

Series: UP, UP & Away!!!

Title: Lessons on the Beatitudes – Part 3

Main Text: Matthew 5:10-16

Welcome: 15 mins. Max.

Option 1: Ask three to four people to share testimonies of answered prayers.

Option 2: Share something about your experiences (up or down moments) during the past week.

Example: "This week, I experienced _____ moments that _____."

Word: 40 mins. max.

Intro: "The Christian is a mirror to the world, showing them their true selves, and they have only two choices: to accept what they see as the truth, or throw rocks at the mirror so they won't have to face it. Why are Christians persecuted? Because they threaten the world's values, self-image, and authority." *Sermon Central by Alison Bucklin*

Discussion:

1. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What do you mean by "persecution?" Have you ever gone through persecution because of your biblical stand or faith in Christ? Would you share your experience?

2. We can also face persecution whenever we stand for what is right, for truth and lawful justice, to mention a few. Have you ever faced persecution because of such convictions? Would you share your experience?

3. There are three kinds of persecutions according to Matthew 5:11:

- Insults
- Verbal or physical attack
- False accusations

Which of the above mentioned have you gone through and how did you respond during that time?

4. "Jesus... the perfect God-man, was mistreated, hated, maligned, beaten, and finally nailed cruelly to a cross. He suffered awful consequences, even though He spent His life giving and serving. One thing is certain: if people treated a perfect individual that way, then imperfect people cannot expect to escape mistreatment. If mistreatment hasn't happened to you yet, it will." (Chuck Swindoll). Would you be able to comment on the above statement?

5. According to the book Fox's Book of Martyrs, Jesus' followers died in the following ways:

1. Stephen – stoned to death
2. James the Great – beheaded
3. Philip - crucified
4. Matthew – stabbed to death
5. James the Less – beaten and stoned to death
6. Matthias – stoned to death and beheaded
7. Andrew - crucified
8. Mark – flogged to death
9. Peter – crucified upside down
10. Paul - beheaded
11. Jude - crucified
12. Bartholomew – beaten and crucified
13. Thomas – speared
14. Luke – hanged
15. Simon - crucified
16. John – boiled in oil but survived. Exiled in the Isle of Patmos where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Eventually died a natural death in a ripe-old age.

How do you feel about each of those Christ's followers mentioned above?

6. Matthew 5:12 says, "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Why do you think we are asked to "rejoice" despite of persecution?

Wrap up:

There are three main reasons why we are a blessed people when we go through persecution:

1. This is a revelation that we are living according to God's ways
2. We are becoming more like Christ in our conduct and ways
3. Our reward is great in the Kingdom of Heaven

Summary:

The phrase "*Blessed are those who are persecuted*" is a term understood by people during the time of Jesus, especially those who were under the Roman Empire. Both the Jewish listeners and readers of the Book of Matthew were familiar with the term "blessed". Our idea of blessedness or happiness is not the same with their understanding 2000 years ago because our present idea of happiness is dependent on circumstances or situations. God wants us to know that no matter how difficult our circumstances are, we can rest assured of His grace and His abiding presence to bring us through.

Prayer for one another.

Ask each member of the group of their prayer needs. Assign prayer partners.