

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Happy are the Harassed, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 5:10-12

Code: 2206

I think it's very fitting tonight that we've had a especially good time in fellowship. I think that's something we really need as Christians. We've shared together. We've laughed together. We've just had a great time. That's as it should be.

Somebody was saying to me earlier tonight at our 5:00 prayer time that since she's become a Christian, she finds that she loves to be with Christians so much. She is so enriched in the fellowship of the believers. She so longs for that fellowship that she had never known in her life. When she goes back to fellowshiping with the world, there is something terribly missing, and she expressed the fact that she was afraid, when she was among certain situations with unbelievers. She never thought she'd ever have such a fear, and she really articulated some of the things that are on my heart to say to you tonight.

We rejoice in our fellowship; there is no question about that. It's fantastic. It's rewarding. It's enriching. It's thrilling, and we so need this, but there is another side of it. There is that side that is right outside these great, big stone walls. We have to go home to families where mom or dad or brothers or sisters don't know Jesus Christ or husbands or wives or sons or daughters, or we've got to go to schools where we meet people who don't know Jesus Christ or go to jobs that have the same problem or go back to our neighborhood where we face the reality of unsaved people all around us. And that's the other side, isn't it?

And this should never be a retreat for us. This should always be a fuel stop so that we can go out and boldly see God work through us in the midst of the world. I think that's really what the Lord wants to say to us tonight. Let's go back to Matthew chapter 5 and look again at the Beatitudes. This will be our last message, Lord willing, on the Beatitudes, and I want to just read them to you again, and then we'll move right into what we have to say tonight.

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when He was seated, His disciples came unto Him, and He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the

kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.”

Let's pray together. Father, we come tonight to a very needful passage – very, very hard for us to understand, very difficult for us to fit into such an affluent, materialistic, comfortable culture. God, somehow, help us to see. By Your Spirit, penetrate our hearts, our minds; change our lives. We give You the glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

When we started studying the Beatitudes months and months ago, we told you that the word “blessed” really is “happy,” and the first thing Jesus ever said was that He wanted people to be happy. He didn't come into the world to make people miserable; He came to make them happy, and that's why His first utterance ever recorded for us, the first sermon He ever gave in the book of Matthew, the beginning of the New Testament, the first gospel begins with the word “happy.”

In 1978, February, *Cosmopolitan Magazine* had an article that presented a test to determine how happy people really are, and they surveyed all kinds of people. They asked all kinds of questions. I won't take the time to go through all of the questions. And then, as a result of the testing, they drew a profile of the truly happy person, and these are some of the principles they came up with from their survey:

Really happy people enjoy other people but are not self-sacrificing. Happy people refuse to participate in any negative feelings or emotions. Another one – happy people have a sense of accomplishment based on their own self-sufficiency. How fascinating. The world says, “The really happy person is self-sufficient, positive about himself, confident in his ability, not self-sacrificing in regard to anyone else.”

That sounds exactly like the definition of a Pharisee to me. It is certainly the opposite of Jesus' definition of a happy person. Jesus said a really happy person is not self-sufficient but cowering like a beggar, realizing he has no resources in himself, and he is meek rather than proud. Jesus said a really happy person is not at all positive about himself, but he is mourning over his sinfulness and his isolation from a holy God. Jesus said a really happy person is not confident in his own ability but very aware of his own inability and, in meekness, reaches out. Jesus said a really happy person, rather than being non-self-sacrificing, is the very opposite. He is merciful, and he is a peacemaker, and he will be merciful, and he will be peacemaking if it costs him persecution for the sake of that for which he makes peace and gives mercy.

You see, the world's definition of happiness is not God's definition. Not at all. Nothing could give a more clear picture of the difference between the world's philosophy and divine truth than comparing a test on happiness in our day with God's standards revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ in the

Beatitudes. The world is pursuing happiness on its own terms. And you see in the mad rush of happiness on the world's terms, when it runs into Christianity, there will inevitably be a conflict. There will inevitably be conviction, guilt, resentment, which results in persecution.

Now, our text for tonight is verses 10 to 12, and what our Lord Jesus is saying is this: "I'll give you a gilt-edge guarantee that if you live according to the first seven Beatitudes, you'll get the eighth one automatically. If you function according to those first seven principles, inevitably, you will be persecuted for righteousness' sake." Inevitably, you will be persecuted for His name's sake. It's inevitable.

Now, in the first part of our study, we began to look at verses 10 to 12. Let me read them to you again: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you."

Listen, people, if you want to really be happy, you have to be happy Jesus' way. And if you seek to be happy on His terms, if you seek to live according to His principles, if you seek to enter His kingdom His way, if you're going to go through the narrow gate onto the narrow way, if you're going to build your house on the Rock, if you're going to wind up in the judgment and hear Him say, "I do know you," not, "I don't know you," then you're going to find that the result of that kind of lifestyle, confronting a hostile, godless world, is inevitably to be a negative reaction. It's always been that way.

In Italy, in the 15th century, a man named Savonarola came on the scene. He was one of the greatest reformers and preachers the world has ever known. His denunciation of the sins of the people and the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church of that time prepared the way, literally, for the Reformation. His preaching, says one biographer, "Was a voice of thunder, and his denunciation of sin was so terrible that the people who listened to him went about the streets half-dazed, bewildered, and speechless. His congregations were so often in tears that the whole building resounded with their sobs and their weeping."

Obviously, the people couldn't handle that kind of preaching, and so they burned him at the stake. It never would be any different, and I really believe that if Christians in our culture were more confrontive about what we believe to be true, and if we really lived the fullness of the Beatitudes in our lives, we would find there would be hostility in the world toward us, if there isn't already, for most of us. It happens everywhere and at all times.

I've been reading, recently, a book that Don Richardson gave me after our watchnight service. Don Richardson was here, a wonderful, God-blessed missionary to Irian Jaya who wrote the classic of mission stories, *Peace Child*. He has written a sequel called the *Lords of the Earth*. It is not like

Peace Child, a story of his mission work, but a story of a friend of his by the name of Stan Dale.

