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**Lesson 9—The Favor of the Persecuted**

***Lesson Notes:***

Matthew 5:10, *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

Congratulations! You’ve made it to the final week of our Beatitudes study. I pray it has been as life-changing for you as it has been for me. I hope you will take some time as a small group, maybe in your next meeting, to reflect on what God has done in your study of these amazing teachings of Jesus.

But we’re not quite done! We still have one final verse to study, and it’s a doozey.

Have someone read Matthew 5:10: *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

***Questions:***

1. You probably already know this but let’s state the obvious: The persecuted of verse 10 are the peacemakers of verse 9. They are persecuted because of their efforts to make peace.
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We’ve talked throughout this study about the connection between the Beatitudes. They’re progressive—each one builds upon the previous one. That is most evident perhaps in the relationship between verses 9 and 10.
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Why do you think Kingdom peacemakers are persecuted?

1. We haven’t talked about this in a while, so let’s recall how Jesus described those in the Beatitudes. He said they were *Blessed*, (*Makarios* in the Greek). What have you learned about *Blessed*? How would you define it?
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2. In this Beatitude, Jesus said that the blessed ones are those who are persecuted. Yes, I know that seems totally crazy.
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The word for *persecuted* is quite graphic and brought vivid images to the minds of Jesus’ hearers. It actually comes from two Greek words which mean *to put to flight*. It means *to pursue, to chase, to run after*, and thus by implication, *to persecute*. The crowd on the hillside that day with Jesus had seen plenty of chasing and running after by their Roman occupiers. Some of them had probably been chased after themselves.
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Persecution is the harassment or punishment of a person or persons because of their religious beliefs. Can you name some examples of people who are persecuted today? Have you ever felt persecuted
3. This is the only verse where Jesus actually explains the Beatitude at length. Have someone read Matthew 5:11-12. What promise did Jesus offer the persecuted in verse 12? Who did he compare them to?
4. Now read John 15:18-21. Remember, Jesus spoke these words just a few hours before his execution. What reasons for persecution did Jesus provide in these verses? How would you feel if you lost your job, had to pay a fine, or even lost your property or freedom because of your faith in Jesus?

Few, if any of us have ever experienced real persecution. Why do you think that is? Do you think our chances of facing persecution are changing? Why or why not?
5. Jesus offered the same promise to the persecuted in verse 10 that he gave to the poor in spirit in verse 3. He said theirs was the Kingdom. Thus, the Beatitudes begin and end with the same promise—we have the Kingdom. Why is that? Why did Jesus open and close these teachings with the same promise? And, what do the persecuted and the poor in spirit have in common?
6. Conclusion. As we put a bow on this study of the Beatitudes, let’s conclude by discussing and even praying about these questions:

First, what do the Beatitudes teach us about the nature of God’s Kingdom?

Second, how will our Kingdom living cause us to stand out in our respective worlds? Immediately following the Beatitudes, Jesus called us salt and light. Why is that?

Third, how close are you today to living a truly Kingdom lifestyle? What would it take for the attributes described in Matthew 5:3-10 to truly describe you?

Complete this thought: If you sat face to face with Jesus and he said, “Now that you better understand my Beatitudes, I want you to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” What would he put in the blank?