



Lighthouse Beacon

New Mexico Lighthouses - October 2003

Are You A Blessing To Your World?

This month we finish our study on the eighth Beatitude found in Matthew 5:10-12. Last month we looked at how the persecution of Christians has been dramatically increasing worldwide during the last century. And how, even in the United States, there is growing pressure brought against anything to do with the worship or even acknowledgement of Christ.

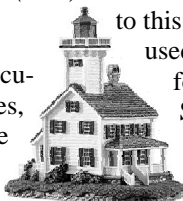
Today we consider Our Blessing and Our Response to this growing threat. The main point that we must always remember is that the powers of darkness are not coming against us, but He who is in us. And He who is in us is greater than [those] who are in this world! Rejoice as you are challenged or persecuted for your faith—through you, He will overcome. *Let Him Shine!*—KC

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Matthew 5:10-12 (NAS)

What is our blessing?

Our blessing for enduring persecution is, according to these scriptures, a two-fold gift. The first part of the blessing says *“for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* That statement means *right now, right here*. This concept was repeated by Jesus several times including Matthew 4:17 *“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,’”* and in Luke 11:20 *“But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”* From the moment the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism, the Kingdom of Heaven began to be re-



vealed here on earth. Ever since that time, Satan has tried to thwart the influence of that Kingdom and make it subject to his authority. Because Christ is alive in us, we represent the Kingdom of Heaven. Furthermore, it is the Kingdom of Heaven, *manifest in Christians*, that has been a significant influence in this world for the last 2,000 years. Even during the most difficult persecutions, Christianity has been the source of Hope to this world. And Christians have been used by Him as nations have been founded and guided by God’s Holy Spirit working through the hearts and lives of believers. However, when we examine the current hostility towards Christianity generated by the courts, the media and many influential leaders, we must wonder if the time of Kingdom influence is drawing to a close in the USA. Ironically, Christians in the 21st century could be drawing closer to God, experiencing more of His Kingdom revealed in their personal lives, while at the same time finding themselves with less opportunity to share that Kingdom with the increasingly secular world around them.

“Let your light shine so that others may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven.” Matthew 5:16

...you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light —Eph. 5:8

The second part of the blessing says “for your reward in heaven is great.” This is the eternal aspect of the blessing. We only see the Kingdom vaguely here on earth, through His acts of love and divine intervention. But one day our reward for persevering —battling our flesh and the pressures of a sinful world— will be the full revelation of His Kingdom. Rewards beyond description await those who overcome, those who will not turn from Him, even in the face of persecution.

But our ability to possess the Kingdom of Heaven is direct result of our being possessed by Jesus. Only those who are indwelt by Him can receive the blessing. For them, the Kingdom has already come, and the Kingdom is coming. And they possess the Light of the Kingdom, to shine in this world, and the next.

What is our response?

If we are given the privilege of persecution, how are we to respond? In Matthew 5:44-45 Jesus tells us: *“But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven.”* By the power of Jesus in us we must pray for those who persecute us. Paul says in Romans 12:14 *“If people persecute you because you are a Christian, don’t curse them; pray that God will bless them.”* Dear Lighthouses, by His grace, we can ask God to bless those who would try to destroy us.

The result of our desire to obey Christ will bring us great reward, but it may also bring a surprising change for our persecutors. Paul reminds us of how God can change a heart when he speaks about himself in Galatians 1:23-24 *“All they knew was that people were saying, ‘The one who used to persecute us now preaches the very faith he tried to destroy!’ And they gave glory to God because of me.”* A reformed persecutor has a powerful testimony and there are many of them chronicled throughout history.

So remember the next time you face persecution for your faith, whether a small offense or potentially deadly, ask Jesus to help you face the opportunity with His strength and courage. Ask Him to help you pray for those who hate you, because they really despise the One who dwells in you. And if persecution increases, remember the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:7-9 *“But this precious treasure—this light and power that now shine within us—is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don’t give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going.”* Fellow members of the Kingdom of Heaven . . . *let Him shine!*

Invite Jesus to Your Christmas Party!

LightShine Ministries has materials available (Training Manual and Training Videos) that will lead you step by step through the process of hosting a non-offensive, but Christ glorifying Christmas Party that will introduce others to the true “reason for the season.” (Even if you are not hosting but simply attending someone else’s party, there are many ideas here that can help you bear a gentle witness of Him.) If you would like to learn more about hosting a Christmas Party that lets Jesus shine in your home for family, neighbors, or friends, contact LightShine Ministries at 293-0743!