persecutors?

Notice the text: **Mt 5:11-12** ““You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. 12 Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (CSB)

- We all ready defined the “**You**” as being the **disciples** in the immediate context.
 - Who is the “**They**”?

Clue: What did the “**they**” do?

- **Verse 12** provides the answer: **they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**” (CSB)

Who were the “**prophets**”?

Jesus called

- **Jonah** a Prophet (Mt. 12:39)
- **Daniel** a prophet (Mt. 24:15)
- **Elisha** a prophet (Lk 4:27)

Who were the “They”? Their **own** people!

- The **prophets** were “insulted, persecuted and slandered” by their **own** people!

Persecution from Within the Church

- **Job 12:4** Job states that he is “a laughingstock to my friends, by calling on God,”
- **1 Ki 22:27** Micaiah, a prophet at Ahab’s court, was put prison because he prophesied that the king would not be victorious!
- **2 Ch 16:10** “[King] Asa was angry with the [prophet] and put him in prison
- **Je 37:15** “The officials were angry at Jeremiah and beat him and placed him in prison.”

Persecution may come at the hands of those we would least expect it!

- Later, after Jesus ascended, we read in **Ac 5:21** that the **apostles** were **imprisoned** by the **religious leaders**!

Persecution from Without the Church

The “They” can also refer to **non-Jews**

- **Goliath** taunted and mocked David (**1 Sa 17:42**)

- **Nehemiah** was mocked by the Samaritans for rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in **Ne 2:19 & 4:2**

- In **Ac 12:4 Herod** had **Peter** arrested

The **persecution** may come from both within and without!

Living a Blest Life Will End in Reward

Persecution is not a **pleasant** thought!

- No one wants to be insulted, persecuted or slandered!
 - No one wants to suffer physical, mental, emotional or spiritual abuse!
 - No one wants to worship God huddled in a dark cave or in constant fear, but Jesus said it may very well happen!

Persecution is not a **pleasant** thought, but Jesus says to the **disciples**-and by extension to us-**“Blessed are you when they persecute you.”**

- In fact, Jesus calls those who are **“persecuted”** **“Blessed” 2x’s!**

How Can this be a “Blest Life”?

Blest People Experience God's Filling

Mt 5:10-11 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness... "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me."

- To be "persecuted for righteousness" means that "righteousness" must characterize your life.
 - Thus, those whose lives are characterized by righteousness must be also described in **Mt 5:6** "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (CSB)

If you are going to be "persecuted for righteousness" then obviously you have been "pursuing righteousness."

- If have been "pursuing righteousness" then you have already been experiencing the blessing of "being filled."

Blest People Have the Kingdom of Heaven

In v. 10: Jesus says that those who are "persecuted for righteousness" are "blessed" because "the kingdom of heaven is theirs"

Notice that this is the **same promise** given in v. 3 to those who are “**poor in spirit**”: **Mt 5:3** “**Blessed are the poor in spirit, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.**” (HCSB)

- Why the link?
 - Those who are “**poor in spirit**” are **dependant** upon God
 - Thus, those who are “**persecuted**” must be “**poor in spirit**” in order to **survive**.
 - Those who are “**persecuted**” must **depend** upon God!
 - They must be “**poor in spirit**” to **withstand the persecution!**

The ones who are “**poor in spirit**” and “**persecuted for righteousness**” are promised the “**Kingdom of Heaven**”

The “**kingdom of heaven**” is where God **manifests** His authority!

- The “**kingdom of heaven**” is where God’s “**will is done**”
 - When a person is “**persecuted because of righteousness**” he/she is “**blessed**” b/c God has **authority** over his/her life!
 - He or she is living under a higher authority.

- He or she is experiencing the joy of God's rule in his/her life!
 - That is why he/she is being **persecuted for righteousness**!

Blest People Will Receive a Reward

Then there is the **third** promise: **Mt 5:12** “**12 Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**” (CSB)

WHEN are we going to receive this reward? In heaven

- The **reward** is **not** here on this **earth**
 - On this earth all we may get is insults, persecution, and slander.
 - On this earth you **may** only get **ridicule** and **rejection**.

This is a statement of faith: “**Your reward is great in heaven.**”

- **Persecution tests your faith!**
 - Persecution **tests** your **dependence** upon God!
 - Persecution **tests** your resolve to “**pursue righteousness**”

- **Persecution tests** whether you live for your pleasure or God's pleasure

WHAT are we going to receive? A **“great reward”**

- **“Great”** refers to **“many, much or great”**
 - In other words, the rewards for persecution may consist of **many rewards** or a **great quantity** of rewards.

What is supposed to be **our attitude** when we **face persecution?**

- For the first time in the beatitudes, we are **told how** we are to **react**: **“Rejoice and be glad”!**
 - These are commands!
 - Our **natural inclination** may be to have a **pity party** in the midst of insults, persecution or slander, but **Jesus commands** us to **“rejoice and be glad.”**
- **Why?** **“Because your reward is great in the kingdom of heaven”**

YOU

In the second century A.D. there was a church leader called **Ignatius** of Antioch.

- Ignatius wrote a set of seven letters that have helped us understand the persecution of the church in the second century.
 - Side note: Ignatius was born around **30 A.D.** and some think that Ignatius was the child Jesus blessed because he was later known by the title “**He who was borne by God.**”
- We don't know exactly why the Bishop was arrested, but he was
- In **107 A.D.** he was **condemned** to die. He was sent to Rome to die as a part of the Roman celebration of a military victory. The Romans thought that Ignatius' death would “amuse people.”
- What is interesting is that Ignatius heard that the Christians in Rome were working on the possibility of freeing him from death. He wrote them the following message: *“I fear your kindness, which may harm me. You may be able to achieve what you plan. But if you pay no heed to my request, it will be very difficult for me to attain unto God.” ...If you remain silent about me, I shall become a word of God. But if you allow yourselves to be swayed by the love you hold my flesh, I shall again be no more than a human voice.”*

Justo L. Gonzalez who wrote the book “**The Story of Christianity**” wrote that Christians in this time period “*believed that martyrdom was not something one chose, but something for which one was chosen by God. Those who were so chosen were strengthened by Christ who suffered with them, and for that reason they were able to stand firm.*”

Living a Blest Life May Result in Persecution But it Will Result in Reward!

PQ: Are you Living a Blest life?

- If people **make fun** of you because you are living for Christ **don't stop pursuing Christ!**
- If your **family members reject** you because you have “**Changed**” since you started attending church, **don't stop pursuing Christ.**
- If you find it **tempting** to give in and start **acting** like the “**rest of the guys**”-which means compromising-**don't stop pursuing Christ!**
 - **Don't quite pursuing Christ because of persecution**

Satan wants you to turn away from pursuing Christ because it is too difficult!

- **Satan** wants you to **focus** on the **pain** you are suffering from the rejection of your friends or family.
 - **Obey** Jesus' command and **“rejoice and be glad”** you are suffering for righteousness!
- **Satan** wants you to stop obeying Christ and live for yourself so you can try to have the **“Best Life Now.”**
 - Don't worry about having the *Best Life Now*, **worry about pursuing righteousness!**
 - **Don't quite pursuing Christ because of persecution**

The **Bible never commands** or **exhorts** Christians to **pray** for persecution.

- But the Bible very definitely **tells** the growing **Christian** to **expect** persecution.
 - **1 Peter 4:12** emphatically states that **“we are not to be surprised”** when persecution comes, or think that **“some strange thing”** is happening to us when we are persecuted as Christians.

The temptation may be to quite pursuing Christ because of persecution, but remember, you will be **“Blessed”** if you take a stand and keep pursuing righteousness.