

# Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

*A Discipleship Journey*



## **Beatitudes**

Week 36

### **Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven**

This weekly material is offered to support our Discipleship Journey as we walk in the foot prints of Jesus.

We encourage you to use this material as a part of your daily prayer practice as follows:

- ❖ Begin with the Opening Prayer.
- ❖ Reflect on: *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness.*
- ❖ Close with the Closing Prayer.

Let us pray for each other that we are transformed, as individuals and as community, by this Discipleship Journey.

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#### Opening Prayer

It is through what we are and do that others will come to know us.  
We are here to bring peace to a broken people  
and healing to those in need.

We are here to witness to the world  
that we live in response to a desperate society  
seeking truth, equality, and freedom.

Parent of the poor and oppressed, we ask for Your help.  
You have shown us how to be faithful in the midst of persecution.  
You have taught us to stand firm in the pain  
that we experience in our broken world.

Teach us to become sight for the blind,  
ears for those who are deaf to hear Your Word,

and hands for those who refuse to work  
at building the Reign of God.

We pray all this in Your name and for Your honor and glory.  
AMEN

Reflection:

Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness Sake,  
for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

The beatitudes reflect characteristics that disciples of Jesus embody: utter dependence on God, meekness and humility, being impacted by the suffering of others, working toward a just world, being quick to forgive, seeing God in all things, and cultivating peace. These characteristics are, in many ways, in complete contrast to the ways of our world today, which makes living them out challenging. Jesus Himself warns us that the path He proposes goes against the flow, even making us challenge society by the way we live.

A life of discipleship means putting God first, over and above all else, embracing and growing into these beatitude characteristics. This transformation certainly doesn't happen overnight, but it happens gradually as we gain understanding and awareness. As we change, the world notices but cannot understand; it is incomprehensible why someone would choose to honor God rather than doing whatever is best for themselves. And yet disciples do just that and can be treated horribly as a result. Persecution can take many forms: sarcastic comments from friends, friendly teasing about being "religious", harassment, humiliation, being bullied, marginalized, or excluded. Here in the Western hemisphere, persecution occurs primarily in social or economic form. In some parts of the world, being a follower of Christ invites violence and, at times, the risk of death. Persecution isn't something a disciple seeks out or tries to initiate; rather it is a consequence of living as a follower of Jesus. At first the persecution feels hurtful and one might become defensive. Prayer and reflection help affirm righteous actions and strengthen commitment to the discipleship path. Over time, this love and commitment to Jesus is tested and tried, like gold, in a furnace and found to be precious, genuine, and lasting. Therein lies the blessing – great freedom is experienced when love drowns out persecution and a disciple is able to live his or her belief, without fear of cost or consequence. Complete trust and faith in God diminishes fear of persecution.

This beatitude indicates "theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven," not *will be* or *shall have* but *is*. Present tense – not sometime in the future, but *today*. To fully embrace the way of the beatitudes is to bring about the kingdom of heaven *today*. What greater gift can we, as disciples of Jesus, bring into our world than the kingdom of heaven *today*.

Closing Reflection

Blessed are those who are convinced of their basic dependency on God, whose lives are emptied of all that doesn't matter, those for whom the riches of this world just aren't that important. The reign of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who know that all they are is a gift from God, and so they can be content with their greatness and their smallness, knowing themselves and being true to themselves, for they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Blessed are those who wear compassion like a garment, those who have learned how to find themselves by losing themselves in another's sorrow, for they too shall receive comfort.

Blessed are those who are hungry for goodness, those who never get enough of God and truth and righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, those who remember how much has been forgiven them, and are able to extend this forgiveness into the lives of others, for they too shall receive God's mercy.

Blessed are those whose hearts are free and simple, those who have smashed all false images and are seeking honestly for truth, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the creators of peace, those who build roads that unite rather than walls that divide, those who bless the world with the healing power of their presence, for they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are those whose love has been tried, like gold, in the furnace and found to be precious, genuine, and lasting, those who have lived their belief out loud, no matter what the cost or pain, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.