



Pastor's Pen

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." – Matthew 5:11-12

Dear Bethel Church family and friends,

Grace and peace from Him Who is, Who was, and Who ever will be. The eternal King who took on flesh and walked among us that we might become the children of God. Happy Summer! I hope you have survived the first heat dome of 2025. Hopefully, by God's grace, this will be the only one of the year. As you read this, Kathy and I are on our way back from the PCA's 52nd General Assembly in scenic Chattanooga, TN.

A great big **THANK YOU** to all who served the children and families of Bethel and our community during this week's VBS. We missed being with you all, but know that it was a real blessing for those who participated.

This month, we conclude our year-long study of the Beatitudes found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In these powerfully poignant statements, our Savior taught his disciples about the foundational moral and ethical standards of behavior we're supposed to embody. As believers living in a fallen world, do we exhibit these character traits perfectly in our daily lives? No, we don't, at least I don't. But because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who is the sign and seal of our new life in Christ, the Lord has given us a new set of desires. One part of embracing these new affections is that we want to live in a way that honors our Lord for His gift of salvation.

We have also seen that Jesus had an order in mind as He preached this portion of His sermon. Our Lord's first three statements remind us of our need. Without understanding that we are poor in spirit, how can we ever come to recognize the necessity of God's saving intervention in our lives? And when we do grasp our critical poverty, of course, we mourn. Indeed, we begin seeing others through God's eyes and treat them more graciously. Why? Because we comprehend that, except for God's grace, we would all still be in that situation ourselves.

Jesus' fourth statement of blessing tells us what happens when our need is satisfied. As we hunger and

thirst for holiness in our lives, reflecting our righteous Savior, the Lord promises that we will be filled, that the new passions of our heart will be met. The next three beatitudes tell us about what happens when our hunger for righteousness is fulfilled. This inward change leads to an outward transformation, as demonstrated by a more merciful attitude towards others. We will also desire real purity in our hearts and become people who are willing to do the hard task of building harmony and resolving conflicts between others.

All of which brings us to our final statement, which, honestly, hardly seems like a blessing, for Jesus reminds the people that all true disciples should expect to be persecuted because of righteousness. The blessing of course does not come in the actual persecution, although being counted worthy of suffering on behalf of Christ is an honor (Acts 5:41), but of the promise of the kingdom of heaven becoming more evident in our own lives and being assured that our future position in God's kingdom is secure. Our verses today don't serve as a separate beatitude, but helps us, as they assisted the original disciples, understand what kind of persecution we might be expected to face. Jesus assured his followers, **Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.** Now, let me gently remind you that this does not mean every trial we face as Christians is God-honoring and will result in a blessing. Some who claim the name of Christ have been persecuted because they are a nuisance. Others have suffered the same fate because they have shown themselves to be rude, foolish, or needlessly insulting to those outside the faith. Is this the persecution about which Christ is talking? Absolutely not! It is only those who suffer for being like Jesus whose persecution is blessed. Have you been insulted, called ignorant or simple-minded at school because you claim that Jesus alone is the way to the Father? Have you been lied about or perhaps even passed over for promotion at work because you would not sign off on a plan that was against God's holy law? Then my friends, and only then, are you suffering persecution for Christ.

May our gracious King give us the desire, strength, peace, and joy we need to faithfully face all the slings and arrows of the world, so that we would be good witnesses to our family, friends, and community of the abundant blessings of following Christ.

Grace and peace to you, Pastor Chris

this week

Sunday's sermon:

Jesus Heals

Mark 1:29-45

events

GriefShare
7/1 at 6:30 pm

Diaconate Meeting
7/1 @ 7:00 pm

GriefShare
7/2 at 1:00 pm

volunteer schedule

Infant Nursery
Trina Meek &
Abby Chidester

Toddler Nursery
Staci & Brett
Brackett

Worship Training
Lindsey Hall &
Grace Benes