

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

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Gracious Heavenly Father, that song just reminds us that the cross is enough, and that we don't need to add anything to it. We cannot add anything of merit to our justification. You have declared that, that we are righteous in your sight, and there's nothing that we can add. Help us get over our legalistic tendency to think that we can add something to our justification that's going to impress you. Father, we just thank you for the joy of your presence. We thank you for the ministry of the Holy Spirit who is our teacher. We just trust, Lord, that you would once again open our eyes that we might behold you clearly for Jesus' sake. Amen.

I want to express my thanks to Ted and Bishop Rogers for their excellent teaching over the past couple of weeks while I was gone. Ted covered me a couple of weeks ago on rather quick notice. Ted, thank you for covering me at the last minute.

Ted: Thank you for asking me.

I called Ted at the very last minute and said, "Can you take over?" One of the great things about this...there's a great lesson we can learn, having a brother like Ted and a brother like John Rogers be able to teach us, and Tom and the other people who teach us. This really is not about me or about them or about any one person. It really is about the ministry of the Holy Spirit who is our teacher. He really is the one who guides us into all truth because that's his job description. How grateful we are that this is not built around a person, but it's really built around a message, and the message is the cross is enough.

While I was gone Camp of the Woods, I was asked to write a chapter on Legalism for a new book that's being published. My position basically was this—the cross is enough. As I began to delve into that idea of legalism, we really think sometimes that we can add on to what the cross accomplished. I think one of the examples...remember a couple of years ago there was that fashionable trend, WWJD, to wear the little bracelet? What would Jesus do? I have no idea. First of all, the Scripture says that my thoughts are not like yours, so who am I to think that my thoughts are going to be like his anyway to know what he would do in a situation. I have no idea what Jesus would do. I think the bracelet should have said WHJD. What has Jesus done? My article is let's talk about what he's done, not about what we should do; let's talk about what he's done. When you understand what he's done, the cross is enough.

You cannot add to your justification. That's something God does for us, and we don't add to that. Hopefully this will come out in six or eight months and I'll get you some copies. It's a book by several of us on legalism, about the tendency to think that we have merit in our good works. There's no merit in anything we do. It's expressions of gratitude.

We're going to see that today as we come to our eighth Beatitude in Matthew 5. My thanks to Ted and to John for their wonderful exposition of the Scriptures. Again, it's just affirming that this is not about one person; it's really about the message of the Scripture, that the cross is enough.

Let's turn to Matthew 5. Next week, Tom and I will have a little bit of an announcement for you about Tin, our brother in Vietnam. His leg that we got him five years ago is basically wearing out. We found another hospital in Vietnam that will help construct another prosthetic for him. We're working on some of the details, and we'll come back to you with more information on that. Perhaps we can have another ministry to a brother that we helped before. He's rather dependent upon us, and if we can do that, it might be something the Lord would have us do. Tom and I will come to you next week with some more information on that.

Let's turn to Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." I want you to notice that this blessing is only for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, not for stupidity, or because they are objectionable or because of politics. It's because of righteousness.

Remember the word righteousness means right-wiseness. In other words Jesus is telling his first staff meeting at the Beatitudes, that you're going to be in a world system that you are the antithetical aspect of it because you're anti-world—we'll see that in a moment—and one of the understandings you realize is this. You will be blessed when you are making decisions that are rightly wise based upon the Kingdom. That's why we call ourselves M8's—mission minded members of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace.

We need to realize that this is sort of the summary of all the other seven Beatitudes. It's sort of the end result. They all go in succession. Blessed are the poor in spirit. You're spiritually bankrupt. As we go all the way, when you begin to live those first seven Beatitudes, you now come to the eighth Beatitude, which is this one, "Blessed are those who are persecuted." You live according to the first seven Beatitudes; the consequence is the world will persecute you. It's a consequence. It's sort of a summary.

The Christian life is really full of strange, what I would call paradoxes, because when you look at several of these, they're really opposed to human reason. God's saints rejoice with unspeakable joy, yet we mourn over our sin. How can somebody have great joy in their relationship to God at the same time mourn over their sin? That's exactly what we are. That's a paradox if you don't have a spiritual mind. If your heart has not been changed, you have no understanding of how you can be both of those. One moment you can be filled with great joy, exuberance, exhilaration, and the other times you're exposed in your sin and you mourn over your sin. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. You see, to the world, that's a paradox.

