

**Saturday, December 23, 2023 • Read Matthew 5:10–16**

*Questions from the Scripture text: What is the condition of those described in v10a? What is done to them? Why? What do they already possess (v10b)? Who are the blessed in v11, the described in v13–15, and the commanded in v12, 16? What three things will be done to them (v11)? Why? What two things are they commanded to do in v12? For what two reasons? What is the size of this reward? Where is this reward? Whom else did they persecute like this? What does v13 call them? What might be the condition of the salt? What can't be done with it? What is it good for? What two things does v14 call them? What can't be done to this city? What isn't done to the light (v15)? What is done to it? So that it does what? What are they commanded in v16? What should men see? Whom would they glorify for this? Where is this Father?*

**How should we respond to persecution?** Matthew 5:10–16 prepares us for the morning sermon on the Lord's Day. In these seven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we should rejoice and keep shining, whenever we are persecuted for Christ.**

**Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** v10 is the final beatitude, third-person declaration about who the blessed are. In this case, they are persecuted for righteousness' sake. We must be careful not to appropriate this to ourselves through self-righteousness. It is possible to read a verse like this as vindicating us for others' distaste for that which actually proceeds from our remaining sinfulness. No, when the Lord Jesus says "righteousness' sake" here, He can only mean real righteousness. That which God calls righteousness, not self-perceived righteousness.

But the blessedness named here is the same as in v1. How can those who are "poor in spirit" be "persecuted for righteousness' sake"? Because of the only way that someone becomes either righteous in their standing before God or righteous in their character and conduct: union with Christ. Union with Him through faith by which we are counted righteous with His own righteousness. Union with Him in the ongoing shared life that we have in Him. Union with Him from which His Spirit reproduces His character in our character. Union with Him that thus transforms our conduct.

But it is just because it comes from union with Him that "righteousness' sake" in v10 is "My sake" in v11. Those who reject the true and living Christ will more and more reject a believer, as that believer is more and more conformed to Christ. So, let the believer seek Christlikeness from Christ Himself by His Spirit. But there will be much that He produces in us that the world will despise—especially the worldly in the church. Confidence before God. Liberty, zeal, and freedom of life. Actual obedience to God being worked out in the life. Love of God that is in contradistinction to the superstition and sentimentalism of manmade religion. Love of neighbor that is not according to the neighbor's definition of love but God's. For such things, we can expect not to be condemned but denounced (reviled, v11). Not to be treated kindly, or even to be left alone, but actively harassed, hindered, and attacked (persecuted). Not to be told the truth about but slandered as evil with no regard to actual facts.

**Your reward in heaven.** Notice the switch from "those" and "theirs" in v10 to "you" and "your" in v11–12. This is very personal. Jesus now speaks directly to those in front of Him about themselves. And by His Spirit, He addresses all believers who receive and read and hear this Word. They have the kingdom already, because they have the king (note the present tense in v2, 10). But our Redeemer now turns to us and tells us what we should expect to experience now, as those who have Him. Persecution of genuine believers comes not because of what we will have, but because of what we already have. We already belong to His kingdom. And competing kingdoms are not pleased with this.

"You" in the immediate, original context meant those on the mountain with Him. Separated from the world. Receiving instruction. Literally set on a hill at the time that they receive this word. This changes the speech from instruction (blessed are those) to benediction (blessed are you). Our Lord, our King, our kingdom, smiles His own blessing upon us now.

At the same time, He gives us instruction. At first the instruction is implicit in the phrase "falsely for My sake." Don't give them a legitimate reason to speak evil against you; see to it that these "all kinds of evil" that they say against you will be (a) false, and (b) for Jesus's sake.

Strive to do everything you do according to God's Word. God defines what is righteous (v10) and what are good works (v16). We aren't blessed when we live according to our flesh, using Jesus's Name, and then are spoken against. So let us do that which God says is right. Let us do works that God says are good.

And strive to do everything for Jesus's sake. If we are doing what is right, and we are doing it for Him, and people say all kinds of evil things falsely against us, then we are those upon whom v11 is pronouncing this benediction. Of course, doing all things for Jesus's sake means that we aren't seeking some other blessing than Jesus Himself.

