

BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN

Message 18

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

INTRO: We have come to the concluding verses on the beatitudes. In our last message we answered this major question: Are verses 10-12 two beatitudes or one? Verse 10 says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Verses 11-12 then say, "Blessed are you when they shall revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets which were before you."

I have come to the same conclusion as numerous others, and that is that verses 10-11 are not a beatitude in the same sense as the other eight passages that begin with the word 'Blessed'. We find in verses 10-11, for the first time, the disciples addressed in particular and they are instructed on what to do when they are persecuted for righteousness sake.

In our last message we noted this difference between these verses and the previous eight. The first says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." The second, "Blessed are they that mourn..." The third, "Blessed are the meek..." The fourth, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness..." The fifth, "Blessed are the merciful..." The sixth, "Blessed are the pure in heart..." The seventh, "Blessed are the peacemakers..." The eighth, "Blessed are the persecuted..." And now notice this difference, "Blessed are you..."

And I remind us again that He said, "Blessed are you when," not if, "they persecute you." And again, we need to be reminded that Jesus said that this persecution was on account of righteousness. He is not speaking here of all other reasons why one may be persecuted. It is specifically for living right.

So we come to point ten in this series, which I have called simply the conclusion: Blessed are you.

X. THE CONCLUSION - BLESSED ARE YOU

A. The time you are blessed

1. When you are reviled

Now I want you to notice when Jesus said to the disciples that they had entered the sphere of those especially blessed by God. Notice that it is first,

'when they shall revile you.' You see, the blessed person here is the one who is reviled, not the reviler. Remember that this reviling is for righteousness' sake.

Let me make a point here that our grammar students will understand. I would have liked to give them this verse to diagram and indicate if the words 'for My sake' apply to all three clauses, or only the last one? I think it applies to all three and it could then be read like this: Blessed are you when they revile you for my sake, and persecute you for My sake, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake."

Let me further make this comment, to be reviled for Jesus' sake is to be reviled for living righteously because you believe in Him and obey Him. It is not simply because you name yourself a Christian. It is because you are living right.

Now note the word to revile. To revile is to reproach someone or to come down on them with speech. One can reproach someone rightly or wrongly. Matthew 11:20 says, "Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent..." The word 'to rebuke' is the same as the word translated 'to revile' in our passage. Mark 16:14 says, "Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen." So the word is to reproach or reprimand, to verbally say negative things.

On the other hand it can be used in a bad sense like in our passage. In Matthew 27 (read 38-44). Verse 39 says that those who passed by Him blasphemed Him. And verse 44 says those crucified with Him also reviled Him saying the same thing. There is our word. So, what does this passage mean when it says they blasphemed Him or reviled Him? It means they said things like this, "Hah! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" Or, "Bah, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the king of Israel, let Him come down from the cross and we will believe." "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Again, as they reviled Him they said, "Let the Christ, the

King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."

2. When you are persecuted

So, when a person is reviled for righteousness' sake, it is to be spoken of negatively. But, not only would the disciples be blessed when people would revile them for Jesus' sake, they would be blessed when they would be persecuted for His sake. I mentioned to you in a message that John Leoffler speaks of formal and informal persecution. Formal persecution is when laws are passed that require one to disobey God and such like. Informal persecution is when society in general dislikes some they view as sub groups. For example, some church some family etc..

Let me give you an example of formal persecution, since it may well be coming upon us soon. Recently I was sent a link by one of our folk to an article titled: "Dear Churches in America: Prepare to Be Treated Like 1st Century Christians in Rome." It was written by Wallace Henley dated April 24, 2015. He writes:

The United States Supreme Court may soon liberate the biblically conservative church from old "prejudices" that should have long ago been "jettisoned," (dropped overboard) forcing it into "rightly bowing to the enlightenments of modernity," in the words of a recent writer in The New York Times.

Homosexuality must be removed from the "sin list" and, according to an MSNBC commentator, traditional marriage proponents must be forced "to do things they don't want to do." Sadly, this crusade will be like the Marxist "liberation" movements that promised to "free" people, but really were about control and suppression.