There are several other paradoxes we have. The believer in Christ has been brought into contact with a source of vital satisfaction that is capable of meeting every blessing, yet at the same time, we sing and make melody in our heart, but we groan deeply and daily because of the sin in our lives.

Those are paradoxes that Jesus has been teaching us. How can you be blessed...I mean, look at this logically from the world's point of view. How can you be blessed when you're persecuted? That's a paradox. The world's not going to understand that. We need to realize what Jesus is saying is that he's teaching us how to live a life that is anti-world. This is other-worldly.

Remember when Jesus was in the boat and his disciples were fearful about the waves and the sea and he was asleep and they came over and said, "Master, aren't you worried about what's going on"? He said, "Peace, be still," and even the waters at that moment were obedient to him, and the winds died down. What was Peter's response? "Who is this man?" Who is this? That phrase literally means "he's out of this world. He's other-worldly." In other words, we've just seen something that is not of this world.

That's what Jesus is saying about kingdom citizenship. This is how you enter into the kingdom of God, and when you live like an other-worldly person according to these seven Beatitudes, it takes you to the eighth Beatitude, and the logical consequence we need to understand is the fact that you're going to be persecuted by the very system of which you are demonstrating an other-worldly lifestyle. That's what it means when he says we're blessed by...when we're persecuted.

Remember the word "blessed" here means happy in spite of circumstances. You see, the world looks at happiness because it's based upon happenings. We are blessed because of our character. Character

precedes conduct, because who we are determines what we do.

Let me read you a quote about the dichotomy and these paradoxes that exist in our lifestyle based upon these Beatitudes by a Puritan by the name of Andrew Fuller. This is what he writes about those paradoxes as he introduces his teaching on this eighth Beatitude, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness.” “It is a strong proof of human depravity that man’s curses and Christ’s blessings should meet on the same person. Who would have thought that a man could be persecuted and reviled and have all manner of evil said of him for righteousness’ sake, and do wicked men really hate justice and love those who defraud and wrong their neighbors? No. They do not dislike righteousness as it respects themselves. It is only that species of it which respects God and religion that excites their hatred. If Christians were content with doing justly and loving mercy, and would cease walking humbly with God, they might go through this world not only in peace, but with applause. But he that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Such a life reproves the ungodliness of men and provokes their resentment.”

I told you several years ago when I was teaching down at the LSU Graduate School of Executive Management, which I do every May...I’ve done it for about the past eight years. I teach on Ethical Decision Making, Managing Change and Teamwork. As you know all the stuff that I do through my consulting group has Scriptural basis to it. So when I teach Ethical Decision Making, I just teach the Beatitudes. I’ve just taken these eight character qualities of the Beatitudes, repackage it, rather than saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” I say, “Be a follower.” I take the principle behind that, wrap it in a character quality and teach the character quality.

After I taught my hour-and-a-half presentation on Ethics, a young man raised his hand, probably in his mid-30’s. There were about 300 mid-range to senior executives who come from around the country to this week seminar. He said, “Dr. Bickel, I’ve just finished my MBA at Harvard. We had a three-credit course on Ethics, and it cannot touch what you just did in one hour-and-a-half. Where in the world did you get your material?” {LAUGHTER} I said, “Do you really want to know?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Everything I just gave you came from the Scripture.” “That’s inappropriate.” As soon as I said it came from the Scripture, his response, “That’s inappropriate.” I said, “I thought you said it was the best stuff you’d ever heard?” He said, “That was until I found out the source.” That’s the world. That’s America.

That’s what Jesus is saying. When you live a lifestyle that is other-worldly, when you communicate a message that is out of this world, that’s not of the system of this world, you’re going to be persecuted. And then he wrote me up and said that I should never be invited back to teach again because I was a proselytizer and violated the doctrine of church and state. Now if I had said I got that from the Koran...applause, or I got this from Confucius...applause, or I got this from Mohammed or from some other false religion, the applause would have been, “Wonderful! How nice of you to be so spiritually minded.” But you see, brothers, the moment you’re associated with the cross, and you’re associated with the person and work of Christ of Jesus Christ and his sinless perfection and his perfect obedience, that’s an affront to their depravity. It exposes them.

