

Blessed Are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness Sake

(Matthew 5:10-12)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Has anyone ever laughed at you because you wanted to do the "right" thing or to be good or honest? Has anyone tried to make you feel weird for not wanting to laugh at a dirty joke or join in a mean trick? Have you ever been made fun of because you are a Christian?

The Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 3:12, "*All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*" That is, they will be treated harshly or cruelly. This is a promise! You can expect it to happen sometime in your life.

Opening Prayer

Lord, we really truly want to live happy and peaceful lives. Show us this morning just how to do that. Help us to learn all that You have to teach us from the Scriptures this morning. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

Lesson

This is the final lesson in *The Beatitudes*. For the past 8 weeks we've been learning what it takes to be a truly happy person. Who can remember what a *beatitude* is? A beatitude is the blessing you get from God when you have the kind of attitudes that please Him. I call them "*Be-Attitudes*" because they are attitudes that ought to be in our hearts. God gives us blessings when we allow Him to control our thoughts and feelings.

The Beatitudes tell us about the kinds of attitudes we should have to receive blessings from God — blessings that God gives us when we allow Him to control our attitudes. What's an *attitude*? (A way we show people what we're thinking and feeling.)

Jesus taught that if we have certain attitudes, we would live a happy and fulfilled life. So, it's important for us to understand what attitudes God wants us to have. So, let's open our Bibles to Matthew 5 and look at the Scriptures together.

Review

[Teacher, as you review these verses, have the children observe the text in their own Bibles. Lead them to understand the meaning of the words by asking questions and getting responses from them.]

Godly Attitudes

What are the godly attitudes God wants us to have that we've studied so far in *The Beatitudes*?

#	Attitude	Meaning
1.	Poor in Spirit	Know that we are spiritually bankrupt and need Jesus. (Lasting happiness begins when we receive Jesus as Savior.)
2.	Mourn	Grieve over our sins; ask forgiveness
3.	Meek	Personal humility (gentleness)
4.	Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness	Earnestly desire to do what is right
5.	Mercy	Have compassion, forgiveness, kindness towards others

#	Attitude	Meaning
6.	Pure in Heart	Blameless, guilt free
7.	Peacemaker	Make peace with God, parents, friends

Promised Blessings

What are the blessings God promises in each of the beatitudes we've studied so far?

#	Blessing	Meaning
1.	The Kingdom of Heaven	We learned that God is really pleased with us when we know that we are " <i>poor in spirit</i> " (that is, we know that we are lost without Jesus). He promises that once we turn to Him to ask Him to forgive us of our sins, we receive the right to go to Heaven when we die. It says, " <i>for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</i> "
2.	Comfort	We learned that this means that we will be truly happy if we are sincerely sorry about our sins, because God promises to forgive everyone who confesses their sins and to restore them to right standing before Him.

3.	The Earth (Appreciation for your life here on earth: your health, friends, family, fresh air and sunshine, etc.)	We learned that when we stop trying to be the center of attention, we begin to take our eyes off of ourselves, we start enjoying the beauty and the bounty of the earth around us, then we get the most out of life. And, we look forward to being with Jesus in the life to come.
4.	To be Filled (Complete satisfaction deep down in our heart and soul)	We learned that earnestly desiring to do what is right gives us lasting happiness because you know you are in the center of God's will.
5.	Mercy	We learned that if we show mercy towards others, others will show mercy towards us. Why should we show mercy? (Because God has been merciful to us)
6.	See God	We learned that if we have a pure heart, we'll get to live in the presence of God forever in Heaven.
7.	Called sons of God.	We learned that when we make peace with God, He calls us His children and we get to inherit His home when we die.

Today we will study the **eighth** and final beatitude. What does the word "*persecuted*" mean? (To be treated harshly or cruelly; to be hurt or teased; to be treated meanly)

What does it mean to be persecuted for righteousness sake? (To be made fun of for doing good or to be treated badly for doing right.)

Can you be happy when someone makes fun of you for doing good? God says you can. It is hard to be treated badly for doing right, but the Lord Jesus has given us an example.

1 Peter 2:21-24

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed."

Jesus is our example to live by. He never did a wrong thing. He never had a bad thought. He was always kind and loving towards people. He did all kinds of good things for people. He healed the lame and made the blind to see. But, the Jews hated Him. They got hold of Him and whipped Him and pushed a crown of thorns down on His head. They put a purple robe on Him and made fun of Him. Then they forced Him to carry a heavy wooden cross up a mountain where they hung Him by nails.