The culmination may come as the Supreme Court hears oral arguments on same-sex marriage cases beginning April 28. By July 1 the Court possibly will issue an official ruling regarding the constitutional right to homosexual marriage.

The Court's decision may impact the form of biblically based churches dramatically. Churches that hold to a strict and conservative interpretation of the Bible's teaching about gender and marriage may find themselves "Romanized".

The elites of first century Rome would not allow the church an institutional presence in society. "The Christian churches were associations which were not legally authorized, and the Roman authorities, always suspicious of organizations which might prove seditious, regarded them with jaundiced eye," writes Kenneth Scott LaTourette.

In our time this means local churches that do not embrace same-sex marriage would find their legal status shaky or non-existent, as well as parachurch groups, conservative Christian colleges, church-based humanitarian agencies, and all other religious institutions - Christian and otherwise - supporting the traditional view of marriage.

Without state-recognized corporate status everything from mortgages and building permits to employment and hiring practices is threatened - all of them essential for institutional function. End quote.

David Cloud's Friday Church News says that a Christian baker in Oregon state was fined \$135,000.00 which was to be given to the lesbian couple for emotional damages after refusing to bake a wedding cake for them (May 8, 2015). But in Colorado, officials ruled in favor of a baker who refused to bake two Bible shaped cakes that had messages against homosexuality (May 15:2015). Cloud also reports that a mainstream journalist, Charles Moore has said that, and I quote, "the holding of socially conservative views is now 'teetering on the edge of criminality'" (May, 2015).

That is formal persecution and it appears the writing is on the wall for the future, and it may not be long. Informal persecution is when society in general dislikes some sub groups. And when informal

persecution happens, especially by professing Christians, or possibly even miss-led believers, they think what they are doing is for Jesus' sake. And for those who suffer under that, sometimes it is hard to see through all the fog. Informal persecution is much more difficult to recognize. Let me remind you of what Paul Washer said, "Down through history you have a wrong idea of martyrdom and persecution. You think that these men were persecuted and martyred for their sincere faith in Jesus Christ. That WAS the real reason, but no one heard that publicly."

Let me ask you, what do you hear in the community about this church? And is it true? Does the truth get told publically? Listen to our community. Does anybody hear publically what really happened. I had a call recently enquiring about some things this person had been told by one of the folk directly involved. It is amazing what professing Christians tell other people about what happened. People in the community will likely never know the truth about the wickedness that took place.

One of my family members who has gone through much family sorrow and has stood alone in his family told me this past week, "I am glad for all we've gone through. I can see things so much clearer now."

Paul Washer then went on like this, "They were martyred and they were persecuted as enemies of the state, as child molesters, as bigots, as narrow minded stupid people who had fallen for a ruses and could contribute nothing to society. Your suffering will not be noble, so your mind must be filled with the Word of God when all people persecute you and turn on you."

What is going around in the community about us, is not what really happened. As a matter of fact, if what is going around about us was true, they should be excommunicating us. I spoke with one of our folk recently and I said, "We are really painted black in the community." And he said, "Yes, very black." The phone call I got recently told me the kind of things that are being said, and I happen to know first hand that some of those things are not true at all, and some are half truths which are as damaging as the lies.

Then Paul Washer said this, "And if the Spirit of God and common grace pulls back you (will) see even your

children and your grandchildren tossing in the lot that you should die." We might have found that hard to believe some years ago, but not any more.

In John 15 Jesus foretold that persecution would happen and then in chapter 16 He said this, "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service." They will put you out of the synagogues. What is happening here? This is informal religious persecution. And those who do this persecuting are fully persuaded they are doing right. As a matter of fact, Jesus said it would get so bad, that those who do such things will kill and think they are doing God a service.

That has happened in the past to our forefathers in the 1500's. It is happening right now to some extent, and we have experienced some of that, and it will happen again in the future. I mentioned to you in another message something that I found shocking almost beyond description. One of the most ungodly church meetings I have ever attended, was viewed by others there as having taken place by the grace of God. That is staggering.