Let me show you what I mean. Go to John 3:16-21, “¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

Now the world “believe” there means to depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in. It doesn’t mean to give mental assent. It doesn’t mean that you’re giving some factual consideration and approval to some facts about a man that God sent to save the world. It’s not what it means. It’s the acrostic DART—

depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in. That's what it means when it says believe. We lose a lot of the aggressiveness and the power of this word believe in our English vernacular because we think that believe means you just sit back and give some mental assent. In the Greek, it's really very much of an active verb. It's something that is very, very aggressive, powerful and active. You're depending upon this, you're relying upon this, you're adhering to this, and you're trusting in it.

Notice, it says, "because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." The word "name," any time you see that word name it means the total attributes and characteristics of the person whose name you're evoking. It means all the 28 attributes of God. You believe on all of those. You trust in all of those. You adhere to all of those. You're relying upon all the characteristics. You see, when you praise in Jesus' name, it doesn't mean you just add that on the end of your prayer. It means that my prayer is consistent with all of the attributes, characteristics and nature of the person whose name I just evoked. When you use the name of Jesus, notice, it's saying you're agreeing with everything that the Scripture has said about the person and work of Christ.

As we read on, "¹⁹And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed." That's inappropriate. All the truth did was expose that man. You see, that's what Jesus is saying. When you're associated with the message of his person and his work on the cross, you're going to expose people's sin. Notice Matthew 5:16, "You are the light of the world." You see, the consequence of these Beatitudes taking residency in your life and living a life that is out of this world is you're going to become light. You're going to become salt and light. Salt slows down corruption, and light exposes sin. Right here you see what happens.

"You are the light of the world," Jesus says. He doesn't say you should become light. He doesn't say you might become light. He doesn't say you ought to become light. He said, "Look, when you enter the Kingdom by being poor in spirit, and these characteristics of my style of life, of other-worldliness, take on yours, and you live a kingdom citizen life, the consequence of that is this—you are light." Present tense reality. That's who you are, and the world's going to react to that. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Audience Member: Amen!

You see, brothers, you are light in a dark world. When was the last time you were out walking along a road somewhere on hike and you picked up a rotten log? What do all the maggots do? They come to the light. They say, "Thank you! It's so nice to see the light for a change." What do they do? They scurry, they hide, because they've been exposed. Now I'm not referring to people of this world as maggots. That's not with I mean. But the point is there. When they are exposed to light, Jesus says, their deeds are evil and they don't respond to it positively.

Why do you think we get this idea that the world ought to embrace us? We have this Pollyannish view of Christianity that say, "Oh, we're the best thing since night baseball and people are just going to love us." Jesus says, "No! No! If you live a life that is other-worldly, you're going to be exposing people's evil deeds, and it's not going to be something they're going to like. Therefore, the reaction is this—blessed are those who are persecuted.

Audience Member: Do you think part of the people's turn off, just like what you said with the guy, you know, that's inappropriate, the Scripture, it had to do with a lot of the extremists, [UNCLEAR]?

Oh, I think it has to do with the extremists, certainly, because a lot of things give Christianity a bad

name. No question about that. But I also think it's just the truth. It's the truth that exposes it. It's not the extremists. It's just the truth that the cross is enough. You see, when you're associated with the person and work of Christ, that's an offensive message. It's an offensive message. And yes, there are those in the Christian fold who do not help us by that. But the real issue is truth. It's truth. It's the light is being exposed in the darkness.

Let's read on, ²⁰"For everyone who does wicked things..." loves the Christians. They think you're wonderful. ²⁰"For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

You see, we need to understand what Jesus is saying, guys. You've got to take these Beatitudes seriously. These Beatitudes are not, we're not learning the characteristics of the Kingdom life. Learning does not lead us to knowledge. It leads us to living. It leads us to living. That living ought to lead us the loving. We need to love more effectively because that's whom we represent.

