

Happy Hunting

Mt 5:10-12 You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you. Be glad and rejoice.

The word *persecuted* means actually to be *hunted* — like a deer on the first Monday after Thanksgiving in the woods of Pennsylvania. It speaks of the *pursuit* by those who are relentless in their quest to destroy our ministry and silence our message.

And we should be happy about this!?

Absolutely, but on a higher level of enthusiasm that sees another reality at work behind this scene. In verse 12 we are encouraged to “jump for joy.” When the 70 returned from ministering in Galilee”

Luke 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

Here, let us see what is really happening on a spiritual plain above the faltering plans of those who would put out our fire by pouring oil on it.

Acts 8:4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

It is the peacemaker that is being pursued. God’s peacemakers are “in” the world but not “of” it

John 15:19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

Peace has given the peacemaker a different worldview, a different perspective on their circumstances that reveals the true and unseen battle

Ephesians 6:12 r our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

John 16:33 I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

They Insult You?

The world is the world and persecution comes in many forms. Believers live among non-believers who can and have redefined the "rules" of society. Issues arise that inflame the difference between them and us, so that, in one form or another, believers find themselves under verbal, if not physical, attack for what they believe.

Persecution is real, but so is the happiness! We should be believers:

- who never depended on the resources of others, only God's provisions "**Poor in Spirit**"
- who do not fight fire with fire but with prayer: "**Mourn**"
- whose faith has not only survived but flourished.: "**Hunger after righteousness.**"
- whose hearts are at peace with God's will for our lives: "**Meekness**"
- who know how to hold each other's arms up—in a spiritual sense—through the opposition and a cacophony of verbal assaults "**Merciful**"
- who are not influenced by social pressures, who are immune to cultural changes that would compromise our message or commitment to God's Word. "**Purity of heart.**"
- who have found strength in forgiveness
- who have learned to sing God's praises and worship Him through adversity. "**Rejoice and Be Glad**"

Persecution is not the only attack on our vision. We are falsely ridiculed as well—as was Jesus

Matthew 27:44 In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

While on the cross, His enemies accused Him of false claims and not living up to his promises. The word revile means they cast it in his teeth.

Matthew 10:24 The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master.

May we be believers whose faith is unmoved by the gainsayers. ...a group of believers who live the gospel message, who wear the condemnation of modern society as a badge of courage and honor, and whose commitment to following Christ is not a compartmentalized or ritualized belief but a way of life.

The Rest of the Story

Everything Jesus taught in His Mountain Sermon becomes practical applications of these Beatitudes:

- **Matthew 5:13-16** The Beatitudes profile those who are the salt and the light of this world. A true witness for Christ as His followers come from a heart and life characterized by these beatitudes.
- **Matthew 5:17-20** Believers who live the Beatitudes, are living the Law but now it is the Law of Christ. Paul informed the Galatians [6:2]
- **Matthew 5:21-26** Hate toward a fellow traveler or **Matthew 5:27-32** Hate toward a spouse, **Matthew 7:1-6** criticizing another, blaming them, projecting blame to accuse another of what we are guilty of ourselves, spreading negative gossip and accusations are not godly expressions of Christian character.
- **Matthew 5:33-37** using an oath or a promise to lie and deceive, or **Matthew 5:38-42** taking vengeance, getting even with another are all unconscionable actions for those who live the Beatitudes.
- **Matthew 5:43-48** Spiritual perfection is love for our worse enemy! It is easy to do when we find ourselves fulfilled in Christ which is what the Beatitudes are all about.
- **Matthew 6:1-4** We are givers, not takers.
- **Matthew 6:5-34; 7:7-11** Our Lord then put such an overwhelming emphasis on having a prayer life as the secret to all of this.
- **Matthew 7:12** Jesus summarized with the golden rule: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus, clarified that few will follow Him through the narrow gate. Be one of them!

Matthew 7:15-20 Jesus, then, told us how to recognize a false prophet by knowing the true one.

Matthew 7:21-23 What identifies a true disciple or follow of His.

Matthew 7:24-27 Who is a wise builder of his life's work and efforts.

Matthew 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended thesesayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: