




Persecuted Church Message



Message Based Questions to help your personal Study & LifeGroup Discussions

 **EXPLORING IT:** Review the sermon outline and explore the message by using the following Q's which will help you dig in a little deeper and make sure you get the message.

*The mission of the church is to transform the world through the life-changing message of Jesus for the glory of God.
By loving God, loving God's people and then loving the world.*

What comes to mind when you think of persecution?

Whats the most common type of persecution you face?

Take a moment to think about the idea of being persecuted not for being a jerk but for being a lover of people. Have you experienced persecution for loving? Who was it who insulted you? Belittled you? Threatened you? Or actually did some emotional or physical damage? Talk about it.

Why do you think Jesus switched from talking in the third person (Blessed are those...) to spoeking to us directly in the second person(Blessed are you...)?

Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV) says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Talk about these thoughts on gathering together and the idea of creating sacred space in the middle of darkness.

Have you had a friend, mentor, or hero who was light in darkness? Describe them to your friends.

What did you learn about being light? What does being light look like for you? What are your fears or hesitations about being light, giving grace, and loving? As an apprentice of Jesus, what compels you to join his work of light, grace, and love?

If Jesus assumes all his followers will be persecuted, and so many have been, and many still are around the world, what does that say about us? Can we be “real” Christians if we never have to test our faith against the strength of the enemy?

What your favorite verse or inspiration when faced with suckiness or a hard time? Mine is Heb 12:1-3

What did Tertullian—a theologian (ca. 155–225) of the early church—mean when he said that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church”? How does our attitude in times of crisis and trouble influence others? How does my attitude influence me?

How are we blessed by being persecuted for righteousness?


We are blessed when we are persecuted, because persecution means that we have been seen. That we have been heard. That our actions have been taken note of by the powers that be and have made their mark. That we have done something right enough, for a change, to deserve persecution -- something that puts us in the same class as the prophets whom Jesus so honoured for their faith and courage. Something that puts us in the same class as Jesus himself, who suffered persecution.

How do you make the distinction between hope and optimism? Where is there hope in persecution?

Someone said: "Imitate Christ and the world will praise you," "Become Christ-like and the world will hate you." Do you agree with this statement? What does this mean to you in reality?

What does Christ promise us? John 15:18-20

How can we pray for you?

 **PRAY IT:** *Now that you have connected, explored and applied it—it is now time to tap into the power of prayer individually throughout the week as well as corporately praying for one another. Perhaps by sharing the real life challenges and blessings with one another this will help people see what God can do in their lives and will lead them into a plan of action.*

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED (5:10-12)

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Here's another riddle, harder to understand than those that preceded it: the persecuted are the blessed ones. This seems to run in the face of logic!

Yes, Jesus says. Though they are discriminated against and attacked by men, yet God will bless them for remaining true to the righteous living that they stand for. They refuse to back down in the face of threats because they are sold out to God and God will honour them for it. They may have earned the hatred and malice of men, but they have earned the favour of God himself for their courage and he will reward them with possession of the kingdom of heaven.

Sometimes it's difficult to see the glory in persecution. It is bigoted. It is ugly. It is unfair and unfounded. We suffer shame and pain for what we stand for and wonder if it is ultimately worth it. Yes, shouts Jesus, it is worth it. Look at it for what it is: The reward for conformity to the world's shabby political correctness is shame. And the reward for standing for righteousness is an eternal one. There is no comparing the two. How can we doubt? Yet sometimes we do. We begin to understand when we look at our Master who marked the path clearly before us.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:2-3)