Stan Dale had gone to the Yali tribe in Irian Jaya, whereas Don was down in the lowlands working with the Sawi. Stan was way up in what are called the Snow Mountains, and he was working with this Yali tribe. And the Snow Mountains are very high and very kind of precarious, and the villages are on the side of the slopes. And in that area is a river called the Heluk River, which crashes down through the mountains, a thunderous, rapid river, and the constant rains keep it constantly moving at that pace.

They were steeped in an incredible kind of religion, and they had all kinds of little sacred pieces of ground for an illustration. And if a little child happened to crawl onto one of those sacred pieces of ground, they felt that the little child was desecrated and cursed and would curse the whole village, so they would go to a cliff and throw the baby into the rapids, and it would drown and wash its body down into the lowlands.

And if anyone ever said a word – it was built into the system – if anyone ever said a word against the religious system, they were slaughtered on the spot. So there could be no rebellion. There could be no change. There could be no possible way of altering anything. And, one, it tells in the book about one tribesman who decided he wanted to try to change things, and so he tried to point out some of the things that seemed, to him, so foolish, and they shot him so full of arrows that he looked like a reed swamp.

It was hopeless. Hopeless, that is, until a little bandy-legged Australian, about five-foot-seven, undaunted, tramped into the Yali villages. In an incredible way, this amazing little man opened up his heart and the heart of his wife and five children to these savage people who not only were headhunters but were also cannibals who ate human flesh. He came to save them from the impenetrable darkness and death of the terrible beliefs and practices that they had in their culture. Do you want to know what happened to him? I'll read it from Don Richardson.

“The native, holding his breath, eased his arrow over the rock and aimed at Stan's side. For a moment, firelight gleamed on his shiny bamboo blade, especially chosen for killing. Then he drew his bow to full strength, as other warriors behind him waited their turn. As if to oblige the warrior, Stan moved across the doorway for something in his pack. In the next instant, he recoiled, grasping and pulling the five-foot arrow out of his right side. Chortling over his success, the first warrior leaped from behind the rock blind and promptly shot another arrow into Stan's right thigh. ‘We're in a death trap,’ Stan gasped. ‘They can shoot at us from every direction. The fire, I've got to put it out.’

Stan lunged at the fire, trying to scatter its burning brands, and as he did so, another arrow struck his left thigh, burying itself deeply into his muscle. He flung himself to the far side of the hut, seeking shelter, but there was none. Two more arrows struck him; one pierced through his right forearm and

another penetrated his diaphragm and his intestines. Stan yanked each arrow out in turn, and then cried back at his tormentors in Yali, 'Run away home, all of you. You've done enough.' Pain from his five wounds stabbed through him. The floor of the yogwa was now crisscrossed with many arrows, five of them reddened with blood. Stan pressed against the wall of the yogwa waiting for the next arrow. He saw it coming."

Well, amazingly, I'm not going to finish the rest of it. You'll have to get the book. Amazingly, he lived. They took him out. He was spared there. He was given surgery, turned right around and went back, right back into the same village, right back into the same area. He gave, literally, years of his life, and then this story:

"Beyond Yendoal the river grew shallow, flowing over a wide, stony bed. They waded through it for 300 yards and reached a gravel beach. Beyond the beach, the trail left the river and climbed directly upward to the pass. Just another 2,000 feet of climbing, and they'd be over and on their way down to safety. But the war cry resounded again, much closer now. And suddenly, they came floundering through the river, bows held high. Others streaming down through the forest, their floppy rattan coils rattling. Stan and Yemu stood at the lower end of the gravel beach, facing them. Phil – " Phil Masters was alone at the other end, 50 yards away.

"The three Danis waded another 30 yards beyond Phil. As they all looked back in horror, they saw Stan raise his staff, grimly facing the Wickboon horde. 'Yemu, leave me,' he shouted over his shoulder. He kept his staff raised, not to strike, but to form a barrier against the advancing tide of warriors. 'All of you, turn around and go home!' he commanded. A priest of Kembu named Bereway slipped around behind Stan and, at point-blank range, shot an arrow in under his upraised right arm. Another priest, Bunu, shot a bamboo shaft into his back, just below his right shoulder. Yemu was crying now and shouting at them to stop.

As the arrows entered his flesh, Stan pulled them out one by one, broke them, and threw them away. Dozens of them were coming at him from all directions. He kept pulling them out, breaking them, and dropping them at his feet until he couldn't keep ahead of them.

Nalimo reached the scene after some 30 arrows had found their mark in Stan's body, 'How can he stand there so long?' Nalimo gasped. 'Why doesn't he fall? Any one of us would have fallen long ago!' A different kind of shaft pierced Nalimo's flesh – fear! 'Perhaps he is immortal.' Nalimo's normally impassive face melted with sudden emotion. Because of that emotion, Nalimo said later – " and by the way, Nalimo was baptized later as a believer in Christ – "because of his fear, he didn't shoot an arrow into Stan's body, though all of his people did. Stan faced his enemies, steady and unwavering, except for the jolt of each new arrow.

Yemu ran to where Phil stood alone. Together they watched in anguish at Stan's agony. As some 50 or more warriors detached from the main force and came toward them, Phil pushed Yemu behind him and gestured speechlessly, 'Run!' Phil seemed hardly to notice the warriors encircling him. His eyes were fixed on Stan. Fifty arrows – 60 arrows – red ribbons of blood trailed from the many wounds, but still Stan stood his ground.

Nalimo saw that he was not alone in his fear. The attack had begun with hilarity, but now the warriors shot their arrows with desperation bordering on panic because Stan refused to fall. Perhaps Kusaho was right. Perhaps they were committing a monstrous crime against the supernatural world instead of defending it as they intended. 'Fall!' they screamed at Stan. 'Die!' It was a plea. 'Please die!'

