



Sunday, December 5, 2010: Blessed are the Persecuted

Scripture: Romans 5:1-5; Matthew 5:10-12

Speaker: Joe Boot

Sermon Notes:

1. There's a logical progression in the Beatitudes which mirrors the Christian life.
2. The first verses highlight our spiritual need – humility, sorrow for sin; then this hunger is satisfied in the righteousness of Christ and the fruit thereof is manifested in the believer's life; finally persecution is the consequence of living Christ's ethic.
3. The kingdom of God belongs to people persecuted for justice.
4. To be at peace with a rebellious world is to join the rebellion.
5. The world seeks to hunt down those who stand up for righteousness and justice for the sake of Jesus.
6. If you're really living for Christ, you'll have trouble. The law and gospel condemns the world, and so the world tries to suppress it.
7. There has always been persecution in the life of the Church.
8. Today, the persecution of the church is global. In Canada, in Britain, Christianity is being aggressively opposed in every sphere.
9. The actual seizure of our property and prison terms may be down the road for Christians given the trends.
10. Hatred of God and persecution for righteousness sake is the reason for the absurdly tenacious opposition to Bibles in schools.
11. Jesus is not saying we'll be blessed for being stupid, or for being difficult, or for being offensive, or for being fanatical.
12. 1 Peter 4:15 says we're not to suffer for being criminal or busybodies in other people's affairs.
13. There are lots of causes, but we may confuse our own personal agenda with Christ's call and righteousness.
14. Many people have martyr complexes, and bring trouble on themselves in foolish ways.
15. Be careful who you select as heroes of faith. People may suffer for a cause which is not Christ's, e.g., Castro, Mandela.
16. Paul says if you surrender even your own body to be burned and it's not for Christ then it counts for nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3).
17. Try speaking out for education, responsible charity, or just government in the name of Christ and you'll be persecuted.
18. All those who identify with the righteousness of God will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12).
19. The modern liberal church is an agency of persecution of Christians in the name of righteousness.
20. Reformers and Puritans suffered at the hands of other Christians. The church threw Bunyan in jail. The Wesleys preached in fields because they were kicked out of pulpits. Wilberforce was opposed by Clergy. Hudson Taylor was mercilessly persecuted by fellow Christians.
21. People are uncomfortable around Christians as much as they are uncomfortable around pedophiles, because of their ethical opposition to God's justice.
22. Our ideas of Christ should not be such as those which the natural man may applaud. If the world applauds you, maybe you're not representing the truth.
23. Our hope doesn't disappoint: "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12).
24. We're bearers of God's grace, salvation and justice. As we fellowship in Christ's sufferings we will also fellowship in His resurrection.
25. It is through Jesus' sufferings and persecutions that we have access to God.

Application Questions:

1. Describe the logical progression of the Christian life outlined in the Beatitudes.
2. Why does the world persecute God's people? See John 15:18-20.
3. Am I avoiding persecution by compromise? Am I standing clearly for the truth of God?
4. Are the persecutions and trials that I face due to my own faults or rebellion against God?
5. What kind of persecution are you willing to endure for Christ's sake?
6. How are we to respond to persecution according to 1 Peter 4:16?
7. What are the spiritual rewards of enduring persecution for Christ?