3. When you are lied about

So, Jesus said, "You will be reviled. They will reproach you with words for My sake." And then He said, "They will persecute you." In the last message I said you could translate that as 'pursue cute'. The only thing is there is nothing cute about it. Last, Jesus said to the disciples, "Blessed are you when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake."

There is a warning for us here. Sometimes we hear things about others and we say, "Do you know what so and so did?" But we should not say that unless we know what so and so really did. We should say rather, "I have heard that so and so did thus and such." There are many people in the community who lie about us or others, but they are not knowingly lying. They are passing on as truth that which others have told them.

Now let me remind us, if we pass on what others have told us as truth, and it is not the truth, we are lying. I had a phone call recently about what I and my family had done and I said, "I think you must have

misunderstood that. You better check that out. But if you did not misunderstand, then what you were told is a lie."

Let me say here once more, how horrible a sin lying is. Let me tell you how used to lying we are. I said in a church meeting not long ago, "If I had told you that so and so committed adultery three times, you would be up in arms, now I have told you that so and so lied to me three times and it makes no difference." One of the ten commandments says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Do you know what kind of company liars keeps? In the ten commandments it keeps company with idolatry and adultery and a host of other such sins.

Listen to John 8:44. Jesus said to the religious Jews, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." And Jesus said to them the devil is your father because you too are liars.

Revelation 21 speaks of the New Jerusalem. And in verse 27 it says, "But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Did you know that liars do not have their names in the Lamb's book of life? Neither adulterers nor fornicators etc... etc... Revelation 22:15 speaking of this same city says, "But outside are dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie."

Now our passage says that when people say evil things about us that are not true for Christ's sake, that is for righteousness sake, then we are in a blessed state. Now let me tell you what happens to us naturally when people say false things about us. We want to be hurt. Some time ago I heard a person say about another who had done something or said something bad about them and they said, "That hurt me so much." And suddenly I thought, "Oh my. You have a long way to go." When we are hurt about things like that, we are carnal. We have not been to the cross on that.

Now I want to remind you once more of what it means to be blessed. You see, here it says we are blessed if we

are reviled, or if we are persecuted, or if people say evil things about us falsely for righteousness' sake. And in my understanding of this word blessed, it means 'to be envied' is such a person. Do you envy people like that? Is that an enviable state to you?

B. The instruction to the blessed

1. The twofold content of this instruction

So, Jesus said to His disciples, "Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake." But He did not leave it at that. He then went on to instruct them on what to do when this happened. The first thing He said is, "Rejoice!"

The original word translated rejoice is *chairō*. We get names like Grace, or Charisa, or Chara from this word. The original word to rejoice is *chairō*. Grace is *Charis*. Thanksgiving is *eucharistēo*. All three have as their root word the word *char*. For our young people, that is not c-a-r. It is c-h-a-r. Colin Brown says that, "words formed from the Greek root *char* indicate things which produce well-being..." True rejoicing will produce well being. Seeking revenge will bring bitterness.

But how can one rejoice without faking it? Scripture exhorts us to rejoice evermore. How do you do that when life's circumstances seem to call for mourning rather than rejoicing? I read a newsletter by Caryl Matriciana recently. I think she had just completed the third DVD in the series, "Wide Is The Gate". Let me recommend those DVDs to you. She then had a near fatal bicycle accident, but survived that. Then she had knee surgery and weeks of physical therapy. Then, three months after the accident she was diagnosed with breast cancer and this has spread all over now. And in her newsletter she writes, "The Person of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession (2 Corinthians 1:22), who is the Revealer of all Divine Truth through the Scriptures (John 14:26 & 16: 13), has instructed us through the Word to 'count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience...' and '...rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings...' (James 1; 1 Peter 4:13)."