Yemu did not hear Phil say anything to the warriors as they aimed their arrows at him. Phil made no attempt to flee or struggle. He had faced danger many times but never certain death. But Stan had shown him how to face it. If he needed an example, it was there. The example could hardly have been followed with greater courage. Once again, it was Bereway who shot the first arrow, and it took almost as many arrows to down Phil as it had Stan. Yemu and the three Danis waited until they knew Phil was too badly wounded to survive.

At the sight of the killings, after both missionaries had fallen on the stony beach, the Yali dragged their battered bodies away from the stones and placed them in separate forest alcoves overhung with bows. Although the Yali were not headhunters, Bunu, moved by fear, beheaded both Stan and Phil. Still not satisfied, the killers stripped both bodies naked, systematically cut them to pieces, and scattered bits of bone into the forest to make resurrection more difficult. From the beginning, Nalimo and his friend planned a cannibalistic feast after they killed Phil and Stan."

There is a price to pay, isn't there? The wonderful end of the story is that the Yali village and that whole territory has now come to Jesus Christ, and they don't gather around to eat missionaries. They gather around to the Lord's Table, but the price was very high.

One of the most wonderful things that I know about in regard to this story is that the fifth child of Stan, who was a baby when he died, was saved reading this book about his father. That's the price. If you're going to confront the world, there is a price to pay. That's the way it's always been. It was with Savonarola. It was with Stan Dale in the late 1960's when this happened. It will be in the future because we look ahead in Revelation, and what do we find in chapter 9? But a group of people under the altar crying out, people who were slain, martyred for the cause of Christ. It'll always be this way.

Now, let's look again at Matthew 5:10-12 and see the three points we introduced in our last study: the persecution, the promise, and the posture. The persecution is in verses 10 and 11, and we'll just quickly review it. "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And then it's personalized. I think it's the one in the same Beatitude, not two. It's

just that people who endure this are double blessed.

But you have a general statement in verse 10, and we saw this last time. This is a review. And then it's personalized in verse 11: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, persecute you, say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake."

Let's ask some simple questions: Who are persecuted? Who? I'll tell you who – the ones who live a Beatitude kind of life, the ones who come to know God through Jesus Christ, the ones who are kingdom people, the one who live life on God's terms. Beloved, I want you to understand this – that godliness generates antagonism. You've got to expect this. I'm not trying to tell you this so you'll go out and be ugly in the world. I'm not telling you this so you'll go out and make enemies. I'm telling you this so you won't be shocked.

In Philippians chapter 1 in verse 29, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but also to – " what? " – suffer for His sake." "Unto you it is given," He says. This is to be expected. This is not abnormal.

And Paul says to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 3:3, "No man should be moved by these afflictions..." You shouldn't be shocked. You shouldn't be knocked off your pins. You shouldn't want to rethink whether you've made the right commitment. "...for ye yourselves know that we are appointed to these things." This shouldn't knock you of your pins. This shouldn't surprise you. We were called to these things.

In 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 12, again, the same thought, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We've been called to this people, and it's very basic. A godless, angry, hostile, sinful world, confronted by Christianity must react.

The "who" – everybody who lives the Beatitude life, everybody who comes into the kingdom, everybody who's a son of the kingdom who lives this way. You just go into the world and try to bring mercy to the world. You go in and try to purify men's hearts by bringing them the consciousness of sin. You go in and try to make peace through the only Peacemaker, Jesus Christ. And if you're bold and confrontive in the way that God wants you to be, you're going to find there's going to be a reaction.

How? We saw the "who." What about the "how"? Well, we're going to be persecuted. How are they going to show their anger? "Persecution" is from a Greek word that means "to harass, to treat evilly." Literally, in its root, it means "to pursue." You're going to come after us.

I really feel in America, we're on the threshold of some days that are going to be real different than what we've known in the past. I think that we've been sort of lollygagging around in the post-American

Awakening era. You know, we've been living off the revivalists of the past and the benefits that America had from its heritage of those days. That is fast coming to an end. Not only is government acting against religion, and religion is acting against itself by proliferating all of the cults and -isms and schisms and spasms and everything else.

And we're seeing the government crack down on religious groups. We're seeing changes in attitudes. We're seeing the IRS and other agencies begin to make laws that are going to directly impact those of us who are in the church of Jesus Christ. We're seeing reactions to things that once were held to be sacred, the whole idea of church and all of those kinds of things, you know, it's all gone with mom and apple pie. That's gone too, and so, "They're going to come after us," He says.

How? Verse 11. Remember what we told you? "Revile." That's abuse to the face. "...say all manner of evil against you falsely..." that's slander behind the back. They're going to come at those who are God's people right on the nose and around the back. They're going to talk about us when we're gone, and they're going to react to us when we're there. There will be open confrontations, and there will be that private slander.

I received a letter this week, and I just thought I had to share it with you: "Recently, you preached on the last Beatitude, 'Blessed are you when men revile you, persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely on account of Me.' In that sermon, you pointed out that if a Christian was never persecuted, then there might be something wrong with his Christianity.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to speak to a friend who I had not seen for several years. She, at one time, professed Christianity but is now in the process of divorcing her husband with no just cause. I knew I had to confront her on what God has to say about divorce. It would mean putting our friendship on the line and the possibility of her becoming hostile toward me. I was scared, and I wished I didn't have to confront her. But having the knowledge of God within me, I knew I had to obey God, and, briefly, this is what happened.

I reminded her of God's love and grace and how He wanted her family to be happy and to live together harmoniously according to His perfect standard. I shared with her what God thought of divorce and His guidelines for marriage and divorce, and the more we talked, the more defensive and angry she became. She said she didn't believe the Bible was God's Word but man's interpretation of what God said. She further stated that anyone had the right to form their own interpretation of what Scripture meant. The Bible was nice to have around for its guidelines, but it was up to the reader to decide which one applied to them.