Whereas v11 is a benediction, v12 is a commandment: rejoice and be exceedingly glad. What a merciful commandment! This isn't a stoic, "chin up." This is much more intense. Rejoice! Be exceedingly glad!

But a joy so great must have a great cause, and this one does. "Great is your reward in heaven." Not "great *will be* your reward," but present tense: it is already great. If you have the Son, you have the Father. And if you have God Himself, what loss is it for men to attack you? The prophets of old (v12b) refused to appease men, because they had God. God spoke to them; God called them; God sustained them; God made their words to stand. Now, the one who has the Lord Jesus, and who is being made like the Lord Jesus, possesses God as his reward just as those prophets did. When the believer (who has God) experiences the same attacks that those prophets endured (for the sake of having God), this is cause indeed for rejoicing and exceeding gladness!

**Your Father in heaven.** Still, we might shrink from that persecution. Can't I just enjoy having God as my great reward without having to be reviled and persecuted and slandered? No, you cannot. If you're not salty, you're not salt. "loses its flavor" in v13 is actually a word that sounds like (and means something like) "moronic." It's fool's salt. And, the verse says that it is analogous to fool's gold. It's only useful for trampling. It's not actually "Christ's-kingdom-ly" salt but "Satan's-kingdom-ly" earth/dirt. To be un-salty may be enticing because we would not be persecuted. But we would not be rewarded. We would not be blessed. And we would have neither the Father nor the Son as our reward, either now or in the future (cf. Mt 7:12–27).

Finally, let believers not shrink from where their Lord brings them to shine. If they are in Christ, they already are light, just as they already are salt. For these to whom Jesus was speaking, He has brought them up the literal hill. Perhaps they could already catch glimpses of sneering looks from others below. But He uses the analogy of the placement of a city or the placement of a lamp to remind them that it was He Who had positioned them. Cities don't crawl down off of hills, nor do lamps off of stands. Let not believers, who find themselves sticking out as Christians where they are, shrink from either being Christians or being where they are.

Jesus arranges us where we are in His world so that just by being what we are and where we are, we will be seen by whom He wants us to be seen. As they persecute us for good works now, they bring glory to the Father Who has shown His heavenly character in us on earth. And there will come a day when they can no longer persecute, when their own knees bow and tongues confess, and when God's justice and God's people are vindicated (1Pet 2:15, 19–20). When believers suffer for conformity to the Son and the family resemblance of their Father, let them not give in to shunning the circumstances but rather lean in to shining within those circumstances. (cf. Ac 4:29, 31; 5:40–42)

By whom are you reviled? By whom are you persecuted? By whom are you slandered? How have you been focusing upon the joy of your reward in the midst of it? Where has the Lord placed you to shine? What does shining look like there?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for giving Yourself to us in Your Son. And thank You for the honor of being counted worthy to suffer for the Name. Grant unto us to rejoice and to keep shining, as those who already have You as our reward, in Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP73C "Yet Constantly, I Am with You" or TPH2B "Why Do Heathen Nations Rage"**

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))

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Matthew chapter 5 verse 10 through 16. These are God's words. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake? For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed. Are you when they revile and persecute you? And say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly.

Glad For great is your reward in heaven. For, so they persecuted the prophets who were before you You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

You are the light to the world. The city that is set on a hill, cannot be hidden. Nor do they lie to lamp and put it under a basket. But on a lampstand. And it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine for men.

That they may see your good works and glorify. Your father. In heaven.

So far the reading of god's inspired and An iron toward.

So, we have the last of the Beatitudes in verse 10. Blessed, are those? It's still third person. Generally, describing The blessed ones. Blessed are those. And in this case, who are persecuted, For righteousness sake. Who are attacked? For the sake of righteousness, or on account of righteousness. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The attitudes began blast are those who are poor in spirit blessed. Are the poor and spirit for theirs is The kingdom of heaven. And then we had Uh, six more Beatitudes. Where the blessing was something future, they shall be comforted, they shall and air at the earth. They shall be filled, they shall obtain mercy, they shall see god.

They shall be called Sons of god. But not only are we back. Now, in verse 10. To present tense for there's is But it's actually the same exact blessedness. Blessed to the poor in spirit for theirs as a kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness's sake?

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And so, which is it? Are they poor in spirit, or are they righteous? Seems to be too opposite things with the same blessedness.