Now I ask you, when you have experiences like that within a few months of your life, how do you rejoice? And when you live right and you are reviled and persecuted and lied about, how do you rejoice? Let me tell you what wants to happen to us when we experience reviling or persecution or people lie about us and we are doing right. We want to become angry. We want to take revenge. We want to ring a few necks. How do I know that? But all such actions will tend to lead us to bitterness. Those are the ways of handling such things in the natural. But here comes the divine instruction, "Rejoice!" Can you believe that? How can one rejoice when you want to ring a neck or two?

But, we are told to rejoice! You see, when we rejoice, that will tend to bring well being to our souls. Do you know how we know if we are experiencing the grace of God? Paul desired for people to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do you know if you are growing in grace, charis? Well, if you are rejoicing, charis; and if you are a thankful Christian, eucharisteo, that is a sign of growing in grace, charis.

And if you are persecuted for righteousness sake, and you are down in the dumps, you will say, "How am I to rejoice? What have I to rejoice about? What have I to rejoice in? If I were to rejoice, I would be a fake." Well, Jesus will give us the answer to that shortly.

The second thing Jesus instructs persecuted Christians who are suffering for righteousness sake to, is to be exceeding glad! Can you believe that? Be exceeding glad when you are doing right and people are reviling you for my sake? Be exceeding glad because you are being persecuted for My sake? Be exceeding glad because people are lying about you. Really? How? Why? For what reason? Well, Jesus knows it is important to answer that question, and He will tell us yet.

Now, the word to 'be exceedingly glad' is *agaliao*. It comes from two words, the word *agan*, meaning much, and from *hallomai*. This word is used only three times in the NT and has been translated 'to leap' twice and once 'to spring up'. It is used of water that gushes up.

Let me give you the picture. On September 2, 1972, in the Montreal Forum, a hockey series began before 18,818 fans. I was not into hockey then but watched the games years later. It was a very tough series and the

Russians pulled every trick in the book. And at the end of the first game, it was 7-2 for Russia. In Russia they celebrated until the early hours of the morning. Then Canada won 4-1. Then a 4-4 tie. Now, everybody had been sure Canada would easily win Russia and now the Canadian fans began to boo team Canada.

The series then moved to Russia and the Russians won 5-3, and they won the next game by a score of 5-4. Russia has 3 games and Canada has one game. Canada now has to win three games in a row and you can guess with the controversial reffing and dirty tricks by Russia, and a bad slash by the Canadians that things are pretty up-tight. Then came game six and Canada's Paul Hendersen scored the winning goal. In the second to last game Paul Hendersen once more scored Canada's winning goal.

And then came game eight. This is the final game. It is the last minute of play. The series is tied at three games each and this last game is tied at two goals each and tension in the rink and all over the world, and especially in Russia and Canada, and with Canada taking a number of questionable penalties, emotions are at a breaking point. And now, with one minute left to play, Paul Henderson, who has scored the game winners in the last two games gets on the ice. And now with about 40 seconds left in the game, he comes streaking down the ice, and with just 34 seconds left on the clock, he puts the puck in the Russian net! Now I'll tell you what happened all across Canada. There was rejoicing! Canadians were exceeding glad! All over the country, Canadians who had been sitting on the edge of their seats, lifted clear out of them in ecstatic joy. And that is the picture of our text. But in our text it is for something eternal, not some temporary, earthly hockey game. You see, here in our text, it says that is what people are to do who reviled and persecuted and lied about for the Lord's sake!

But you say, "The Canadians had something to jump up about. If I did that when I was persecuted, what could induce me to jump up like that? I would have to put it on. I would have to be unreal. I'd have to be a hypocrite. What happens to me is I want to crawl in a hole somewhere when these things happen to me. Well, some of you have experienced these things to quite a large extent." Maybe you say, "You know, that sounds good. But I would have to fake it." Well, it is not that I don't know what you are talking about.

But let me tell you something. It is not too late yet to obey this Scripture. We are still alive. "But", you say, "How can you really do this? How can you do it without putting on?" Well, Jesus will now tell us what we must believe, and if we believe it, it will induce us to jump for joy. He knows how important it is that we know about this, so He told us. And so, we look lastly in this series at Jesus' twofold reason for the instruction to rejoice and be exceeding glad. This will also tell us how to obey this command to rejoice, and what it is that will induce us to be exceeding glad.