But we need to understand what Jesus is saying here is that when you living according to these other-worldly principles of a kingdom citizen...that's why I find such great comfort in how Jesus began at his first staff meeting. He didn't give them a strategic plan. He didn't say, "Here are our strategies, here are our tactics. Let's go do some male bonding." He didn't do any of that. He said, "Look, I'm going in this direction. Follow me. Now if you want to follow me, you're going to have to do three things," as he later teaches us in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. You have to learn self-denial. You're going to have to learn self-sacrifice. And you're going to have to learn self-submission. That's what it means to be a disciple. "If you want to come after me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me."

Essentially, that's what he's saying in the Beatitudes. He's describing this is how you enter into the kingdom of God and this is how you live as a kingdom citizen. It will take on these attributes in your life when you are regenerated by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. You'll receive all the blessings in heavenly places as Bishop Rogers taught us last week in Ephesians, that wonderful exposition of Ephesians and the blessings that are in the heavenlies that are ours. Those are our kingdom benefits.

You've got to understand that the joy that you have with that, the other side of that is you're going to suffer. That's a paradox for the world. How can you be blessed and be persecuted? You see, the world's not going to understand that. You and I, we need to understand this because our view of God is going to determine how we experience our suffering. You see, if we don't have the right view of God, then we will not have the right view of suffering.

Let's go to Isaiah 55 for a moment.

Audience Member: *Again, when I was in the hospital a week after the transfer, and they had given me three to four doses of narcotics for nerve pain, that had absolutely effect. But listening to John Guest, and remembering the Word, the suffering of Christ, covered over the pain when the work of man failed. And I gotta tell you, they got some powerful [UNCLEAR]. When they stopped...it's just like firing a weapon or shooting [UNCLEAR]...you're trained to hear the [UNCLEAR] in those words. That light will [UNCLEAR].*

Great. Thank you. Go to Isaiah 55. Now the first couple of verses, "Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters," verses one and two describe a person who's living in this world who's an unbeliever. Here's the description, ¹"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ²Why do you spend your

money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.” That’s an invitation, that’s a description of a person who is depressed, it’s a person of this world.

The next thing you begin to see is an invitation to come to him and listen. Then you go to verses 8 and 9. The point of this is you start off in the wilderness, being thirsty, depressed and hungry. Notice down at the very end of the verses, down in verse 12 and 13, “For you shall go out in joy.” There’s a huge contrast between verses 1 and 2 and verses 12 and 13. From 3 to 11 is the invitation to come.

You see, there’s a description of the lost, there’s an invitation to the lost, and then there’s the consequence of coming and believing. Notice the critical verse, transitional verse, is 8 and 9, “⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Now the transition between being there in the wilderness and now coming into the garden, the contrast there in verses 1 and 2 is the wilderness, of being hungry, thirsty and depressed; the contrast is verses 12 and 13 in the garden. Notice how that’s described, “^{12b}the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” There’s quite a contrast between 1 and 2 and verse 12 and 13, and the difference is your view of God in verses 8 and 9. If you don’t have the right view of God, you’ll never go to the garden.

The transition is you’ve got to understand that God’s ways are different than our ways. We should not try to bring God down to our level; we should be taking people up to his level. Don’t bring him down to us. Take people up to him. When somebody says, “Oh, God told me,” quite honestly, I’m very skeptical of that, because you’re basically saying, “My thoughts are just like his.” Do you realize this, brothers? The very best thought that I’ve ever had can’t be compared to how he thinks, and I have the audacity to think that I can think like him. That’s ridiculous! For me to think that my thoughts are like his? You see, that’s an offense to his glory, that’s an offense to his name, to think that I can think like him.

When somebody says to me, “God told, me,” my first thought is, “Can you support that and validate that with Scripture?” If you can, then wonderful. Let’s talk about that. But don’t take this idea that says, “Oh, my thoughts are just like his, and he’s teaching me how to think like him.” Guys, the very best thought, the very best thing you’ve ever done in your life can’t be compared to his thoughts or his ways.