The answer is both. Because only those who are poor in spirit, only those who Um, He discover their bankruptnes, bankruptcy Spiritual bankruptcy. And rest only in the lord jesus christ and have him as their righteousness rather than their own riches. Their own moral riches. Only they can be righteous.

And so we see that blessed are the poor and spirit for theirs is a kingdom of heaven because only those who have christ and union with him, have the kingdom of heaven now And if we have, And if we have christ, And union with him. Then we have not only christ as our righteousness that stands before god.

Our right standing with god. But christ also has the one who has producing righteousness in us. There's no one whom he justifies, but then doesn't sanctify. Someone who is not. Joined to jesus and living by faith in christ. And being transformed more and more into the image of christ does not have the lord jesus.

Does not have. Um, Actual spirit given saving. Fifth. So the poor and spirit, man and the righteous man. And in this case, it's not just those who are counted righteous, but Particularly, those who are conducting themselves righteously. Um, in verse 10. They are. The same one. And they have the same blessedness.

There's is the kingdom of heaven. The reason they are being persecuted is their living according to the principles and by the power, and for the purposes and desiring the pleasures. Of their new homeland of their new kingdom. But, Kingdom of this world. The Kingdom of the devil. It is hostile.

To the kingdom of the lord jesus. And so, that's wonderful that we Get to have the kingdom already. But if we are being conformed, In our new citizenship. Uh, to our king. Then we will be persecuted and There's many reasons, you could be persecuted. But when you are persecuted for righteousness, sake, it is a reminder.

That the hatred that you experience is especially hatred. First and foremost for jesus. Notice for righteousness, say in verse 10, Matches for my sake at the end. A verse 11. And that's where it gets personal. Noticing verse 11. No longer is a blessed. Are those for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

But blessed, are you? They are violent, persecute you say all kinds of evil against. You. Rejoice and be exceeding. Glad for great is your Reward. And so the lord jesus. Now turns to those who are gathered to him up on the mountain. And, Now, he's not giving them instruction.

Describing to them who the blessed ones are teaching them. How they may be identified and what sort of blessedness they have. He's not giving instruction here, he's giving benediction. Blessed, are you? He's pronouncing blessing upon them. What sorts of things can? Uh, can we expect if christ is both our righteousness for our righteous standing with god?

And Um, our righteousness as the one to whom we are united and from whom We are growing in righteous character and righteous conduct out of that righteous character. Well, what we can expect on account of him. Because that's what it really is. It's not so much on account of our Um, Thinking and feeling and speaking and doing That which is according to god's law.

Much more than that. It is on account of him himself. That people will revile us. Denounce us. And persecute us attack us. And say all kinds of evil against us falsely. For his sake, slander us. Now, if we want. Uh, to be the ones who are the objects of this benediction and verse 11.

Or the ones who are described by the instruction in verse 10. Then we need by The grace of god in jesus christ applied to us by the spirit. We need to live with love for god. With all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And for our neighbor as ourselves, we need to keep god's commandments.

Because for righteousness, sake in verse 10, Is not. What the world says is right? No, they call evil good and good evil. And the good works that we are. Um, That we are to walk in that. We are to do. That men will see in verse 16 are not works.

That men think are good. But that our father in heaven. Says are good. This righteousness is good works. Um, These are according to the definition of god. So that, when we're slandered as being evil, This falsely cuts at least two different ways. One. They will just lie. But the other is because they do call good evil.

They will call us evil. Even for that, which is good. No, not only does he give us benediction in verse 11 but then he gives us commandment In verse 12. Rejoice. And be exceedingly. Glad So, if you are being Reviled. And persecuted. And slandered. And you're just, Happy. We're joyous.

Uh, you still haven't fully obeyed. Because the commandment is to rejoice and be Exceedingly. Glad Not exceedingly. Glad that we are receiving these things. Although that is something that we should rejoice over. Remember the apostles after they were beaten and told to pray preach in. This name, no more at the end of Acts chapter 5.

That said they went from the place rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer for the name. They actually obeyed. At the end of Acts chapter 5, this commandment of Jesus. But we are too ought to obey. But he tells us the grand of our Exceeding gladness. Our great rejoicing, our great gladness.

