

Memory Verse:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” – Matthew 5:10

Big Idea:

In our sterilized view of Christianity in America, we often think that once we get saved, everything should work out for us. In fact, if we have any problems, we are shocked. However, most Christians throughout history have known that problems and persecution don't disappear when we come to Christ, but in many ways, they begin. God actually promises us that we will be persecuted.

We live in a lost world. We live in a world that is ruled by an anti-Christ spirit. We live in a dark world. If we live in a dark world, then the darkness will do its best to extinguish the light. If we live in a world that is against Christ, then we who are in Christ don't fit in and will be persecuted. Let's be clear where persecution comes from. It comes from Satan, not from people. “We battle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of darkness.”

We can't be afraid of the persecution. We can't allow the darkness to stop us from bringing the light. We can't allow the Devil to control us. We must be Beatitude people. We must bring righteousness. We must share the love of Christ with this world. That is our mission. That is our purpose. That is our calling. And God promises us that when we live out our calling we will be rewarded greatly. We inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Eternity with our Creator and our Lord – joy overflowing!

Scripture and Discussion Questions: *Read the Bible passage(s) and discuss the questions.*

1. **Matthew 5:10-12** – Who are the persecuted? Have you ever had a time when you knew that you should have stood up for righteousness but you kept quiet? Think back and figure out what kept you from speaking up. Exactly what were you afraid of? What lie did you believe? Share a time when you were persecuted because of righteousness. Is it worth it to suffer for the Lord?
2. **Ephesians 6:12** – When persecution or suffering hits your life, what is the first thing you usually do? Cry? Eat? Lash out? Call a Friend? Pray? Why do you think that is your first response? Where does the persecution come from? With this in mind, how should we battle against persecution?
3. **John 15:18-21** – What kind of things does the world do that we should avoid? Why is it hard to say no to these things? Do you feel that you are a spiritually mature Christian by the standards Jesus set in the Beatitudes? Why or why not? What areas of Christian spiritual growth do you know that you still need to work on? Seek the Lord's direction, and invite Him to guide your growth in these areas.

Kids Corner:

Read the story of how Nicodemus came to Jesus in the dark of night (John 3:1-21). Make it dramatic and maybe even turn out the lights and act it out together. Then ask your children the following questions: (1) Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus in the dark of night? (2) Are you ever afraid to tell people about Jesus? Why? (3) Are you ever afraid to do the right thing because of what others might think about you? (4) Have you ever been teased because you did the right thing? How did that make you feel? (6) Why should you bring Jesus into the light and not hide Him from others? (7) Role play together, practicing how they can bring God's light into situations they might encounter at their age.

Prayer Time:

Have a discussion with God about what you have just studied. Seek the Lord's direction, and invite Him to guide your growth in the Beatitudes. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you boldness and to release you from the spirit of fear. Repent from your sin of putting the opinion of man before the glory of God. Confess that you are a child of God and that you are not ashamed of Him or His gospel.