The word “way” there means outward patterns of life. You see, there’s nothing in my life that can be compared to the outward pattern of his life. That’s why we are poor in spirit. That’s why I realize that I’m spiritually bankrupt. That’s why the prayer for us every day ought to be this. Roll out of bed and say, “Have mercy upon me a sinner.” (Luke 6, the publican and the Pharisee)

You see, more and more, as I’ve studied this chapter and wrote this chapter on Legalism, I began to realize that my basic prayer needs to be this, “Have mercy on me a sinner.” That’s who I am. I’m a redeemed sinner—yes. I’m redeemed in the blood of the Lamb, but there’s that dichotomy that we just talked about having joy on one sense, the great exhilaration of being a member and being an M8. But the other side is the mourning over my sin and realizing my thoughts are not like yours. They can’t compare to yours. The outward demonstration and pattern of my life can’t be compared to yours. Who am I to think that I can have an outward pattern of my life that’s going to add anything to the cross? It can’t because the cross is enough.

You see, brothers, the real issue is this. What has Jesus done? What has Jesus done? He’s done it all.

Ted: *What you said is very, that’s a very heavy thought. How do my thoughts*

compare...[UNCLEAR]...the Lord told me to do this, the Lord's leading me to do this. That is such a common expression among Evangelicals. I take your point. You really put the hammer down on that expression. The question I'm having is what are those impressions and urgings that we would normally ascribe to God's leading or God's voice that we get? I'm with you on what you said, I just...

How do we flush that out?

Ted: *That's right.*

Yeah. Well here's what I would say to that...

Audience Member: *May I respond to Ted with what I think a good answer for his question.*

Yeah, please, give me time to think. {LAUGHTER}

Audience Member: *For the last several years, I've been seeing a therapist, and every time I would go to see her, [UNCLEAR] would begin [UNCLEAR] with, "Holy Spirit please come and meet with us. And then she would say, "and help Jack with, and do this with Jack, and so on and so forth." I would sit there and I would go, "How did she know that that day I wanted to talk about, discuss that issue?" and I would ask her. This happened dozens of times. She would know ahead of time what was on my mind. How did she know that? But every time we began a session, we began with a prayer, and she would always begin the prayer with, "Come Holy Spirit and be with us."*

Amen. It's a great place to start. Let me just give you a couple of other suggestions. Go to Colossians 3:12-17, ¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." That introduces the next verse, which is the powerful one in my judgment, ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Now notice, ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing." What's the end result of the Word of God dwelling in you richly? It describes what? Notice what it describes, ^{16b}singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." What is that? That's worship. That's worship.

Hold your finger there. The consequences of letting the Word of God dwell in you richly is worship. Worship is not something you do on the Lord's Day at 11:00 only. Worship is a style of life described in these Beatitudes. It's living an other-worldly life. It's an expression of gratitude because you realize this. The cross is enough. You see, when the Word of God dwells in you richly, the response is gratitude filled worship. You're motivated by gratitude. It's a gratitude attitude.

Hold your finger there and go to Ephesians 5:15-21, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." Greatest verse you'll see on time management. Make the best use of your time. Why? Because the days are evil, and you're light in an evil world, brothers. Make the best use of your time. Be wise. The contrast there is wise versus unwise. It is the unwise person who doesn't use his time wisely. It is the wise person who does use his or her time wisely.

“¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Here is God’s will for you—one of the six verses that tell us what God’s will is. God’s will is the same for you as it is for everybody else. Here’s one of those. ¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

What are the consequences of being led by the spirit, being filled by the spirit? Singing songs, hymns and spiritual songs. It’s exactly the same as letting the Word of God dwell in you richly. How is that you’re going to say, “Holy Spirit come. Lead me today”? How are you going to be led by that? Letting the Word of God dwell in you richly, because the consequences of Colossians 3:16 are identical to the consequences of the definition of what it means to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

If you want to be filled by the Holy Spirit, then let the Word of God dwell in you richly. That’s what we have to do. That’s why I say to somebody when they say, “God told me,” I try to be gracious and say, “Could you show me validation of that movement of the Holy Spirit in your life through the Scripture?” Because I know this—when the person is letting the Word of God dwell in them richly, that’s how the Holy Spirit works. What is the Holy Spirit’s job description? You hear me say that every Friday. Guide us into all truth. That’s what he does. Where is the truth found? Let the Word of God dwell in you richly.