I explained to her how private interpretation could only lead to theological chaos. When I started to get my Bible to read her some specific passages, she wouldn't allow me to read from it, saying she did not come over to argue the Bible. In short, there was no reasoning with her. As she prepared to

leave, she became venomous, and with hate in her eyes, she accused me of luring her into my home and having no concern for her. On that note, she let herself out, slamming the door behind her.

I can say that I now know what it is like to be hated and falsely accused because I took a stand for Christ. I know that I could be living with this for a long time, as she is divorcing her husband in an effort to get something going with someone in my family. I love her, and it's with a heavy heart that I realize the extent of her rejection of Christ. As painful as this has been, I thank God, for the first time in my life, I know what it is to be separate from the world."

Which is worse - to be shot with a Yali arrow or to be hated by somebody you love? One's over in a short time; one lasts a long time. But that's how it is, you see. It's never easy for the committed people. If it's easy for you, one of two things – you're not a Christian; or you're a Christian, but you're not manifesting the kinds of things our Lord talked about here. It's never easy for the Christian.

Look with me at 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Let me show you something, 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 9, and Paul draws one of the most vivid pictures in words that you find in 1 Corinthians. He says in verse 9, "I think that God has set forth us, the apostles – " what's the next word? " – last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Stop right there.

Paul says, "You know, I think when it comes down to where we fit, God has put us last, appointed to death, made a spectacle," and you know what you know what he's got in his mind? When a Roman general won a great victory, he was given the privilege of parading his victorious army through the streets of the city. And as the army came through the streets of the city, they would carry with them booty, spoil, the trophies of war. He was allowing that general to demonstrate to all people the tremendous triumph that he had achieved.

And always, at the end of the long procession, there came a little group of captives, tokens of the conquered people, and they were doomed to die. They were men taken in captive, and men who were now to be led to the arena to fight the beasts and so to die, and Paul says, "I think God hath set forth us, the apostles, last; as it were, appointed to death. We are a spectacle unto the world, unto angels, and to men."

Paul uses terms here from that scene, and he sees the apostles. And who are they? They are like emblems of all truly committed disciples. They are a group of captives appointed to death.

Moffatt translates it this way: "God means us apostles to come in at the very end, like doomed gladiators in the arena." The word "appointed to death," do you see it there? The word "appointed to death" is the word "sentenced." It is a rare term used to refer to criminals paraded as objects of mockery as they were marched to their execution, and so Paul says, "Hey, we apostles are doomed.

We are brought along at the end as captives, spectacles for everybody to see and to mock and to kill, condemned criminals.”

But then he says, "We endure anyway. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise. We are weak, but you are strong. You're honorable, but we are despised," and he's very sarcastic there. And then he says, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and we labor, working with our own hands, and being reviled, we bless, and being persecuted, we – “ and here's the key word “ – we endure it.”

We know what we're called to. We aren't called to ride the white charger into town and be the hot shot. We aren't called to be the superstar. We aren't called to be the sanctified celebrity. We're called to be appointed to death, and we suffer through this thing. We are the fools, and you're the wise. "You look at us as fools," he says. "And we are weak, and you are strong. You look down on us, and you're honorable, and we're despised. And to this present hour we hunger and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted, and never have a place to stay, and we have to work with our hands so hard, and we're reviled all the time, and we're persecuted, and we have to endure it.”

How does he react to all of that? Being defamed, he says – or “being reviled” in verse 12. “We bless; being persecuted, we endure. Being defamed, we entreat.” Now, watch this: “We are made as the filth of the world and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.” Listen. The word “filth” simply means “dirt.” It is used of something that is wiped off something when you want to clean it. It could be garbage left on a pot or a pan. It could be dust left on a table. It's any dirt that you want to eliminate.

And he uses the term “offscouring,” something you scrub off, refuse. Paul says, “Look. We see ourselves as filth and offscouring.” You say, “Paul, I mean you're one of the apostles. I mean we got statues of you, man. We got St. Paul Cathedrals.” He says, “We're filth and offscouring.” They accept this, the apostles did. This was the world's estimate. They counted the cost. They were willing to pay the price, and, as far as we know, 10 or 11 out of 12 died as martyrs. The only one we know who didn't was John, and he was exiled and died in exile.

Listen, people. I don't know what's happened to the kind of Christianity we have today, but it isn't this. I mean, can we say, in human society, in America today, that Christians are the filth and the offscouring of the world? Are we? Why, we're the stars. We get the biggest lights in Las Vegas for us. We got our own TV shows. We go back and forth. You know, we live in two worlds. We do our gig over here, and then we change our clothes and come into the church and do our deal.

We dance in Las Vegas, and then we get up and give our testimony. We're the stars. We're the presidents and the congressmen and the famous athletes and the actors and the singers, and I'm thankful for all those folks that are real believers. I just have to wonder whether we got the picture right. We're trying to waltz the world instead of confront it. I don't know how this happened. We're the

elite. We're the acceptable. We're the rich.

Listen. That's not the way Paul saw it. When Paul came to give his credentials, you know, so many people – I get a lot of stuff in the mail say, "Would you like to have so-and-so start come to your church?" And they'll come for a fee, you know? "And would you like to have so-and-so star? Here's his credentials." Big papers, they send you, with all the stuff – pictures, you know, shaking hands with everybody. "Would you like to have the stars?" Listen. I'm not interested in the stars.

You know, when Paul came, he didn't say, "Oh, I want you to know that I graduated at the University of Gamaliel magna cum laude. I'm a world man. I speak many languages. I'm a personal friend of several kings, rulers, famous men. I died once and came back from the dead." Second Corinthians talks about that. "I've ascended to third heaven." Boy, could he make it on the circuit today. Woo! Gee. "I spoke in tongues more than you all." Listen. There's no end to what that guy could've done. Unbelievable testimony. He could've kept you here for hours.

