

Persecution-- brings Joy???

Matthew 5:10-12

June 22, 2014

DAY 1: Review of 2 Roads; 8 Sign Posts

2 Roads:

Matt. 7:13 Enter by the narrow gate for tall is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it.

1. Road #1. What strikes you the most about this road?

Matt. 7:14 ...but small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.

2. Road #2: What strikes you most about this road?

8 Sign Posts:

3. Below are the first seven signposts (in italics), with my notes in regular print. **Underline** the words or phrases that have particular meaning for you:

Blessed are the poor in spirit--those who don't make SELF (happiness) the center of their life.

Blessed are those who mourn--who take seriously the awful dilemma of SELF committed to staying central in our lives.

Blessed are the meek--those who turn away from "ME-ness" and move toward God and others.

Blessed are those who hunger ...for righteousness--who are driven to God for the inner change needed to be more caught up with God and others than SELF.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy--We were critical of people when they didn't come through for us. Now we see the awful SELF that drives being critical. Now we want to extend mercy to them in the same way God showed mercy to us!

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Just getting our "act together" is not enough. God is after our hearts—clean hearts, and devoted hearts to Him and people.

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.

When we think of peaceMAKERS we think of world leaders but Jesus is talking about regular people who create peace where there is conflict and "drama".

4. What strikes you from what you underlined?

5. If you had to pick your biggest take away from that list, what would it be?

DAY 2: Persecuted for righteousness...

1. Nothing examines and humbles the heart as these beatitudes. The list is an all out assault on SELF. The last sign post is the clincher!

Matt. 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2. *That* is an astounding sentence! Can you imagine a sentence in which "blessed" and "persecuted" are in the same sentence?! Before we study this verse, what connection would you make between these two words? Why do you think Jesus could connect being persecuted with being "blessed?"

3. What reason does Jesus give for one of His followers being persecuted?

4. It's one thing to be persecuted as a Christian because we've done something UNrighteous. In my earlier Christian days I was "persecuted" because I had been rude, thoughtless, and insensitive. In reality, I brought persecution upon myself! Have you ever done something like this?

5. This is not the persecution Jesus is talking about. He is talking about being persecuted because of *righteousness*! He gives some examples in the next verse.

Matthew 5:11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

6. Have you ever had any of these things happen to you?

7. In Matt. 5:10 and 11, Jesus puts His finger on two legitimate reasons for persecution. In each verse He uses the phrase, "*because of _____.*" What are the two reasons?

8. The word "me," is contrasted throughout these beatitudes. The gist of Road #1 is a life where ME is center stage. Road #2 is a different "me," where Jesus uses this of Himself in Matt. 5:11. Which "road" are you currently on?

DAY 3: The joy of fatherly validation

Matt. 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

1. When Jesus says, “*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” He is not saying, “now you have done enough to enter heaven.” That happened at the moment of our conversion.

2. What do you think He does mean by “*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*”?

3. Many of us spend our entire childhoods and much of adulthood trying to please our father. Validation is strongest when we’ve done something *right* and our dad noticed it, acknowledged it, and gave his approval. That’s powerful stuff!

4. How is this kind of fatherly validation similar to what Jesus is promising in Matt. 5:10?

5. Salvation is not something we are going to receive “some day.” Salvation is given to us the moment of our conversion, and it cannot be lost!

6. But many young Christians wonder about their salvation. They may be plagued with doubts. How would the experience of persecution *for righteousness*, or persecution *for Jesus* help us deal with our doubts?

7. Being willing to suffer for our faith can be seen in the smallest decisions of our day. Let’s say someone asked you to serve at a church outreach function. Put a check next to any of the following that are likely to be your first thoughts...

Is it convenient?

Will I get something out of this?

Will I be comfortable?

8. How would Matt. 5:10 be an antidote to that type of thinking?

DAY 4: The joy of honor.

Matt. 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1. Two different verbs are used in Matt. 5:12a to describe the response we should have when we've been persecuted. What are they?

2. Jesus gives two reasons why we should "rejoice" and "be glad" in Matt. 5:12b. What are they?

3. Let's look at the second reason for joy: "...for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

4. Talk to anyone who served in battle and they tell you the same thing: "It was an honor to serve with such men." How would you compare that statement with the last half of Matt. 5:12?

5. Being equated with the great prophets of the Old Testament was a badge of honor. Let's look at another badge of honor--an even greater one!

6. Peter and a few other apostles had been arrested for their faith. They were flogged with a whip.
*Acts 5:41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, **rejoicing** because they had been **counted worthy** of **suffering** disgrace **for the Name**.*
 - a. What was their response upon leaving custody?
 - b. Why? What does "counted worthy" mean to you?

 - c. "For the Name." Whose name? _____
 - d. What is the significance of this example?

DAY 5: the joy of reward

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1. The Greek verb "...be glad..." means "to leap for joy."
2. Let's look at another reason for such joy: "...because great is your reward in heaven."
3. What thoughts go through your mind when you think about a great reward in heaven?
4. People don't normally "leap for joy" when they think about a great reward in heaven. One reason is the human disposition to have a reward *now!* Paul picks up on this same idea...
2 Corinthians 4:18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
5. Just a second of thought would tell us that a reward we can enjoy *for all eternity(!!!)* is of infinite more value than anything we can enjoy now. What strikes you about the difference between a short-term reward now versus a long-term reward to come?
6. Let's finish with one more verse that summarizes everything we've studied this week.
Philip. 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
7. Paul identifies four things he wants. What are they?
8. What do you think Paul means by "...the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings..."?
9. Samuel Rutherford, an old Scottish pastor was imprisoned for his faith. He wrote this from his grimy prison cell, "I never knew by my nine years of preaching so much of Christ's love, as He taught me in Aberdeen (his prison) by six months imprisonment. Christ's cross is such a burden as sails are to a ship or wings to a bird." That is a supernatural joy.
10. What is your biggest take away from this week's study?