Bethany Presbyterian Church Dr. Rick Griffith

19 February 2012 Message 1 of 1

NLT 30 Minutes

**When You Are Persecuted…**

Title

***Matthew 5:10-12***

**Topic:** Suffering

**Theme:** Rejoice in persecution

**Thrust:** because it helps you look in two key directions

**Purpose:** The listeners will joyfully suffer for Christ

**Songs:** “This Kingdom” or “How Can I Keep from Singing?”

# Introduction

### Interest: [Today believers in NYC are getting kicked out of their church premises.]

#### “Imagine if today you came to worship with your church only to be turned away because the landlord of the property doesn't want to rent to people of faith -- not because of conflicts with building use, but just because of religious discrimination. Imagine then if the landlord was the local government...in an American city. But this is just an urban legend, right?

Sorry Closed

#### “Sadly this is really happening now in New York City. For the past decade, New York's Department of Education has given about 60 small, mostly Christian, upstart or itinerant congregations the option to hold their weekend services in any one of the city's empty school buildings. The only condition is that they pay to use the facilities -- a nice benefit to the cash strapped public education system. Now, the Department of Education has reversed course, and as many as 100 churches face eviction on February 19 [TODAY!], as the school board's ban against the use of property by religious congregations goes into effect.

NYC

Eviction

#### “The evictions could be devastating to small congregations and church plants in the city. With limited space in one of the most densely populated areas of the world, and real estate costs that are sky-high, opportunities for ministry in many areas of the Big Apple would be effectively shut down” (FRC News email).

Tough

### Need: “But that’s way over in New York City,” you say. “Christians don’t need to pay a price for their faith in Singapore.” Really? God’s Word says in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (NIV).

2 Tim 3:12

#### So what price are *you* paying for being a Christian?

Price?

##### Sometimes we get passed up on a promotion due to our faith in Christ.

##### Other times our family does not understand our faith and fights against us—as a new Christian, my parents sometimes kept me from attending church.

##### Other prices we pay are financial, social, or ridicule for believing in a condemned criminal who died 2000 years ago.

Response?

#### How do you *respond* to this unjust treatment?

##### Anger?

##### “Hey, this is unfair!”

##### Or do you get sullen and depressed?

#### How *should* we respond to unfair treatment?

Should?

##### James 1:2 says to “consider it all joy when you face trials of various kinds.”

Be joyful!

##### And in our text today, Jesus tells us that when we suffer, we should “Be happy about it! Be very glad!” Wow! Seriously? I ask in your bulletin…

Be glad!

### Subject: Why should we accept persecution with joy?

Subject

### Background: For the past weeks, you have been going through your series on the Blessed Life in Matthew 5.

Beatitudes

#### These verses begin the most famous sermon ever preached—that by Jesus.

#### He spoke these words on a hill just north of the Sea of Galilee.

Mount

#### Now the Church of the Beatitudes marks the spot—a beautiful setting

Church

#### Looking down the grassy hill towards the lake.

Sea View

#### But what did Jesus teach at this spot?

What teach?

#### Some call his sermon the “Be Attitudes.” They show not so much what we should do, but what we should *be* to see God’s blessing on our lives. One scholar says, “The sermon showed how a person who is in right relationship with God should conduct his life” (Barbieri, BKC).

Blessed

#### Therefore, as part of Jesus’ sermon, today’s verses show how we respond to persecution when we are rightly related to God.

#### People who live the Beatitude life *will* stand out and be persecuted.

### Text: Matthew 5:10-12 is the encouragement from Jesus Himself on why we should *welcome* suffering into our lives.

Mt 5:10-12

### Preview: In these three short verses, Jesus gives two reasons we should accept persecution with joy.

• 2 reasons

### Transition: The first reason we should accept persecution with joy is…

# I. Persecution causes us to look forward to our rich rewards (10-12a).

MP

# [When we suffer *now*, it helps us look to our *future* blessings.]

SP

## God blesses us when we are persecuted for doing right because our suffering shows that we are members of God’s family (10).