He says, "You want my credentials? I'll give you my credentials." Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 11. Here are his credentials. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce to you the apostle Paul. Here are his credentials, verse 23: "Are they ministers of Christ?" Oh, he's more. Here is the greatest minister of Christ. You ready?

"...in labors more often, in stripes above measure, in prison more frequently, in death often. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I spent in the deep. In journeyings often, perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils by mine own countrymen, perils by the Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, among false brethren; in weariness, painfulness, watchings often, hunger, thirst, fasting, cold, and nakedness." There he is, folks.

Hmm? Verse 5 of chapter 12, "Of such a one I will not glory..." I can understand that, can't you? An ex-con, beaten up, kicked around, stoned, shipwrecked, abused. "...yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine – " what? " – infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth. But now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be or heareth of me."

Listen. He says, "I don't want to say anything about myself. I don't want to glory. I don't want to give anybody the wrong impressions." Listen. "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me."

You know, he had a problem. Some people think it was an eye problem, possible. Some think he had an oozing eye disease that was always very ugly and made him very distasteful to be around. I don't know what it was. But whatever it was, it was something undesirable. And instead of taking it away, God just said, "My grace is sufficient for you. I have to keep you humble, Paul. For My strength is made perfect in weakness."

"Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I take pleasure in infirmity and reproach and necessity and persecution – " do you see it? " – in distress for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am – " what? " – strong."

Listen. As long as you think you can make it on your press clippings, you don't have the power of God. That's what he's saying. As long as you can cut it on your own, you're good. You've been proven, and you've got the PR to make it. You're functioning on the wrong principle.

He says, "I'll glory in my weakness. I'll glory in my infirmity. I'll glory in persecution. I'll glory in reproach. I'll glory in necessity. Everything that breaks me, everything that crushes me, everything that humbles me, I'll glory in that because that's what makes me depend on God. And, no, I have no resource of my own, and that's when God moves through me to confront a world."

We live in a day when Christianity, like never before, is engaged in an act of self-glorification that must be repulsive to God. We are manufacturing celebrities faster than the world is. That's not the way it is. When our Lord said, as we learned this morning in Acts chapter 1 verse 8, "You are to be my witnesses." He said, "You are to be *mou martyres*." My what? Martyrs. There's a price to pay.

"Who" is the Beatitude is directed to anybody who's a kingdom child. How are we to be persecuted? Why, we'll be confronted face-to-face and reviled; and behind our backs, we'll be slandered. Why? Let's look at why? Back to Matthew 5. Why will they do this to us? You say we're such nice folks, and I agree. Christians are the nicest folks in the world. We're nice folks because God lives in us, and God is goodness, and God takes our badness and gives us His goodness, and so it's there, but why would the world do this?

The answer is simple; verse 10 says, "...for righteousness' sake..." Verse 11 says, at the end, "...for My sake." Listen. There's two things the world doesn't want: righteousness and Christ, you see? You confront a sinful world that loves darkness rather than light, you confront a sinful world that loves its sin, and that world is going to react. You bring up Jesus Christ again, and the world is going to do to him just what the world did before. The world is going to want Him dead, and that's the way it's always been, and that's the way it'll always be.

Look at John 15 for just a brief moment. In John 15 and verse 18, our Lord Jesus put it down as clearly as He could, "If the world hate you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you," John 15:18.

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Verse 17 says, “I command you, love one another,” and that's wonderful, and we need that, and we've enjoyed it tonight, and we've been enriched by it tonight.

And here we are, gathered, all of this tremendous family of Christ here at Grace, and we love one another, and then we turn the corner, but the world doesn't love us. The world what? It hates us. The evil system hates us. You say, “Why do they do that?” Because we're not of the world. If we were of the world, it would accept us, but we confront the world.

Now, if you don't confront the world, they'll never know. But if the world knows we're not a part of the system, they'll hate us. In verse 20, He says, “Remember the word that I said to you, the servant's not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they're going to persecute you. If they kept My saying, they'll keep yours also.” In other words, “When you identify with Me, then they're going to treat you the way they treated Me. And those who love Me will love you, and those who hate Me will hate you, and those who love righteousness will love you, and those who hate righteousness and love sin will hate you.”

The crux of the matter is they just don't know God. Verse 21: “All these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.” You see? They just don't know God. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they should had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin. But now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.”

You know what Jesus came into the world and did? He came into the world, and he exposed their what? Sin. And then they had sin. They saw sin in their lives. They were confronted with the reality of sin. If Jesus hadn't come, they could have glossed it over. They were doing a great job of salving their conscience. Their religion had literally closed their eyes to the truth, and, in their blindness, they were blissfully marching on toward Hell. Christ ripped off the blinds and said, “Look at yourselves,” and they saw their sin, and they hated Him for it, and so they hated Him.

And it all comes to pass just exactly as the Scripture had said, Psalms, “They hated Me without – “ what? A cause. No reason. So the question, “Well, why would they hate us?” Oh, there's no reason. Nothing wrong with you. You're really wonderful. Nothing wrong with me either. I'm not so wonderful as I wish I were, but I'm not all bad, but it isn't me. It's righteousness, and it's Christ. You just live a righteous life. You just be salt, and we're going to get to that next week. You just be salt, and watch what happens.

Salt – you ever put salt in a wound? Woo! It stings. Just be salt. Don't even say anything. Just be salt. Just be righteous in a corrupt society. Watch what happens. That's the way it's going to be. You say, "Well, then I'll tell you what we ought to do. We ought to get out of this world. Boy, we have to – poof – bail out." Monasticism reigns. Let's all get a habit and become monks, retreat, build a cloister, study the Scripture.

No. In spite of this, I love it. "When the Comforter has come –" verse 26, " – whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me: And ye also shall bear – " what? " – witness..." "Don't go anywhere," he says. "Don't bail out. Don't go to retreat. Don't pack up your tent. Don't steal away into the dark night to study the Bible until the Rapture. Get out there and be a *martyres*, a martyr." You have to confront it, people.

