

# THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT – MATTHEW 5-7

## The 8th Beatitude: The Blessedness of the Godly's Persecution

Matthew 5:10-12

Faith Church of Linden

By Daniel Patz on May 17, 2026

### SERMON AIM

*The godly will be persecuted — not despite their faithfulness but because of it. Yet this is not a curse. It is a blessing. The persecuted disciple stands in the flourishing life Jesus describes throughout the Beatitudes, for he belongs to a kingdom that cannot be shaken and carries a reward that no one can take from him. This sermon calls us to receive that truth deeply enough that we obey the first command of the Sermon on the Mount: Rejoice.*

### THE TEXT: MATTHEW 5:10–12 (ESV)

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

### INTRODUCTION

We have arrived at the end of the Beatitudes. And before we enter the body of this sermon, it is worth pausing to notice something about the structure of this passage — because the structure itself is part of the message.

Every other Beatitude is a single contained statement. This one is not. Verse 10 gives us the Beatitude itself. Then Jesus does something He has done with none of the others: He expands it. Verses 11 and 12 press deeper, move from the third person to the second — from a description of a type to a direct address, looking His disciples in the eye. And at the end of that expansion comes the first imperative in the entire Sermon on the Mount. Not an observation. Not a blessing. A command: **“Rejoice and be glad.”** The first command in the greatest sermon ever preached is a command to joy.

Notice also the bookends. The very first Beatitude promises: *“theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* And this last one closes with the same promise. The Beatitudes are bracketed by the kingdom, from first to last. This is what the life of a kingdom citizen looks like — from poverty of spirit to persecuted faithfulness — and the same kingdom holds it all.

In the nineteenth century, Charles Spurgeon was perhaps the most celebrated preacher in the English-speaking world — and one of the most attacked. He preached the old gospel without apology in a city that increasingly found it offensive. He was insulted in the press, mocked in society, slandered in print, and had his motives constantly questioned. The weight of it drove him at times into deep discouragement.

His wife Susanna wanted to encourage him. So she took Matthew 5:11–12 — the very passage before us this morning — and embroidered it. She framed it and placed it above their bed, so that every morning when Spurgeon rose, the first thing he saw was the word of Christ: *“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you... Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great.”*

May God give us that same grace — to have these words not merely on our walls but written on our hearts, so that when the cost of faithfulness comes, we walk by faith and not by sight.

Four movements this morning:

- 1. The Reality of the Godly’s Persecution**
- 2. The Reason for the Godly’s Persecution**
- 3. The Reward of the Godly’s Persecution**
- 4. The Response of the Godly’s Persecution**

## **1. THE REALITY OF THE GODLY’S PERSECUTION**

Jesus does not say persecution *might* come to His disciples. He assumes it. *“Blessed are those who are persecuted.”* *“Blessed are **you** when others revile you.”* He doesn’t say if but when you are persecuted.

In John 15 He says plainly: *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you... If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”* (John 15:18, 20) The disciple is not above the master. Paul says it with equal directness in 2 Timothy 3:12: *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* Not some. All. And in Philipians 1:29 he goes further: *“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.”* Suffering for Christ is a grant. A gift given to us, not merely inflicted on us. Peter adds: *“Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you, as though something strange were happening to you.”* (1 Peter 4:12) This is not foreign to the Christian life. It is part of its shape.

The Book of Acts is a sustained illustration of this. Stephen is stoned. James is executed. Paul is beaten, imprisoned, left for dead. And after the apostles are flogged and ordered not to speak in Jesus’ name, we read one of the most striking lines in all of

Scripture: *“Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.”* (Acts 5:41)

Before we go further, let us thank God this morning for the faithfully persecuted — across history and around the world right now. Next weekend we observe Memorial Day and remember those who suffered and died in war. This morning, let us pause and give thanks for those who have fought the good fight of faith: those who were reviled, imprisoned, tortured, and killed for the name of Christ — and who held fast. They are a great cloud of witnesses, and we stand in their company.