K of H

7 slides

### “Kingdom of heaven” in Matthew refers to the political kingdom Israel will experience after the nation repents (3:2; 4:15; 10:7; 6:33; magi; 19:27-28).

### [Example of Tim Tebow]

#### How many of you have heard of Tim Tebow?

Tebow

##### He’s the starting quarterback for the Denver Broncos at a height of 1.91 m. and weight of 111 kg. Born in Manila to Baptist missionary parents and then homeschooled, he is now 24 years old and a football sensation—both in passing and running.

• Football

##### He’s also an outspoken Christian. “During his college football career, Tebow frequently wore references to biblical verses on his [eye black](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eye_black). In a 2009 Championship Game, he wore [John 3:16](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_3:16) on his eye black; the verse was the highest-ranked [Google](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google) search term over the next 24 hours, generating over 90 million searches!”[[1]](#footnote-1)

John 3:16

##### Tebow also helps the suffering and dying look to the future. Each week he sponsors a dying person and his family to his game—whether home or away—and meets with that person for about an hour after the game.

#### Not surprisingly, Tim Tebow has many critics due to his righteous life.

##### In answer to an interview question, Tebow stated that he was a virgin.[[2]](#footnote-2) The statement was subject to much discussion about whether the question was necessary, including criticism of the reporter who originally asked!

##### He gets a lot of press when he gets a picture taken of him with an attractive girl, implying that he has been unfaithful to his pledge.

##### One “[Poll Finds 43 Percent Believe God Helps Tebow Win](http://liberalvaluesblog.com/2012/01/13/poll-finds-43-percent-believe-god-helps-tebow-win/)” appeared on the website liberalvaluesblog.com on 13 Jan 2012 by Ron Chusid, who wrote:

There are certainly a lot of ignorant Americans. A [recent poll](http://denver.cbslocal.com/2012/01/12/poll-finds-43-percent-of-people-believe-god-helps-tebow-win/) found that 43 percent believe God helps Tim Tebow win football games.

I wonder how they explain the games in which Tebow doesn’t win. Did Tebow (or his fans) do something wrong to cause God to make him lose, or does God lack the power to control everything in a football game?

Even more importantly, if they believe that God is interested in football to the point of intervening, why doesn’t God intervene in more important areas which might reduce human suffering. Do they really believe that intervening to determine who wins a football game is more important to God than intervening to prevent the Holocaust?

##### Other reporters have asked if this guy is really for real—“Does he really care for the sick and dying to meet them every week?” Well, he does!

##### His critics even worked to change the rules so players could not write anything on their eye black!

##### Tebow has said of his critics, "I just have a passion to play football. When you do things different than other people sometimes do them, and you don't settle for just being average, you open yourself up for criticism. But, I'm ready for it. I've learned to live with it. I never just wanted to do things the same way everybody else does."

##### You know what? If Jesus is correct here (and I believe he is!), then Tim Tebow is blessed because of doing right—despite getting criticized for it.

5:10

### The way we are blessed is “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What’s that mean?

#### First century Christians had a reputation for being enemies of the State. Why?[[3]](#footnote-3)

Enemies

##### Jews: Christians were initially seen as a branch of Judaism and thus had the protections of Roman law afforded the mostly wealthy Jews—but when many Gentiles became Christians, Jews joined in persecuting them because of their disdain for Jesus as Messiah.

Passover

Rome Protected Jews

Persecution

##### False rumors also spread about Christians that led to horrible persecution:

###### *Cannibalism* was assumed since they ate Christ’s body and drank his blood.

Cannibalism

###### *Immorality* was assumed since they had “love feasts” and gave the “kiss of peace.” “They call each other ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ so they must have immorality at their love feasts!”

Immoral

###### *Murder* of their children was surmised since they brought their children into the catacombs for instruction and baptism.