Listen. The coming of Jesus not only brought salvation, but it brought the manifestation of hate from those who love their sins, and this didn't mean we turn our backs on the world. It meant we go right out there and confront world, and we face the world. And, sure, what's going to happen? I'll tell you what's going to happen. He says, in verse 2 of chapter 16, "They'll put you out of the synagogues. The time will come that whoever kills you will think he does God's service, and these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor Me."

You see? It isn't you. It's that they don't know God. And because they don't know God, they don't know Christ. And because they don't know Christ, they don't understand righteousness. And because they aren't willing to accept righteousness, they want their sin and will not tolerate a confrontation at that point.

That's exactly what the Beatitudes are saying. Turn back, now, to Matthew and let me show you something. In Matthew chapter 5, the Lord says, "You're going to be persecuted. You're going to be persecuted." Verse 10, verse 11, verse 12, and you say the same thing, "Oh, well, let's be monastic. Let's retreat." Nope. Verse 13 – stick around, folks: "You're the salt of the earth." Verse 14: "You're the light of the world." Don't go anywhere. Men don't light a lamp; put it under a bushel. They put it on a lampstand, so let your light so shine what? Where? Before men.

You see, people, even though there's a price to pay, we can't bail out. I can see little Stan Dale, and it's just incredible to read that book. The first time he was attacked, just prior to his first attack by those natives, they were all gathered with all their bows and arrows on the top of the hill, and he just said, "I'm going up there and tell them that they can't do that," and he just walked right up that hill and just kept walking at them, and they shot at him. And the arrows were missing him, and he just kept right on walking.

Whoa, man, there's something exciting about that. He was going to be salt and light no matter what. It took nearly 60 arrows before he even fell over. He was going to salt the situation as long as he could.

Don't bail out. Be faithful.

Well, sure the world doesn't like it. You know, in Colossians 1:24, remember that? And I'll skip some other thoughts and just give you this one. Colossians 1:24, you remember that thought: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh..." Let me just take that much of it.

Paul said, "Every time somebody beats me up, they're really getting after Christ." Stan Dale could have said the same thing. Every one of those Yali that shoots an arrow is really shooting at a Jesus Christ. It isn't me they resent; it's the truth that I represent that they resent, right?

It's Christ the world is after. It's Christ the world is still trying to kill. They can't get Him, though, because He's not here, so they get whoever stands in His place and speaks the same truth. Just as the world pounded the nails into His hands because they hated His message, so the world is still driving the nails into the lives of believers who are out there confronting the system with the same message.

Now, you know me, I'm not trying to make war. I'm not trying to make enemies all over the place. But I'm telling you one thing, I believe in saying what's right, saying it when it ought to be said and where it ought to be said, to whom it ought to be said, and not worry about the consequence for His sake. Oh, I hear the apostle Paul, "Oh, that I may know Him and the fellowship of His – " what? Suffering. See? "I mean I'm willing," he says. "I'll take those blows."

In Matthew 10 and over again in Matthew 24, those great text about the fact that he says, "You're going to be hated for My sake. You're going to be hated for My sake." Who? Kingdom people. How? Persecution. Why? For His sake. When? When are we going to be persecuted? Well, look at verse 11: "Blessed are ye when..." When – *hotan*? What does it mean? It means "whenever." Whenever. It does not mean, "Blessed are you who are always being persecuted." No. "Whenever it happens, blessed are you."

It is not the idea that we are going to be incessantly, unmitigatedly persecuted, an unceasing stream of persecution. That wasn't true in Paul's time. That wasn't true in Christ's time. There were times when Christ enjoyed the respite of a family time with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. There were times when Jesus retreated to the Mount of Olives. There were wonderful times with the Twelve in Galilee.

No, it isn't going to be incessant, unending, unceasing. But whenever – *hotan* – whenever it happens, then God will be there to bring His blessedness to bear upon that willing soul. He always makes it bearable, doesn't He? "There's no trial taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful who will never allow you to be tried above that you are able, but will, in that trial, make a way of – " what? " – escape..." It'll always be there.

Now, listen, beloved. Whenever it happens, we don't seek it. We don't seek it. We don't have a martyr complex, but we don't run from it either. And when we get in the middle of it, we don't compromise. Well, persecution is followed, in the text, by promise. Aren't you glad for that? What is the promise? "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you," and so forth. Blessed, blessed, blessed, because theirs is the kingdom.

Listen, beloved. Whatever we would forfeit in this world, we would gain a million-fold in God's kingdom, right? Whatever physical thing we would lose, that eternal reward would infinitely compensate. And what did the beloved apostle Paul himself say who could have, with his mind and his capability, made it big in this world? Instead, he had absolutely nothing, and one day put his head on a block and an ax severed it from his body. What did the blessed apostle Paul say but this: "I count that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Right?

Whatever loss here could never be compared with what gain in God's Kingdom. "Blessed," he says. Twice he says it, emphatically repeating, "Blessed. Blessed again," because those who would willingly stand up for Jesus Christ will know the bliss of obedience and the blessedness of being a part of God's eternal kingdom.

I think of so many illustrations of this. Joseph found it to be true. Joseph was persecuted by his brothers for righteousness' sake. He ended up in a dry well in the desert, despised and hated, and God picked him up and made him the prime minister of Egypt. All it took was a little patience.

Jeremiah was thrown into a slimy dungeon because of his righteous life and quicksand was all around, engulfing him. And God lifted him up and made his name as honorable as any man who ever lived as a prophet of God.

Listen. If you're willing to pay the price now, God says, "The glory which shall be revealed is incomparable. Double blessed are the persecuted, for theirs is the kingdom and all that the kingdom could possibly contain." You say, "Well, what kingdom is He talking about?" I think He's talking about all the concepts involved in the kingdom. I think he's talking about here and now. The living King dwelling within us reveals and gives to us the fullness of kingdom life spiritually.

