

Readings

Scripture

¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

- Matthew 5:10-12 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

"These verses neither encourage seeking persecution nor permit retreating from it, sulking, or retaliation. From the perspective of both redemptive history ('the prophets') and eternity ('reward in heaven'), these verses constitute the reasonable response of faith, one which the early Christians readily understood. 'Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called on to suffer. In fact it is a joy and a token of his grace.' (Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, p. 80-81)"

- Longman & Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (p. 167)

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

- Mark 8:34-38 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

A Life Worthy of Persecution
Matthew 5:10-12

And His Disciples Came to Him
Jeff Hooker

Persecution is a natural part of kingdom living... (Matthew 5:10-12)

Persecuted because of:

- Righteousness (Matthew 5:10)
- Falsehood (Matthew 5:11)
- Allegiance (Matthew 5:11-12)

Rejoicing is the response of kingdom living.

 (Matthew 5:12)

Reflection Questions

 (taken in part from the *Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- Read Matthew 5:2-10. Is this a list of various character qualities or a composite view of kingdom living? How do you think the church would look different if all of its disciples lived a life that looked like this?
- What is our responsibility to other believers who are facing persecution for their faith? People in our context? People in different parts of the world?
- What is the specific promise associated with persecution in verse 10? Will this promise come about in the present, or the future?
- What does righteousness look like in your life? Is it something you are, or something you do?
- Why does allegiance to the world mean disloyalty to Christ and vice versa? Why does the kingdom of the world want to persecute those in the kingdom of heaven?
- How can we "rejoice and be glad" in the midst of persecution and suffering? Try to think of some practical steps we can take when the situation arises.