Murder

##### Emperor Worship: Rome had an incredibly vast empire of many languages, traditions, and religions—so appreciation to the State was expected in the form of an annual offering of incense and a simple statement: “Caesar is lord.” Once someone did this, they were give a certificate of being a law-abiding citizen and they could then go worship any god they wanted until next year. Jews were exempted from this, but Christians were not—and they could not say this since they knew that Jesus alone was Lord.

Perpetua

#### Today some also view us with suspicion when we declare that our primary allegiance is not to the government, but to Christ as Lord.

##### Think how strange we are: We’re the only people who believe our leader was virgin born, resurrected, gives salvation simply by faith alone, and is coming back in the clouds to get us! We’re really different—and therefore suspect.

##### We identify ourselves as citizens of heaven when we suffer for Christ.

Phil. 3:20

##### We also appreciate what we have in heaven awaiting us!

## We should rejoice about being persecuted for doing right because we have greater heavenly rewards (11-12a).

11-12a

### God’s blessing comes when we are insulted, persecuted, and spoken evil of—just as the early Christians were.

### We are commanded us to be joyful. The joy here is not an emotion but an attitude.

### Christ promises more heavenly reward for those who suffer for his name!

MP I

(So the first reason we should accept persecution with joy is because persecution causes us to look forward to our rich rewards. The end of verse 12 states the second reason to suffer joyfully…)

# II. Persecution causes us to look back at our rich heritage (12b).

5:12b

MP

# [When we suffer *now*, it helps us identify with godly people in the *past*.]

## The OT prophets paid a great price for their faith in God.

Jeremiah

### Jeremiah preached over 40 years but never saw many people respond. He was thrown into mud for days. Even Jerusalem was destroyed—just like he said.

Isaiah

Mud

### Isaiah ministered even longer—for 65 years! Yet the Jewish tradition is that he died by being sawn in two.

• Sawn 2

## We identify with these great prophets when we suffer for Christ.

Identify

### We have no reward for suffering due to sin or tactlessness (cf. 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:14-15).

### But suffering due to our faith is admirable.

### It’s not as if we are masochists who like pain—it’s more of the privilege of identifying with prophets of great faith.

### The greatest of all these men of faith, of course, is Christ Himself.

(So how can we sum up what Jesus is saying to us in this passage? Simply this way…)

# Conclusion

### Rejoice in persecution because it helps you look in two key directions (MI).

MI

### Be glad for the opportunity to suffer for Christ since this helps you think about your eternal home and identify with godly saints of old.

### Main Points

MP I

#### Persecution helps you look forward to your rich rewards (10-12a).

MP II

#### Persecution helps you look back at your rich heritage (12b).

2 Tim 3:12

### Think About 2 Tim. 3:12—raise your hand if God brings a situation to mind here…

Think…

#### What price are you paying for being a Christian? At home? Work? With friends?

• Price

#### How can you look forward? Study “overcomers” in Rev. 2–3.

• Forward

• Back

#### How can you look back? Read Jeremiah or Acts!

### Prayer

# Study Questions (Step 1)

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### “The sermon showed how a person who is in right relationship with God should conduct his life” (Barbieri, BKC).

### Therefore, as part of Jesus’ sermon, today’s verses show how we respond to persecution when we are rightly related to God.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Matthew’s gospel is evangelistic for unbelieving Jews.

### The Sermon on the Mount does not teach works righteousness, but it does indicate the standards of behavior God expects of those in a right relationship with him.

**Matt. 5:10 NLT** God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

**Matt. 5:11**    “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. **12** Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

# Questions

### What does it mean to be “persecuted for righteousness”?

### What does it mean “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”?

#### That they will be in the millennial kingdom?

#### That they will appreciate heaven more due to suffering?

#### That this identifies them as heading to heaven?

#### That those willing to suffer for doing right will show that they are members of God’s family.

**Outlines (Steps 2-5)**

**When You Are Persecuted…**

***Matthew 5:10-12***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# Exegetical Idea: The reason God blesses us when we are persecuted for doing right is to help us look forward to our reward and back at our rich heritage in the prophets.

# I. The reason God blesses us when we are persecuted for doing right is to help them appreciate our heavenly rewards (10-12a).