I think He's talking about a millennial element. There is coming a time when the physical fulfillment of kingdom life will belong to us in that wonderful, renewed earth, and I think He's talking about the eternal kingdom, when we're face-to-face with the Son of God and glory forever. I think he's got it all here. I think He's saying all that the kingdom can possibly convey, all that there can possibly be of God's great and glorious gift to compensate for our struggle will be ours.

In Mark 10, "Peter said, 'Lo, we have left all and followed thee. I mean we have done it, Lord. We've stripped ourselves naked. We've just come after You. We're like beggars in the world,' and Jesus answered and said unto him, 'There is no man that has left a house, or brother, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or land for My sake and the gospel's – "listen" – but he shall receive an hundredfold, now in this time...' Do you see that? That's the present fulfillment. "...and houses and bretheren and sisters and mothers and children and land, with persecutions – "footnote" – and, in the age to come, eternal life." Do you see? Here and now, then and there. It's all ours. What a fulfillment, people.

Listen. We are so shortsighted. We want to protect the moment. Instead of give the moment away to God and secure forever then eternal weight of glory. Listen. The kingdom is the gift of the Beatitudes. Did you note the first Beatitude began with the promise, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and the last Beatitude ends with the promise, "Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven"? And what it's really saying to us is that the major promise of the Beatitudes is you become a kingdom citizen now and forever, and the ones in between are just elements of kingdom life.

No matter what the world does, my friends, no matter what the world does, it can never affect the possession of Christ's kingdom. That is ours, now and forever. So the persecution is going to be there, and when it's endured willingly, the promise is ours. We're a part of the kingdom and all that the kingdom could possibly give will be ours.

You know something, I don't have a great big mansion here and now, but I will someday, right? I'll be in the Father's house. I don't have all these houses and lands and all this huge thing that it talks about. Here and now, for my own very own possession, in a sense, it's going to be in the millennium and in eternal state. But you know, there is a sense in which I do because some of you are my brothers and sisters in Christ, and some of you are my mothers and fathers in Christ, and some of you have nicer houses than I've got, and I get to go over and enjoy all that.

You see, that's what it means in the here and now. We all share. You know, you may give up your family to come to Christ. They may isolate you. But I'll tell you one thing, look around. Here's your family. You may have no place to stay because you've been thrown out of your home. Look around. Here we are. We've got homes, and they're yours too because we don't own anything. We just manage it for God, and it belongs to all of us.

So the persecution bears with it a promise, and that means there ought to be a posture that we take in persecution. That's the final point. What should be our posture? What should be our attitude if this is true? Verse 12. "Rejoice." You say, "Rejoice?" Rejoice when they're shooting the arrows in you. Rejoice while your friends are screaming venomously at you. Rejoice while they're whispering behind your back. Rejoice while they're undermining you. Oh, yes, rejoice. He says, "*Chair!*" It means "be

glad, really be glad.” And then if that isn't enough, He has to add this: “Be exceedingly glad,” which is *agalliaithe*. It literally means “jump and skip and shout for joy.”

You say, “You have to be kidding? Jump and skip and shout for joy? I'm being persecuted.” You ought to get happy about that. You say, “Well, why should I be so happy about that? It doesn't sound like a big deal to me.” Well, there's two reasons you have to be happy about that: Reason number one, verse 12, “Great is your reward in heaven.”

Now, listen, people. “Great is your reward in heaven.” Let me tell you something. Heaven is how long? How long is heaven? Forever. How long is here? “A vapor that appears for a little time and vanishes away,” James 4. How long is Heaven? Forever. How long is here? Not very long, getting shorter all the time.

What are you investing in? No wonder Jesus said, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust doesn't corrupt, and where thieves don't break through and steal.” Don't lay it up here. This is here and now and gone. Heaven's forever. “Great is your reward in heaven.”

You say, “Well, do you think we're going to get crowns in Heaven?” Sure, I think we're going to get crowns in heaven. I mean the Bible talks about them, and I don't know what that means. I, really, in my heart, I think I believe that it has to do with our capacity to glorify God forever. I think the more faithful we are here, the more able we'll be to glorify God forever. I think God will give us a greater capacity for Him, a greater capacity for service forever, a greater fulfillment, if we're faithful here.

But I'll tell you one thing, if I'm going to be there forever, and I'm only going to be here another 20 or so years, man, I'm going to invest in forever. Not here. I've just got a little snitch of time, and I want to pile all of it that I can into God's bank account, so it'll pay me eternal dividends – not for me, but so that I can take them and place them at His blessed feet in praise.

Listen. “Great is your reward in heaven,” and I love the word “great” because the word “great” really means what it says, like a lot of those words in the Bible. When God says “great,” He means “great.”

Polus, abundant – it's used in Ephesians 2:4 to talk about abundance. It's the fullness of reward. And you say, “Well, I don't know why you want to be so crass.” People say that a lot, you know, “Oh, you know, you don't serve the Lord – you serve Him out of love. You don't serve Him for reward.”

Listen. I didn't make up the system up. I serve Him out of love. If He chooses to reward me, that's His wonderful pleasure. I'm not going to argue about it, and by the time I get to Heaven, I won't be proud anyway, so I'll take it all and give it right back in humility. See, there won't be any proud people in Heaven. We'll be all perfect then, so we can handle reward. Do you understand that? That's why the Lord doesn't give it to us here. It'd mess us up something awful. If the Lord chooses to do it, that's His

own choice, and it's a wonderful motive.

Paul says, "I've been doing what I've been doing all my life, serving the Lord." With that in mind, at the end of 2 Timothy, when he kind of gives a swan song, he says, "I know there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day: and not to me only, but all them that that love his appearing." He says, "There's nothing wrong with me longing to see that day, nothing wrong with me longing to see that crown. If that's the Lord's gift of love to me – I took the gift of salvation; I'll take that one too."