And the persecution Jesus describes is not only imprisonment or martyrdom. It is the full spectrum: reviled, falsely accused, slandered, mocked. It includes the low-grade chill of a relationship that has quietly shifted because you refused to compromise.

I have heard from some of you about this firsthand. A family has felt a growing distance from close relatives because of a homosexual relationship they cannot affirm — they have continued to love, to reach out, to show up, but they have held their conviction, and the distance is real. A woman shared that the relationship is still there, but something is different now — a wall, a carefulness that wasn't there before, because of disagreements about what the Bible says and what is right. She knows many women carrying this same tension with grown children who have, at least for a season, cut them out. A man in our church was called into his manager's office as a new hire for making a coworker uncomfortable — because he spoke of Jesus. Another watched a smear campaign launched against him by a director whose dishonesty he had refused to publicly endorse. His career prospects in that organization ended the day he kept his convictions. Yet another, still young in his faith, held his ground in a conversation about how to raise children, and was physically attacked by a coworker. He went to church that evening with the man's handprints still on his throat.

You are not imagining it. Jesus is naming it. Persecution is a reality.

## **2. THE REASON FOR THE GODLY'S PERSECUTION**

Jesus qualifies this blessing precisely: *“for righteousness' sake”* and *“on my account.”* These two phrases are the hinge of everything. If we miss them we miss the Beatitude.

### **What This Is Not**

Jesus is not commending every form of social friction and calling it persecution. There are people who are difficult, argumentative, or self-righteous in the name of Christ — and when others pull back from them, they call it persecution. It is not. Peter is explicit: *“But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.”* (1 Peter 4:15) This does not say blessed are those who make themselves obnoxious and then claim a martyr's crown. It does not say blessed are those who underperform at work and interpret their employer's frustration as spiritual warfare. It does not say blessed are those who suffer for a good cause — even a genuinely good cause — as though moral conviction in general is what Jesus is commending here. And it does not

say blessed are those who are simply jerks for Jesus — calloused, proud, socially oblivious, picking fights in the name of Christ. That is not what we are talking about.

### **What This Is**

The persecution Jesus describes flows from a life shaped by everything we have walked through in these Beatitudes. Think of what a person looks like who has genuinely been changed by grace: poor in spirit, mourning over sin, meek toward others, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, committed to making peace. That person does not fit. Not in a sinful world. Their very character becomes a kind of quiet indictment — not because they are trying to indict anyone, but because genuine righteousness, lived out with integrity and love, unsettles people whose consciences are alive.

They are persecuted *for righteousness' sake*. Look back at verse 6: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”* The same word. The person who hungers for righteousness, who will not soften it for social comfort, will find that their life eventually collides with a world that does not want to be reminded of what righteousness looks like. Genuine integrity in a place where dishonesty is the norm does not make friends. It makes enemies — not because you tried to make them, but because your life has become a light, and light exposes.

And then: *“on my account”* — for Christ’s sake. This is the deepest reason. The disciple is known to belong to Jesus. His values are Christ’s values, his allegiance is to the King, and the world’s hostility to Christ flows toward those who carry His name. Many people will say they admire Jesus in the abstract. But a person who actually follows Him, who holds to His exclusive claims, who speaks of Him as Lord and Savior — that person has aligned with a name the world does not receive.

Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12 that *all* who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. If you face almost no pushback for your faith, that is a question worth sitting with — not to manufacture conflict, but to ask honestly: is my life distinct enough, my devotion visible enough, my integrity costly enough to register at all? Luke 6:26 carries the sober word: *“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you.”* Universal approval from a world that does not know Christ is not the badge of a faithful disciple.

*Reflection Question: Is the friction you experience coming from genuine faithfulness to Christ, or from something else? Where might you be accommodating yourself to avoid the cost?*

### 3. THE REWARD OF THE GODLY'S PERSECUTION

Jesus does not tell His persecuted disciples to grit their teeth and survive. He points them to reward. And the reward He describes has both a present and a future dimension.

