“The King’s Blessed People: Reviled… and Rewarded”

Matthew 5:1-12

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 9/18/22)

 Today we reach the end of the Beatitudes, Jesus’ description of His Kingdom and His followers. We were brought into this Kingdom of Heaven solely by faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ. The only thing we bring to the table is our need to be saved. As followers of Jesus, the kindness God lavished on us spills out on others. We desire that others be at peace with God, as we are at peace with God. But His people are not loved and respected by the world. They are hunted and harmed. They are persecuted.

 This persecution may be life threatening, or it may be harassment, being the object of hurtful misjudgments, inuendo, and gossip, or it may be being used or misused by others. Threats to our lives, though rare in the USA, are quite common around the rest of the world. Just last week, one of our missionaries was hauled out of his church service and arrested for spreading the Gospel. Are you ready for persecution?

 The world’s inevitable response to the King’s blessed people is persecution. The only way to avoid it is to stop living for Christ (John 15:18-19)! (Q1) You should expect it; you can’t get a pass on persecution. Even Job experienced it, first from Satan, and then from his closest friends!

 Note that Matt. 5:10 says, “…persecuted **for righteousness’ sake**…” This doesn’t include persecution because of troubles we create on our own through foolishness, rudeness, obnoxiousness, or being a busybody (1Peter 4:15-16). In 5:11 Jesus said it is “for My sake…” God’s people live a Christ-centered life. It gets noticed. It attracts attention. Your Christian character sometimes seems like a personal affront or an indictment to those who don’t follow Jesus. If we manifest the standards of the King, we will face persecution (2Tim. 3:12).

 What is the blessing of this beatitude? Persecution for righteousness’ sake affirms that I belong to the King! God uses persecution to purify His people (suffering refines us), making us more like Him. God is chipping off all the stuff that doesn’t look like Jesus! Persecution is purposeful (1Pet. 1:6-8). In fact, the church around the world has grown fastest under persecution.

 Just this past week, CBS News said that Christianity was declining in the USA, and it won’t be the majority religion much longer. They got two things wrong: Jesus wins! Christianity will never be wiped out, because even “the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.” Secondly, Christianity has not been a majority in our country for a long time! TRUE followers of Jesus are those that repent, believe, and follow Him. Are you a listener or a follower?

 So, what is the church to do, when you stand for what Jesus stands for and then you face persecution? Verse 12 says to REJOICE! You can be assured that you belong to Him. You can be assured that you are being made more like Him. And you can look forward to your reward in Heaven with Jesus for eternity! The eternal reward of grace is INFINITELY greater than our temporary suffering. In persecution, you are being prepared for eternal glory! Amen.

**QUESTIONS**:

1. How can we be in the world, yet “out of the world” at the same time? How then shall we live?
2. Right after the beatitudes, Jesus told His followers, “You are the salt of the earth.” Discuss what this means, even in the face of persecution.
3. Paul David Tripp said, “… a sound Biblical doctrine of the future is the only way to arrive at a sound Biblical understanding of the present.” (New Morning Mercies, Sept. 18) How does this relate to today’s study?
4. A little bit later in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” It is our privilege to labor for Him. Look around. Where do you see fields white unto harvest?
5. Do you remember the Christians beheaded by ISIS a few years ago? They refused to recant their faith in Jesus, and lost their earthly lives for taking that stand. If they can do that, I can certainly stand for the truths of the Bible. What will you stand for?
6. Professor Carl Trueman (Grove City College (PA)) says that when addressing matters such as the LGBTQ movement, he does so in a manner “that does not compromise the truth but acknowledges the pain of the people” involved. Which other issues require this kind of sensitivity?

“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” (Perronet)

 All hail the pow’r of Jesus’ Name!

 Let angels prostrate fall;

 Bring forth the royal diadem,

 And crown Him Lord of all!

 Ye chosen seed of Israel’s race,

 Ye ransomed from the fall,

 Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,

 And crown Him Lord of all!

 Let every kindred, every tribe,

 On this terrestrial ball,

 To Him all majesty ascribe,

 And crown Him Lord of all!

 Oh, that with yonder sacred throng

 We at His feet may fall!

 We’ll join the everlasting song,

 And crown Him Lord of all!