Has a great foundation or cause For great is your reward in heaven. Not a great well-being. Great is now. You have. The approval of the father. You are reconciled to the father in the sun. He is your reward. Whereas you deserved to be denounced by him. He instead commends you and and blesses.

You Where you deserve to be attacked by him. Have his wrath bored out upon you. Literally his goodness and mercy persecute you. Now hunt you down. All the days of your life. Where you deserve to be slandered? When spoken evil of falsely. You are. Praised and vindicated. Not falsely.

But still. Uh, by grace and mercy on account of what Jesus has done. And not on account of what you have done. And so here you have God. Who is your Lord in heaven? Who is doing exactly opposite. Um but the world that hates God will will do and say to you and about you for Christ's sake.

Do you not see? Why the? With this dichotomy, this contra distinction between how those who are resisting and rejecting Christ, treat you and how God treats you. You are actually cause for Rejoicing and exceeding gladness. When he says for. So they persecuted the prophets who were before you He's not saying well, you know, the prophets were good, guys.

And so, it's kind of cool to be in the same boat as they were, you know, you're in good company. Now the, the prophets were willing to speak against the whole world and to receive the hatred and despising of the whole world because they had God himself. The living, God spoke to them.

They interacted with him. They had such fear and reverence for him and devotion to him by their experience of him. And the way, the Spirit blessed them, the word that he gave them in their hearts and their mouths. That they would not give up God for the whole world.

And so there were glad to be Reviled and persecuted and slandered. Because they had God. And he's saying, God has sustained people in the same position before? You have God if you have the son, You have the father. You have the blessing of the father and the son by the ministry of the Spirit.

With persecution comes. With that territory. While praise God. Having him as your reward. In heaven is wonderful, territory to be in. Let us go ahead and be persecuted. For now. Now, when we are persecuted, We're maybe tempted to think, well. Can't I just have God without the persecution? Can't I just enjoy him?

But, Uh, make no waves on earth. So Um, So people. Don't really see the Christ's likeness. And I don't end up having to endure. The reviling and the attacking, and the slandering. The answer is no. He gives the two images here, the salt and the light. And he doesn't say b, the salt of the earth and be the light of the world.

He says, you are a believer has already been made salty. The new one, he says, if what if the salt loses its flavor Um, is he's saying if it is fool's salt The Greek word you would recognize. Um, It is the root for moron. And, So he says, if the salt is moronic salt, If the salt is fool's salt, And we perhaps are familiar with with another concept or substance fool's gold.

Which is worthless because it's not gold at all. Someone's panning for gold and he gets some fool's gold and he knows what it is. If he's able to identify, The actual quality of the thing, not just the external appearance of the thing. What does he do? He tosses it aside it's no more used to him than the dirt.

Well, here he says, you are the salt Of the earth. But if the salt turns out to be full salt, what is it? Well, it's just earth, it's just dark. And that's the point of the rest of the verse, how shall it be made salty. How shall it be salted or saltified?

That has done good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. And so, if you're asking, Whether you can. Have God without persecution. The answer is no. Because what you're asking is, if you can be salt, that isn't salty. You're asking to be fool's gold.

And how dreadful for someone? To have this idea that they have God. But it's a God of their own imagination, the God of their own ideas. And maybe they get those ideas while they are reading the Bible and so they think they're biblical. But they don't have life, they don't have faith in Christ there.

They don't have fellowship with God himself, actually in Christ, they're not being conformed to the image of Christ. And so they come at last to the end and they discover That what they thought was. Genuine salvation, and having God as the reward. Was just fool's gold. Or to use the language of verse 13.

Full salt

Well. What are we to do? Then when we are salty, when we are light and as our light comes to be seen. We start to become. Reviled we start to become persecuted. We start to become slandered. Well. There's a temptation at that point to Either be intimidated or Um, Embarrassed or even just for our own comfort.

To. Uh, try and Get out of the. The spotlight. Um, Try and live in such a way that it isn't so obvious. But what's being described here is The one who made us light, Jesus himself, of course. Says, in the gospel of John, I and the light of the world here, he says you are the light of the world.

How did we come to be the light of the world? He made us the light of the world. And the illustration that he uses in verse 14 is actually, Very particular to their current circumstances. Where are they? When this teaching is occurring. They are up on the hill. Where everyone can see.

