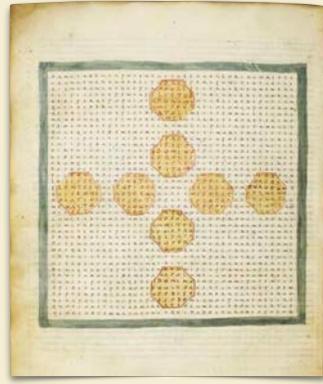


Happy Subversives

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:10; 5:11-12; Luke 6:22-23, 26).

June 22, 2025
Pastor Tyler Williams
Greenfield Community Church



Happy Subversives

A Beatitude with a Bonus:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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 5:10-12, NIV).

Happy Subversives

“Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets... Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets” (Luke 6:22-23, 26, NIV).

Happy? Really?!

“Blessed...” or “Happy” (Matt 5:10-11; Luke 6:22).

“Rejoice and be glad” (Matt 5:12).

“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy” (Luke 6:23).

The Reasons for Persecution

“Jesus is not blessing those who get persecuted for being obnoxious in peacemaking, or those who get persecuted for being tactless, or who are culturally insensitive as they bear witness in the world. Jesus is not congratulating those who are persecuted for being dogmatically dogmatic or narrow-mindedly narrow-minded. Jesus is not applauding the thrill-seeking confrontationist, or those with a ‘victim complex.’ Jesus is blessing those who find themselves in trouble ‘because of righteousness’ and ‘because of me’” (Darrell Johnson, *The Beatitudes*, 127).

The Reasons for Persecution

1 *Because they seek God's righteousness and justice.*

“Because of righteousness” (Matt 5:10).

- “Righteousness” (*dikaiosyne* δικαιοσυνη) means practical righteousness and an individual's just conduct lived in relationship with others.
- “Suffering for a just cause” (Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 109).

The Reasons for Persecution

2 *Because they are followers of Jesus*

“Because of me” and “because of the Son of Man” (Matthew 5:11; Luke 6:22).

- This shouldn't be a surprise!
- “You will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all because of me” (Matt 24:9; see also 10:39; 16:25; 19:29).

The Reasons for Persecution

There is a long history of persecution of those who lived and spoke for God (Matt 5:12; Acts 7:51-52; Hebrews 11).

And followers of Jesus are not above their master (John 15:20).

The Apostle Paul even said: “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2Tim 3:12).

Persecution of the Way

Persecution in the First Three Centuries

- Followers of the way were persecuted at the hands of the Roman Empire for their exclusive allegiance to Christ and the counter-cultural standards they adopted in their efforts to live a life worthy of Christ.
- “The blood of the martyrs is the seed” of the church (Tertullian, ca. 200AD).

Persecution of the Way

Persecution during the Period of the Reformation

- The Reformers saw themselves as recipients of this beatitude's blessing as they were often persecuted by the Catholic Church (and they later persecuted the radical reformers).
- This history is a painful irony — Christians as both persecuted and persecutor.
- Being the persecutor is never the mark of the disciple seeking to live by the beatitudes.

Persecution of the Way

The Reality of Persecution Today

- 100-360 million Christians around the world live in places where they face persecution for their faith.
 - Worst countries include North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- (Check out opendoorscanada.org or worldea.org)

“...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”

The promise, which is repeated from 5:3, is in the **present tense**: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (5:10).

- Despite the persecution, they can experience the presence of the kingdom in the here and now (5:10), as well as the fullness of the kingdom when Christ returns (5:12).

Happy Subversives

Following the Way of Jesus is Subversive

- Following Jesus is about giving your allegiance and worship to Jesus above all else.
- The traits and qualities highlighted in the beatitudes are counter-cultural and will make Christ followers stand out: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you odd" (attributed to Flannery O'Connor).

Our Response to Persecution

We should respond to any persecution with the characteristics of the first seven beatitudes.

- Prayer for and blessing the persecutors (Matt 5:44; Rom 12:14; 1Corinthians 4:12; 1Thessalonians 5:15).
- Joy in the face of persecution and suffering (Matt 5:12; Luke 6:23; see also Acts 5:41; Rom 5:3-5; James 1:2, 12; 1Pet 4:13-14).

Invitation

Be thankful for our freedom to worship and follow Jesus.

Pray for the persecuted church.