

Group/Individual Study

Series: "Bless this Home" - Blessed are you when persecuted

Passages: Matt 5:10-12

REFLECT on the message heard Sunday, 5/21

1. Read Matthew 5:10-12. What types of persecution do you think the early Christians who originally read these words were facing? How do you think these words of Jesus strengthened and encouraged them? Why?
2. What parts of the world would you imagine still present similar types and levels of persecution for Christ followers as those earliest Christians experienced 2000 years ago? Do you know any believers in those parts of the world? Take some time to pray for them.
3. In secularized society in the US or in the West, what does persecution, pushback, or ridicule look like today? Where have you personally experienced it? What do you see in how Jesus responded to people who reacted negatively to Him that might inform the way He might have us respond in our day?
4. Given that our series is called "Bless This Home," where do you feel the battle between cultural values around us and the "Jesus-values" you'd like to see influencing your family? Your home? Where do you feel like you are doing a good job living Jesus' way in spite of the pressure? Where do you feel like the world is pressing you into its mold instead of Jesus' mold? How would you like prayer for that?
5. Gary normalized persecution since the Bible warns us and promises us that it will come if we follow Jesus. He urged us to: 1) expect it; 2) endure it; and 3) embrace it. Which of these three seems to be the one you most need to internalize? Why?
6. We Christians sometimes get unjust persecution just because people are reacting against the Jesus we love. Other times people react negatively to Christians because we aren't living out the love and truth of Jesus very well. They sense a disconnect between the Jesus we follow and the ways we are living. Give examples of getting "persecuted for the right things." Give examples of getting a negative reaction because of not living congruently with the way of Jesus. Pray that you can live so that you are only persecuted for the right things.