Why did the Jews do that? (They were jealous of Him. They were afraid that Jesus would take their power away in the government.) What was Jesus' reaction to the persecution He received? (He took it with dignity.) He asked the Father to forgive them; He said they didn't know what they were doing. He showed love and compassion right up to the end. How would you react if someone made fun of you for being a Christian? [Teacher, allow the children to discuss this issue.]

God expects us to live our lives with the attitudes that we have been learning from the beatitudes. He wants us to be humble and to seek to live right. How can we do that in a world that is literally trying to get away with murder? People are being taught by the examples

they receive that it's OK to lie and cheat and steal and even kill people. Do you think it makes it OK to do these things just because you've seen it done on TV, or in the movies, or your friend says, "*Hey everybody else is doing it!*"? (No!) God has perfect standards by which our lives will be judged someday. God sees everything we do and hears every thought that we have. He knows all about us!

How can we make the right choices even when we are tempted not to? We need to have faith in God. We need to ask God to control our thoughts and feelings.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11:6a, "*without faith it is impossible to please Him (God).*" We need to believe what God says, and act on it. He has told us that if we live with the kind of godly attitudes listed in *The Beatitudes*, we will be happy and receive blessings and honor from Him.

There will be a time when people might make fun of you for being a Christian. Expect that to happen; don't be surprised!

You may avoid persecution by living like the world — laughing at dirty jokes, joining in mean tricks - but then you will not have the blessings Jesus promises in this beatitude.

What is the blessing that God promises those who are persecuted for being a Christian? (*Yours is the kingdom of heaven...great is your reward in heaven.*)

When people laugh at you or even try to hurt you for doing right, think of the happy days to come in Heaven. Troubles may last for a while here on earth, but Heaven will be forever and ever!

Closing Prayer

Father, we look forward to the day that we will live with You in Heaven for ever more. Until then, we do want to live happy lives here on earth. We want be known by our friends as the kind of person that has godly attitudes. We want to receive the blessings You promise in the beatitudes. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. Has anyone ever tried to make you feel weird for being a Christian?
2. What does the word "*persecuted*" mean? (To be treated harshly or cruelly; to be hurt or teased; to be treated meanly)
3. What does it mean to be persecuted for righteousness sake? (To be made fun of for doing good or to be treated badly for doing right)
4. Do you know anyone who didn't feel bad when they were made fun of? (Jesus)
5. Why didn't Jesus feel bad even when people were making fun of him and torturing Him? (Jesus knew He was doing the Father's will; He knew He was doing the right thing.)
6. What was Jesus' reaction to the people that persecuted Him? (He asked the Father to forgive them. He said they didn't know what they were doing.)
7. How would you react if someone made fun of you for being a Christian?
8. What kinds of attitudes does God want us to have? (He wants us to be humble and forgiving and to seek to live right.)
9. How can you have godly attitudes? (Ask God to control your thoughts and feelings.)
10. What is faith in God? (Belief that what God says, He means, and then act upon it.)
11. Do you think you'll have persecution some time in your life? (Yes! God says we can expect it.)
12. How can you avoid persecution? (By living like the world. Laugh at dirty jokes, join in mean tricks)
13. What is the blessing that God promises those who are persecuted for being a Christian? (Yours is the kingdom of heaven...great is your reward in heaven)

Match the Attitude with the Meaning

(Draw a line to connect the attitude with the meaning)

Poor in Spirit

Earnestly Desire to do What is Right

Mourn

Treated Harshly or Cruelly

Meek

Blameless

Hunger and Thirst
For Righteousness

Personal Humility

Merciful

Grieve Over Our Sins

Pure in Heart

Know That We Need Jesus

Persecuted

Don't Give What's Deserved

Match the Attitude with the Blessing

(Draw a line to connect the attitude with the promised blessing)

Poor in Spirit

Called Sons of God

Mourn

Mercy

Meek

Kingdom of Heaven

Hunger and Thirst
For Righteousness

Comfort

Merciful

Inherit the Earth

Pure in Heart

Shall See God

Peacemaker

Kingdom of Heaven

Persecuted

Filled (or Satisfied)