



Pastor's Pen

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

Dear Bethel Church family and friends,

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I pray you had a restful Memorial Day. We also recently celebrated my first anniversary as Bethel's senior pastor. I can hardly believe how quickly the time has passed and how much has changed in the last twelve months. Truly, I am blessed beyond imagination by God's goodness and grace in bringing us to you. May HE be forever praised!

This month, we continue studying Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Here, our Savior lays out the moral and ethical standards of His people. Now, some claim that these expectations are unrealistic for believers today. However, as we've seen, it is clear that for all who love Jesus, these qualities remain foundational in our relationship with the Lord. Do we keep them perfectly? No, we don't. Do we obey them to earn our salvation? Or perhaps so that God might owe us something? May that never be the case! Such understanding is foreign to the gospel. No, the heartfelt desire of all true disciples is to bring glory, honor, and praise to our Redeeming King in **thanksgiving** for His work of grace in saving and transforming us.

Our study has also revealed a definite order to this list. The first three beatitudes are concerned with our need before God. When we understand that outside of the gracious work of Jesus, we have earned only judgment, then we know our true spiritual poverty. As we come to grips with this reality, our response is to mourn. We also realize the importance of treating others with genuine humility. The fourth beatitude tells us how our needs are satisfied. When we hunger and thirst for personal righteousness, the Lord promises that we will be filled, that the desires of our transformed heart will be granted. The next three beatitudes tell us about the result of our hunger for righteousness being fulfilled. That as the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ, we bear the healthy spiritual fruit of being merciful towards others, of seeing real purity in our hearts, and of being individuals who build harmony and resolve conflict. Today, we look at the last

beatitude, which describes the outcome of this transformed life: **"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."**

So, what does it mean to be righteous? The dictionary defines this term as morally good or correct, meaning that we live according to a moral code that exists outside ourselves. Biblically, being righteous means living according to the example of Jesus Christ. And herein lies the problem. Bethel, Jesus warned us of the danger of following Him. **If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: No servant is greater than his master; If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also** (John 15:18-20). How often today are Christians belittled because we claim that there is a transcendent moral truth applicable to all people? That we are mocked when we assert that marriage is between a man and woman, not because we think less of certain people, but because that has been God's plan from the beginning. That, for followers of the Lord, all human life from its moment of beginning to its last breath is precious and worthy of respect and protection. And that, as Christians, we fight to do justice, to love mercy, and to share the gospel, which alone can provide freedom from the tyranny of sin for all who are made in God's image. You see, if we are truly righteous, if we do mirror the behavior of our Lord, we will be persecuted because our passions and our actions will be different than the rest of society.

What benefit do we receive when we face persecution because of righteousness? God promises that we will receive the Kingdom of Heaven. Remember, this promise not only has a future fulfillment when we join our King in Heaven, but we will see the Kingdom of Heaven expand here on earth as God's people live according to the example of Jesus. Can you imagine that? Oh dear Lord, please give all of us the strength to live today as disciples of Christ.

Grace and peace to you,
Pastor Chris

this week	events		volunteer schedule
Sunday's sermon	Youth Lake Day 5/31 at 12:00 pm	Circle # 1 6/3 at 10:30 am	Infant Nursery Jessica McMullen & Nathalee Cuffman
	Homecoming 6/1 at 11:00 am	GriefShare 6/3 at 6:30 pm	Toddler Nursery Marissa Robinson & Sylvia Price
	BCA Meeting 6/1 at 2:15 pm	Diaconate Meeting 6/3 at 7:00 pm	Worship Training Abby Chidester & Rebecca Wallace
	Ephesians 6:21-24 Youth Summer Kick-off 6/1 at 6:00 pm	GriefShare 6/4 at 1:00 pm	