Who are the ones who left. The The great multitude, that's excited over all the miracles that were done and And all of that. And a gone up to hear a sermon. And perhaps they've even caught glances from people at the bottom of the hill. Oh yeah, goody goody. I'm gonna go hear the preaching.

Yeah, we've already heard enough preaching is preaching while he healed us. But it's the Lord Jesus. Who brought them up and set them on the hill? It's the Lord Jesus. He Puts each of the lamps that he likes. On whatever particular stand. He wants it. This is not saying Go find the lamp stand and climb on it and shine as obnoxiously as you possibly can.

Uh, on everyone that you can irritate Into persecuting you. That is not being persecuted for righteousness sake, or for Jesus's sake. That's bringing your own. Um, Uh, fleshly narcissistic rudeness. Uh, into the passage. What this is, is The Lord Jesus is the one who has placed you. Where you are in your connections?

Yes, even by Uh, whatever. Wise and biblical decisions, you've made even. Often by our unwanted umbilical decisions. But when we find ourselves in a place and our family, or in a church or in the community, That loving the Lord, with all our heart soul-minded strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves loving our brother is Christ.

Loved the church. There's not being well received. Then we still, we need to remember. Who put us there? And not give up. We need to act with wisdom. We need to be gracious. But we must not give in. Uh, to the desire. To escape notice. Because of how unpleasant the response has been.

To what people have noticed. They may hate us. But it is bringing glory to our father. And it is bringing glory to the father. Now, As they see the works. And it will

bring glory to him later. When they are exposed. Um, The way described in first peter chapter 2, Course 15, verse 19, through 20.

And so, When we do suffer, let us remember. That we suffer according to the providence and the sovereignty of the lord jesus. This is what the apostles in Acts chapter 4. We were thinking about x chapter 5 earlier. They're rejoicing of being counted worthy to suffer for the name.

But on the previous occasion. Um, They? They came from their trial before the sanhedrin. And, They blessed god's name and You know, said you knew God, you prophesied, right? Rightly in psalm 2 That the kings and the people's nations rage and kings and peoples plot in vain. And truly, in this city we're gathered against your holy servant jesus.

Both pilot representing the nations and Herod representing the Jews. And then they say, And they did. Whatever your hand had ordained beforehand. For them to do. And so, they're recognizing in their particular situation. It's God's hand. Same man, that ordained. Christ's death on the cross. Had ordained the particular suffering and persecutions that those men would suffer and next, chapter 4, And has planned for us.

Whatever reveling we receive, whatever persecution, we suffer. Whatever slander. Has committed against us. Comes under the ordaining. Power of god, you remember what they prayed. They prayed. That they might speak with boldness. And, You know, two verses after that prayer, it says and they went out and spoke with boldness.

Got answered their prayer. They recognized. That as the lord is the one who had made them salt and light. And set them on a hill, set them on the lampstand. That what they needed? Was not to stop being persecuted. But to keep, Being. The adopted children of god conformed to the images image of christ.

Conformed to the suffering. Of christ.

And bring glory to their father in heaven. So, you see, Bless her. The persecuted for the lord. Jesus is sake. There's is the kingdom of heaven already. There's, Um, great is their reward in heaven, god is already the reward. They have christ and god and christ. And they bring glory to their father in heaven.

By the way, they conduct themselves on the earth. May the lord. Grant unto us to be these blessed ones. And especially to obey the two commands. Command number one rejoice and be exceedingly. Glad Command number two, let your light shine. Don't. Try to be less salty. Don't try to.

Escape notice. Hey man. Let's pray. Her father in heaven. We thank you for this portion of your word. We thank you that You have given it to us at a time and The life of our congregation when. Some dear ones really need to. Hear it, and And pray that your spirit would help us and would help them.

That we might have rejoicing and exceeding gladness and No, you to be our reward and Be willing to yield unto you. The places and times in which you put us, To shine. So we pray that by the grace of your spirit, we would live with boldness. We'd live righteously, we would live for jesus's sake.

We would Do those good works that you have prepared beforehand? For us to walk in. That your god would be glorified in our lives. Even as we are already glad And, Granted than we ask in jesus name. Amen.