The first promise is present tense: *“theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* Not *will be* — *is*. The persecuted disciple does not wait to belong to the kingdom. He belongs to it now. And this kingdom has already arrived because the King is on the scene — enthroned, reigning, and one day returning to bring it in its fullness. His citizenship is secure. His standing before God is not determined by how the room feels toward him, by whether the promotion came, or whether the relationship was restored. He has a King who knows him and a kingdom that cannot be threatened by a hostile workplace or a drifting friendship or a culture that has no use for his convictions.

And then Jesus says the reward in heaven is *great*. The Scripture does not leave that word vague. Paul sets the suffering of this present life beside what is coming and says: *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”* (Romans 8:18) And then, in one of the most concentrated statements in all of his letters: *“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.”* (2 Corinthians 4:17–18)

Light and momentary. Paul knows what he is calling light — he has been beaten with rods, shipwrecked, imprisoned, left for dead, and slandered in city after city. And he says it is light. Not because it does not hurt, but because he has set it beside what is coming, and the comparison is not close.

What is coming? The resurrection of the dead. The new body — imperishable, glorious, powerful, spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). The new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13). The face of Christ. The feast of the kingdom. The river of the water of life. And joy — not the brief, fragile joy of this life, not the happiness that rises and falls with circumstances — but an ever-increasing, never-ending bliss in the presence of God, where every pleasure He made on this earth is only a shadow of what He has prepared for those who love Him. Every good thing you have ever tasted here — beauty, love, rest, delight — is a faint echo of what is held in store. The theologians called it the *beatific vision* — the sight of God face to face — and they spent their lives trying to describe what it will be to be fully known, fully loved, and fully satisfied in Him forever. No words have ever done it justice. The reward is great. It is immeasurably, permanently, staggeringly great.

But there is also a present dimension. The Acts 5 disciples who rejoiced as they left the council did not wait until heaven. They felt the blessing then — the Spirit-given awareness that their suffering was proof of something real, that they had been counted worthy of a fellowship with Christ that their comfortable neighbors knew nothing about.

The persecuted disciple prays differently. He trusts differently. He sees God differently — because he has had no choice but to look to Him.

And the company he keeps is distinguished. Jesus closes the Beatitudes with this: *“for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* Abel. Moses. David. Jeremiah. Elijah. Isaiah. A long, faithful, costly line of men and women who held to God’s word and suffered for it. The persecuted disciple joins that company. He stands in the line of those who were genuine — the real article, not the comfortable approximation. That is not a small thing to belong to.

*Reflection Question: When you face the cost of faithfulness, are you setting it beside the weight of glory Paul describes? What would it change if you did?*

#### 4. THE RESPONSE OF THE GODLY’S PERSECUTION

We come now to the first command in the Sermon on the Mount. Not a description. Not a blessing. A command: **“Rejoice and be glad.”** Luke’s version is more vivid still: *“Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy.”* (Luke 6:23) Active, present, physical. Not *remember that you will feel better eventually. Leap. Now. In this.*

That command only makes sense if Jesus has been telling the truth about everything else. If the kingdom is not real, *rejoice* is cruelty. If the reward is not great, *rejoice* is delusion. But if the kingdom is theirs *now*, and if the reward in heaven is genuinely immeasurable, and if they stand in the company of the prophets, and if the suffering is light beside the glory — then *rejoice* is not irrational. It is the most rational response available.

What is this joy not? It is not stoic endurance — grit your teeth, don’t show weakness. It is not masochism — a love of pain for its own sake. It is not denial — pretending the reviling doesn’t sting, that the false accusation doesn’t wound, that the social exile doesn’t cost something. Jesus is not asking us to feel nothing. He is asking us to feel something more.

