

**The Wisdom of Jesus**

**Maximum Joy  
Matthew 5:10-12**

**February 1, 2009**

**Dr. Steve Horn**

**Introduction:** We are studying the Sermon on the Mount. We are looking for “The Wisdom of Jesus.” The Sermon on the Mount starts out with the Beatitudes. We have already considered the first eight Beatitudes. The eighth Beatitude seems to be developed a little bit further in verses 11 and 12. That is the subject of our study this morning.

**Text:** <sup>10</sup> Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Sermon Introduction:** History tells many stories of persecution that led to martyrdom. One of those stories is that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was the German preacher and theologian who first escaped to the United States only to return to Germany. His return was based upon his personal need to be among his people who suffered at the hands of Hitler’s regime. Soon, Bonhoeffer was arrested which ultimately led to his execution. On the way to the gallows, Bonhoeffer reportedly said, “This is the end—for me the beginning of life.” At the gallows, he bowed his head again in prayer. Ten years later, the doctor verifying the death said, “In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.”

Remember that the Beatitudes show us a blessed life—a happy life. Look at what we have discovered so far so that we might see the lesson today.

**The Introduction (Which Looks Back)**

Let me take a moment to remind you what we have learned thus far. It’s more than just a review, actually it is useful to understand the point of the remaining part of the Beatitudes. Remember that the word “blessed” has to do with happiness or joy. Jesus is giving a summary of how we can have the life that God wants us to have.

**A Summary of the Beatitudes**

**Maximum Dependence + Maximum Devotion =**

**Maximum Joy**

The only way to joy is to have maximum dependence upon the LORD and maximum devotion to the LORD. Then, and only, then will we have maximum joy—the kind of life that God really wants us to have. So, there it is—an equation for joy. But there is much we ought to see in this text.

## **The Irony of the Equation:**

Persecution precedes Joy.

Crucial to this text this morning is the idea of persecution. Our maximum joy is going to be found in persecution. Doesn't seem possible, does it? If our greatest challenge in life is to grow in the image of Christ, we can get no closer to Jesus than to suffer for His sake.

I have been reacquainted this week with the story of missionary Helen Roseveare. Helen was a medical missionary to Congo. In her book, *Living Sacrifice*, she writes about being taken hostage by rebels. For months, these monsters held her captive, beat her, and even raped her. She writes about her first night as being a hostage. "Beaten, flung on the ground, kicked—teeth broken, mouth and nose gashed, ribs bruised. I knew that if the rebel lieutenant did not pull the trigger....worse humiliation lay ahead. It was a very dark night. I felt utterly alone. For a brief moment, I felt God had failed me....In this darkness, He met me and He breathed a word into my troubled mind: the word *privilege*. For that night, cost became swallowed up in privilege."

You say, "Would God do that?" That's not the right question. The rebels did that. But in their persecution, God brought joy. What He did for Dr. Roseveare, He wants to do for you. You say, "It's too much. It's too tough. May you learn that persecution precedes joy."

## **The Inevitability of Persecution:**

"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."  
2 Timothy 3:12

You might be asking the question about the relevancy of this message. You might wonder if anybody is really persecuted today. You might wonder if anyone here is persecuted. The Bible reveals that if we are going to live godly lives, we will be persecuted.

### Reasons to Expect Persecution

1. Historical Reasons—Jesus was persecuted. The prophets who came before Him were persecuted. It stands to reason that we will be persecuted in some fashion.
2. Logical Reasons—The life that Jesus calls us to live is counter cultural. Conflict is inevitable.

## **The Intensification of Persecution:**

So, what is going to determine your persecution?

### Factors that Will Increase Persecution

1. The degree of our devotion to Christ.

Maybe persecution is foreign for us because we live too much like the world.

2. The degree of opposition to Christ of those around us.

Maybe persecution is foreign to us because we isolate ourselves too much from the world.

### **The Eternal Reward of Persecution:**

**Heaven is Great!**

**So Rejoice and Be Glad!**

For their day, two very well known men died in 1899. One was the well known evangelist, Dwight L. Moody. The other was a famous lawyer, orator, and political leader—Robert Ingersoll. Ingersoll was an atheist, calling the Bible a fable. Here's how one biographer summarized the death of the two men.

*Ingersoll died suddenly. The news of his death stunned his family. His body was kept at home for several days because his wife was reluctant to part with it. It was eventually removed for the sake of the family's health.*

*Ingersoll's remains were cremated, and the public response to his passing was altogether dismal. For a man who put all his hopes on this world, death was tragic and came without the consolation of hope.*

*Moody's legacy was different. On December 22, 1899, Moody awoke to his last winter dawn. Having grown increasingly weak during the night, he began to speak in words. "Earth recedes, heaven opens before me!" Son Will, who was nearby, hurried across the room to his father's side.*

*"Father, you are dreaming," he said.*

*"No. This is no dream, Will," Moody said, "It is beautiful. It is like a trance. If this is death, it is sweet. God is calling me, and I must go. Don't call me back."*

*At that point, the family gathered around, and moments later the great evangelist died. It was his coronation day—a day he had looked forward to for many years. He was with his Lord.*

*The funeral service of Dwight L. Moody reflected that same confidence. There was no despair. Loved ones gathered to sing praise to God at a triumphant home-going service. Many remembered the words the evangelist had spoken earlier that year in New York City: "Someday you will read in the papers that Moody is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now.... I was born of the flesh in 1837; I was born of the Spirit in 1855. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit shall live forever."<sup>5</sup>*