2. The twofold reason for this instruction

Look again now at verse 11, "Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad..." Why? Well, here is the first reason. "For great is your reward in heaven." Let me tell you what our problem is. When the things of this text happen to us, we have our eyes here on earth. That is our problem. As a matter of fact, we do not even think of what is happening in heaven.

I have told you that some day I want to do a message called, "Your First Day In Heaven." But I am afraid to do that message. I am afraid that for many, many Christians it will not be anything like we think it will be. Many, many Christians will find a very small pile of rewards and many will lose a whole pile of rewards. Many, many Christians will be there that will need a lot of cleaning up before they get a white robe. For many there will be great loss.

Now let me ask you a question, and I am not trying to embarrass your intelligence. How many of you know what a bank account is? How many of you know what makes your bank account go up or down? All right, you are all good Mennonites. Now, let me see if you are also good Christians. How many of you know what a reward account in heaven is? And how many of you know what makes it go up or down? How many of you know what makes it go up very fast?

Did you know that there are rewards in heaven for all kinds of righteousness? Did you know that Jesus said we are to build big reward accounts in heaven? You don't have to leave the sermon on the Mt. to learn this. Look at Matthew chapter 6 (read 19-20). Notice that this is

not a suggestion, it is a command. And now, let me ask you, how do you make this account go up?

Look at Matthew 5:46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" Now do you know what the implications are? If you love those who don't love you, now you are laying up a reward.

Then look at Matthew 6:1, "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven." A charitable deed is a deed of love. That is love in the Biblical sense of it. There are all kinds of sinners who do charitable deeds, but there are no rewards for them. But Christians who do truly godly charitable deeds, will receive a reward in heaven. What will it be like to reach heaven and receive a reward? It will outshine by millions of miles some temporary glory like scoring a final goal in a big hockey game.

Look at Matthew 6:2, "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."

Now look at 6:5, "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." You see, there is a reward for truly godly prayer! But you lose it if you do it to be seen by others. That is what makes your account go down.

Now look at 6:16, "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." So, here in a few verses we have a number of different kinds of rewards for things if they are done right.

Now go back to our text. Let me show you something. It says if people revile you, and persecute you and lie about you for His sake, now notice carefully, it says, GREAT is your reward in heaven! That is how you make that account go up fast. You see, our problem in such circumstances is we have our eyes fixed on things here and now. If we would know our Bibles and fix our eyes

on heaven, we will be able to rejoice and be exceeding glad without having to put it on. Go to Hebrews 12 (read 1-4).

What do you think it is like in heaven when people suffer for Jesus' sake. Did you know that it says that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God in glory! Did you know that when Stephen was stoned for righteousness' sake, "Jesus gave him a standing ovation?" Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right of of God when as he died (Acts 7:56).

Now I ask you, when somebody says false things about you, they abuse you, they revile and persecute you; what do you feel like doing? But if our text is correct, and we have no reason to doubt it, and if we believed it, what would we feel like doing?

Let me draw a picture for you. You have just been reviled, or persecuted or lied about for Jesus' sake. And you are dejected. But you did not see what happened in heaven. So before I go further, let me tell you something else. When the wicked dead are raised at the end of the millennium, they are judged. And the book of Life is opened. Now, you see, if you are truly born again, your name is in the book of Life. And then it says the books, plural, were opened and from those books the wicked were judged according to what they had done. Now, there is no reason not to believe that when Christians will be judged, the books will be opened. And all their rewards and loss of rewards will be recorded in those books.

And now, let me finish the picture I was drawing for you. You have been reviled, or persecuted, or lied about. And the book with your rewards is opened to the right page, and a huge reward is recorded. Let me ask you, if you could see that happen, what would you do? And if you saw that, do you think you would want to take revenge on the one that lied about you? If you did, the reward would be erased. I venture to guess that you and I would always want to make very sure such things happened to us for righteousness' sake. And I venture to guess revenge would be the last thing on our minds. As a matter of fact, we would want to make very sure it was for righteousness' sake.