You see, what happens when you and I are filled with the Scripture, letting the Word of God dwell in us richly, it produces a grateful attitude of worship, and that becomes the definition of your lifestyle, and that means you’re now being led by the Holy Spirit. You’re being filled by the Holy Spirit. This word “filled” does not mean a second blessing. It doesn’t mean that after your salvation you now have another inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it’s a second blessing, something you add on to your conversion. It does not mean that. Literally in the Greek it means “be being kept filled.” In other words, you have been filled at your conversion, at your regeneration. There was the filling of the Holy Spirit. Now there are many fillings that go on all the time. Be being in that mindset. Be living a life that you’re be being kept filled. How are you be being kept filled? Let the Word of God dwell in you richly. See how it works?

That’s contrary to what we want to think. We want to think that, “Oh, God just told me.” But you see, how, potentially, potentially dangerous that can be, because all that becomes is a means of justification and a means of excusing what I want to do. “God’s leading me out of my job.” “Why is that?” “Because my boss doesn’t like me.” Well I would say this, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for Christ’s sake, for righteousness’ sake.” Maybe, as we going to see later on next week...do you realize that one of the six things of God’s revealed will for you and me is that suffer persecution?

Let me take you to Peter. Go to 1 Peter 2. Notice the context of what I’m going to read because the context begins in verse 18 of 1 Peter 2, “Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.” That’s your work environment. That tells you, as a kingdom citizen, how you respond at work. Where is the emphasis? It’s on you, not your boss. One of the issues is this—do I have the right view of God, that God is bigger than my boss? Every day I go to work and say to myself as I come through the Fort Pitt tunnel, “God remind me that you’re bigger than my boss.” I need to know that. I need to know that because, “Your thoughts are not like mine, and your ways are not like mine.” I need to realize, according to Romans 13, that all authority is God given. That means that she/he, my boss, has a divine appointment over me today—today—and the issue is not whether or not she’s just or unjust, good or evil. The issue is servants be subject to your masters with all respect. My goal every day is to make my boss look good, show respect and honor, because of the position that that person holds in my life, as a divine appointment.

Notice, “to the good and the gentle, but also to the unjust.” The issue is not your boss. The issue is you. It’s me. You’re light. Blessed are those who are persecuted. You may be persecuted by being light and doing what he says.

Let’s read on, “¹⁹For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.” (1 Peter 2:19) Your boss might treat you unjustly. It’s a gracious thing. Peter says it’s a gracious thing when you’re mindful of God. What is the key phrase there? I’m mindful of God. I’m realizing who I am where I am. Ministry is what? Who are you where you are. I’m mindful of the fact, Lord, that she or he has a divine appointment in me today, and the issue is not whether or not she’s treating me justly or unjustly. The issue is this—how am I responding with respect, because I’m mindful of you. And I know this—that You, my Heavenly Father, are bigger than my boss. You’re bigger than my boss. Something’s going on that I don’t see because my ways are not like yours. My thoughts are not like yours. I don’t have any understanding of what’s going on. But I do know what you want me to be.

“²⁰For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” (1 Peter 2:20-23)

I want you to see two verbs that are different, huge contrast. Verse 18—submit, be subject to—and notice verse 23—entrust. There’s never a verse in the Scripture that tells you that you and I are to entrust ourselves to our boss. We submit to our boss, but entrust ourselves to Christ. You take that act of submitting and you entrust that to Christ and say, “Lord, I don’t know what you’re going to do with this because your ways are not mine, and your thoughts are not mine. I’m going to entrust myself to you, and the way I’m doing that is I’m going to be submissive to her when she treats me unjustly, because you’re doing something that I have no idea what that’s about, but I’m entrusting myself to you.” You never submit to them; you entrust yourself to them. You entrust yourself to Christ, but you submit to the authority. You see the contrast?

1 Peter 2:24, “²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. 1 Peter 2:24b, “By his wounds you have been healed.”