Stephen, being stoned, sees the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Paul and Silas, in prison in Philippi, sing hymns at midnight (Acts 16:25). James tells scattered, suffering believers to *“count it all joy”* (James 1:2). Peter writes to exiles under pressure: *“Rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”* (1 Peter 4:13) This is not an isolated exhortation. It is the sustained testimony of people who found that Jesus was telling the truth.

The foundation of this joy is the same foundation Jesus lived from. Hebrews 12:2 says He *“for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.”* He did not minimize the cross. He endured it. He looked past it to the joy, and the joy sustained

Him through what the cross demanded. And now He commands His disciples — people who have received the peace He purchased at the cross — to do the same. Look past the cost to the reward. Look past the affliction to the glory. And leap.

Hebrews 10:34 shows ordinary believers living this out: *“For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.”* They joyfully accepted the loss — because they knew what they had that could not be taken. That is not superhuman. It is a faith response, and it is available to every person who knows what they have in Christ.

Martin Luther grasped this. In *A Mighty Fortress* he wrote: *“Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever.”* That is not resignation. That is a man who has counted what he has and what might be taken, and decided that what remains is more than enough.

And this joy is itself a grace — not something we manufacture by thinking harder or feeling more intensely. The same Holy Spirit who produced poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, and hunger for righteousness in us is the one who produces this joy. We receive it by looking to Christ — by beholding the One who bore the ultimate persecution in our place, who rose from it, and who sends us as His ambassadors into the same fractured world with the same promise: *great is your reward in heaven.*

*Reflection Question: Where do you need to obey the command to rejoice right now? Not to deny the cost, but to set it beside the weight of glory and the kingdom that is already yours?*

## CONCLUSION

Let me speak to three groups of people this morning.

If you are here and you do not yet know Christ — if something in you has been drawn to what you are hearing even though you are not sure why — let me tell you what you are seeing. You are seeing people who have found something worth suffering for. Who possess a kingdom that cannot be shaken by what the world can do to them. Who rejoice when by every ordinary measure they should be despairing. That is not a personality type or a coping strategy. It is the fruit of a gospel.

Here is that gospel: every person in this room, including the most faithful disciple sitting here, was once an enemy of God. Not just indifferent to Him — at war with Him. And God, in love, sent His Son into that war. Jesus Christ lived the perfectly righteous life none of us have lived. He bore the full weight of God’s just wrath against sin — the wrath that belonged to you and to me — on the cross. He died for His enemies. He was buried. And on the third day He rose, and His first word to frightened, guilty people was: *“Peace be with you.”* There is forgiveness of sins in Him. Full, final, free forgiveness — not because you have earned it or cleaned yourself up enough to deserve it, but because He paid for it entirely. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of the poor in

spirit. You can come to Him empty-handed right now, and He will receive you. That is the invitation. Today is the day.

If you are a younger or more recent believer — if your faith is genuine but still finding its footing — hear this as preparation, not condemnation. Jesus is not warning you that hard things are coming in order to frighten you. He is warning you so that when the chill comes, when the relationship shifts, when the room changes because of your faithfulness, you will not be caught off guard. You will know: this is the shape of the life I signed up for. And He gives you the reward before the suffering is over. The kingdom is yours now. The Spirit is with you now. The grace is sufficient now.

And if you are a faithful, growing Christian who is carrying the weight of what faithfulness has cost you — if you told the truth and lost something for it, if you held to conviction and watched a friendship cool, if you gave the gospel to someone you love and felt the distance that followed, if your integrity has cost you in the workplace or in the family — hear the first command of the Sermon on the Mount spoken directly to you: **Rejoice and be glad.** Not because it doesn't hurt. But because your sins are forgiven. Because your reward in heaven is great. Because you stand in the company of the prophets. Because the King is on His throne, and the kingdom is already yours. And because the same Jesus who endured the cross for the joy set before Him — who bore your guilt and rose in glory — is with you in this, as your King, your Savior, and your great reward.

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 5:10*