And then this second thought – I just have to give you this. This is absolutely fabulous. The second reason you ought to be glad is because they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You say, "Well, so what? I mean how does that relate? They persecuted the prophets before me. You mean I'm supposed to be happy because they had the same problems that I have? Misery loves company? Boy, I'm glad I'm not the only one who had this. I'm glad the rest of you guys got it too." Is that the idea? No.

No, the idea is this: You are in pretty classy company. Get the idea? They persecuted the prophets of God. And if they persecute you, this, to me, is the climax of the Beatitudes. And what He is saying is this: If you have any doubts about your salvation, if you have any questions about whether you're in the kingdom. If there is persecution in your life from unbelievers, you will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you belong to God because they'll be doing to you exactly what they did to God's called prophets. You see it? Fantastic truth.

Man, I'm telling you, when persecution comes to me, I just say, "Well, I know I'm your child, Lord, and I know I stand in the ranks of the prophets." You see, the world doesn't persecute people who aren't the prophets of God, who don't speak the message of God.

In Matthew, later on – and we'll get to this – but in Matthew chapter 21 in verse 33, we find that there's a great text through here, a parable. He talks about a household who planted a vineyard and put a hedge around it and dug a wine press and built a tower and leased it to tenant farmers and went to a far country. This, of course, is God, and he sent his servants to the farmers. These are the prophets, and Israel, of course, are the tenant farmers. And the farmers took the servants and beat one and killed another and stoned another, and he sent other servants, and they did the same unto them. And here they are killing the prophets, persecuting the prophets. This is what they did, but they were, every one, the messenger of God.

Over in chapter 22, we find a similar situation. In chapter 22 – or rather in chapter 23. Let's skip and look over to chapter 23 verse 31: "Wherefore are ye witnesses against yourselves, that ye are the sons of them who killed the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell? Go ahead and do it," He says. "Go

ahead and kill Me. You're doing no different than your fathers did.”

Listen. They killed the prophets. They killed the prophets all along through the history of Israel. They killed the prophets and kept killing the prophets. That's fast company, folks. And you read the 11th chapter of Hebrews, verse 32 on, oh, what a catalogue. It says all these people suffered this and suffered this and suffered and suffered this, "Of whom the world was not worthy..."

And then Jesus, Wonder of wonders, says to the crowd that day, and to us all down through history, "If you follow Me and you preach My truth and live My truth and the world persecutes you, rejoice that you can be confident that you belong to the righteous line that is descended to you from the prophets themselves." Persecution, then, is a verification that you belong to a righteous line. Here is the believer's security. Here is the climax of the Beatitudes. He offers them salvation and then tells them how they can know when they have it.

Listen. It doesn't come from some theological prescription. Your security doesn't come from knowing that you made a decision way back when. Your security comes from knowing that you are living a confrontive life in the midst of an ungodly world, and you are being persecuted for righteousness' sake. And when that comes, you know not only will you be rewarded in heaven, but you stand in the line of the prophets of God who, through all of history, have received the same kind of reaction.

In Luke chapter 21, we find, in verses 12 and 13, this statement: "But before all these," says our Lord, "they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, driving you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake." They're going to do it to you, but, oh, listen to that next verse. "And it shall turn to you for a testimony." In other words, the whole ordeal will become a testimony to you that you belong to God. Isn't that great? It'll be a great security to you.

Listen. The world can't handle our kind of life, our kind of living. They can't stomach it. They can't handle it. It's not acceptable to them. They don't even understand it. Poverty of spirit runs counter to the pride of an unbelieving heart. The repentant, contrite disposition that mourns over sin is never appreciated by the callous, indifferent, unsympathetic world. The meek and quiet spirit that takes wrong and is not quick to strike back is regarded as pusillanimous and rasps against the proud, militant, resentful spirit characteristic of our world.

The craving after deeper spiritual blessing from the Lord is a rebuke to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as is a merciful spirit to the hardness and cruelty of our world. And purity of heart contrasts sharply and painfully with hypocrisy and corruption. And a peacemaker cannot be tolerated by a contentious, antagonistic world age, and that's exactly why they react the way they react.

Let me close with these thoughts. A great tribute was once paid to John Knox – great Scottish preacher. This is what he said of Knox: “He feared God so much that he never dared to fear any man.” Chrysostom, great Christian of ancient times, summoned before the Roman Emperor Arcadius and threatened with banishment if he didn't cease to proclaim Jesus, is said to have replied, “Sire, you cannot banish me, for the world is my Father's house.”

“Then I will slay you!” exclaimed the angered emperor. “Nay, but you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God.”

“Your treasures will be confiscated!” came the fiery retort. “Sire, that cannot be; my treasures are in heaven, where none can break through and steal.”

“But I will drive you from men, and you will have no friends left.”

“That you cannot do either, for I have a Friend in heaven who has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’”

Ultimately, he was banished to Cucusus, on the edge of Armenia. But he so continued to influence his friends by letters that his enemies determined to banish him further away, and he died on the journey.

What about you? What are your priorities? Listen to you. What do you say to yourself? What rings true about you in your mind and your heart? Do you understand what the Beatitudes are saying? It isn't the rich. It isn't the proud. It isn't the frivolous or the fierce or the full or the cunning or the warlike or the favorites of the earthly kings that enter the kingdom. It is the poor, the meek, the sorrowing, the hungry, the sincere, the peacemaking, the persecuted. They enter, and the proof of their citizenship is that they are hated by the world. Do you belong? Let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for tonight, for giving us such an incredibly rich and rewarding study of these incomparable truths in this, the first sermon of our dear Lord Jesus Christ recorded in Scripture. Oh God, may we be kingdom people. May we live the way You want us to live. May we come and enter on Your terms the narrow way, and may we walk that narrow way, difficult as it is, in Your strength. May we know there is a price to pay, and be willing to pay it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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