Go to 1 Peter 4:12, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. It’s not strange that you’re being treated unjustly at work. That’s not strange. The world can’t do anything other than that. That’s all they can do.

1 Peter 4:13-14a, “¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ^{14a}If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed.” You’re happy in spite of circumstances. That’s inappropriate. That moment, because of the grace and mercy of God, I was happy in spite of circumstances. That’s not normal. That’s not normal. That is out of this world. That’s kingdom living. That’s transformation.

1 Peter 4:14b, “because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” Now did I enjoy that comment when he said it? Of course not. But I had to remind myself of this, “Be mindful of God. Your ways, at this very moment, Lord, are not like mine. Your thoughts are not like mine. I need to be mindful of you, and I need to entrust what he just said to you in my response.” All my response was, “Thank you for

your honesty.” That’s all I ever said. Then I went on and did what I was going to do. Then he blasted me afterwards.

1 Peter 4:15-18, “¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

Where’s it going to start? Judgment is going to start where? Not in the world. It’s going to start right here in this room. It’s going to start right here at the Brave Men on Friday morning. That’s where it’s going to start.

Now notice this—summary statement, “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will.” (1 Peter 4:19a) Brothers, one of God’s will for you in this chair today, and me standing in front you, is this—we’re to suffer. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God. You see, part of God’s will for you is to suffer. And yet, what do we say? God’s leading me to get out of my job because I’m suffering. Well brothers, you might be right in the middle of where God wants you to be because ministry is who you are where you are. Do you see that?

Now I’m not saying we go look for suffering. That’s not what I’m saying. Please understand that. I’m not saying...remember what the verse said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,” not for stupidity or for ignorance. So you can’t say, “I’m just going to do something stupid. I’m suffering.” That’s not what we’re saying.

“Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will,” notice the verb. What’s the verb? Entrust. “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing God.” What did Jesus do when he was persecuted? He entrusted himself to his Father. What do you and I do when we’re persecuted? We entrust ourselves to our Father. It’s exactly the model that Jesus gave us. Yes, we submit to our authorities, even when they’re just and unjust. But we take that act of submission, of being subject to our authority who has a divine appointment in our life, we take that act and we say, “Lord, I’m taking my actions, my thought patterns, and I’m entrusting that to you because your ways are not like mine, and your thoughts are not like mine. You’re going to do something with that because you’re sovereign, and I’m a kingdom citizen, and you have me be light in this world. I have no idea what you’re going to do with this, but the one thing I’m going to do is I’m going to entrust my respect for her/him to you and allow you to do something with it, and I’m going to be an aggressive responder and respond when it happens.”

You don’t have to figure out the results. You don’t have to be an answer person. Jesus’s example is this. When he was reviled and persecuted and beaten, he didn’t come back at them. He entrusted his submission to that to his Father. Now this is all introduction for our Beatitudes. We’ll begin to explore it next week. You’ve got to understand that Jesus says this, “When you live according to these Beatitudes, you’re going to suffer,” because it’s going to be God’s will for you. Remember this—if that happens and you’re being persecuted for righteousness’ sake, representing the person and work of Christ and the fact that the cross is enough, you’re blessed. You’ll be happy in spite of circumstances. Can the world understand that? Absolutely no. Do I understand it? Absolutely no. But I’m entrusting it. I’m entrusting it because I’m believing what the Scripture says. Blessed are those who are persecuted. We’ll find out what that means next week.

Let’s pray. Father, it’s overwhelming the paradoxes that exist for a believer in this world. You tell us that we’re going to be persecuted because it’s your will, and at the same time, you tell us we’re going to

be happy about it. Now Lord, that's beyond our human comprehension, but that's alright because we know this. Your ways are not like ours and our thoughts are not like yours, and gratefully, yours are not like ours. So Father, we have to take and trust those paradoxes that exist and we have to entrust them to you as the God and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. We entrust that to you that what you ordain, the Son has accomplished, the Holy Spirit will apply. Father, help us be being kept filled by the Holy Spirit day by day as we let the Word of God dwell in us richly, so that our response of a style of life will be a style of grateful gratitude and motivated worship. And may that be what the world sees, for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!