Take our Mennonite forefathers. They were hunted. They were persecuted. They were executed for their faith in Christ. Every time they experienced this, and it was

from the Church that claims to be the only true church; their rewards were recorded. May I ask, what would revenge have done to them? And let me ask you this: What size of reward do you think God will give to those who die for the Lord's sake?

Listen to Hebrews 11:24-26, "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ (reviling, persecution, lied about for His sake) greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward." How did Moses do it when he could have had all the glories of Egypt? He kept his eye on heaven!

Is our problem not that we have our eyes fixed on things below, when we should have them fixed on glory? That is what Christ did. And for the joy set before Him He endured the cross.

But that is not all Jesus had to say to our present discussion. He first said, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." And then He gave us one reason. It was this: great is your reward in heaven. But He gave another reason to rejoice and be exceeding glad. He said, "For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Why were the prophets persecuted? For righteousness' sake. Who persecuted them? Those who claimed to be righteous!

Now I want you to see this. When we are reviled or persecuted or lied about for Christ's sake, then God puts us in the class of the prophets of the OT! Oh, what a difference it makes to us in this life with whom we are identified. I see these black robed preachers of our community sometimes, and say there is a funeral. And they stand out like the elite. And then comes faspa, the lunch, and there is a table nobody else can sit. Oh, how they like to be identified and set a dozen notches or so above the rest.

But, those who experience what our text is talking about, are identified, not with a table full of pastors, but with the prophets of the OT! These prophets were God's mouthpiece. God chose them for a very important task, but it had righteousness in it and it cost many of them their lives. They were great men of God.

Do you know how much stock we place in identification with important people? I have a grand-daughter whose name is Alice. And recently when prince William and his wife Kate had a daughter, one of the names they considered, was my grand-daughter's name. I called Prince William and told him it was not a good idea because people might confuse my daughter with his. Well, like Guy Dowd, US teacher of the year some time ago, said, "That's a lie." I have a grand-son, he is named after one of the prophets of the OT. Wow! Sometimes a son is named after some parent or grand-parent or some great-grand parent, and they are honored to be identified with that person by name.

But I want to tell you something. When Christians are reviled or persecuted or lied about for Christ's sake, they have entered the camp of the prophets of God. They have something in common with Daniel; with Jeremiah; with Ezekiel; with Isaiah, with John the Baptist. In man's eyes, they are scum. In God's eyes, they have entered a very special class of people. They have become identified with them by experience.

Oh, may God open our eyes to heaven and give us grace to keep them there!

CONCL: Well, we bring to a conclusion this series on the beatitudes. We have taken a long look at the man heaven calls the blessed man. Our discussion in the last three messages has been that of persecution. John MacArthur has written this: "John Chrysostom, a godly leader in the fourth-century church preached so strongly against sin that he offended the unscrupulous Empress Eudoxia as well as many church officials. When summoned before Emperor Arcadius, Chrysostom was threatened with banishment if he did not cease his uncompromising preaching. His response was, "Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father's house." "Then I will slay you," Arcadius said. "Nay, but you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God," came the answer. "Your treasures will be confiscated" was the next threat, to which John replied, "Sire, that cannot be, either. My treasures are in heaven, where none can break through and steal." "Then I will drive you from man, and you will have no friends left!" was the final, desperate warning. "That you cannot do, either," answered John, "for I have a Friend in heaven who has said, I will never leave you or forsake you.'" Chrysostom was indeed banished, first to Armenia and then farther away to Pityus on the Black Sea, to which he never arrived because he died on the way. But neither his banishment nor his death disproved or diminished his claims. The things

that he valued most highly not even an emperor could take from him."

What are we to do when we are reviled? What are we to do when we are persecuted? What are we to do when people tell lies about us, who tell others, who tell others? Rejoice! It is better than some temporary moment of glory! Exult. Rise up and shout, "Praise the Lord." Oh, may God open our eyes to heaven and give us grace to keep them there!