## The reason God blesses us when we are persecuted for doing right is because their suffering shows that they are members of God’s family (10).

## The reason we should rejoice about persecuted for doing right is because we have greater heavenly rewards (11-12a).

# II. The reason God blesses us when we are persecuted for doing right is to help us identify with the OT prophets (12b).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will gain strength by looking both forward and back during persecution.

**Sermon Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)—Steps 5-6

# Subject: Why should we accept persecution with joy?

# Introduction

### Interest: Today many believers in NYC are getting kicked out of their church premises.

### Need:

#### What price are you paying for being a Christian?

#### How do you respond to this unjust treatment?

#### How should we respond to unfair treatment?

### Subject: Why should we accept persecution with joy?

### Background: People who live the Beatitude life will stand out and be persecuted.

### Text: Matthew 5:10-12 is the encouragement from Jesus Himself on why we should welcome suffering into our lives.

### Preview: Jesus gives two reasons we should accept persecution with joy.

### Transition: The first reason we should accept persecution with joy is…

# I. Persecution causes us to look forward to our rich rewards (10-12a).

## God blesses us when we are persecuted for doing right because our suffering shows that we are members of God’s family (10).

### Tim Tebow has many critics due to his righteous life.

### He helps the suffering and dying look to the future.

## We should rejoice about being persecuted for righteousness because we have greater rewards (11-12a).

# II. Persecution causes us to look back at our rich heritage (12b).

## The OT prophets paid a great price for their faith in God.

## We identify with these great prophets when we suffer for Christ.

# Conclusion

### Rejoice in persecution because it helps you look in two key directions (MI).

### Main Points

#### Persecution helps you look forward to your rich rewards (10-12a).

#### Persecution helps you look back at your rich heritage (12b).

### Exhortation/Application

#### What price are you paying for being a Christian?

#### How can you look forward?

#### How can you look back?

# Tentative Theme/Thrust Statements (Step 5)

Text

# Possible Illustrations (Step 6)

### Text

# Possible Applications (Step 6)

### Text

Bulletin Outline Filled In

# Introduction

### Suffering as a believer is the normal Christian life.

### Why should we accept persecution with joy?

# I. Persecution causes us to look forward to our rich rewards (10-12a).

## God blesses us when we are persecuted for doing right because our suffering shows that we are members of God’s family (10).

## We should rejoice about being persecuted for doing right because we have greater rewards (11-12a).

# II. Persecution causes us to look back at our rich heritage (12b).

## The OT prophets paid a great price for their faith in God.

## We identify with these great prophets when we suffer for Christ.

# Conclusion

### Rejoice in persecution because it helps you look in two key directions (Main Idea).

### What price are you paying for being a Christian?

### How can you look forward?

### How can you look back?

Bulletin Outline with blanks

# Introduction

### Suffering as a believer is the normal Christian life.

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ should we accept persecution with\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

# I. Persecution causes us to look \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to our rich rewards (10-12a).

## God blesses us when we are persecuted for doing right because our suffering shows that we are members of God’s family (10).

## We should rejoice about being persecuted for doing right because we have greater rewards (11-12a).

# II. Persecution causes us to look \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at our rich heritage (12b).

## The OT prophets paid a great price for their faith in God.

## We identify with these great prophets when we suffer for Christ.

# Conclusion

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in persecution because it helps you look in two key directions (Main Idea).

### What price are you paying for being a Christian?

### How can you look forward?

### How can you look back?

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tebow#cite\_note-84 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Travis, Clay (July 23, 2009). ["Tim Tebow Says He's Still a Virgin, Saving Himself for Marriage"](http://ncaafootball.fanhouse.com/2009/07/23/tim-tebow-says-hes-still-a-virgin-saving-himself-for-marriage/). Retrieved 15 August 2010.; cited at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tebow#cite\_note-63 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. William Barclay, *The Plain Man Looks at the Beatitudes* (London & Glascow: Collins, 1963), 101-109. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)