

# Luke 6:22-23, 26

*"Blessed are the Persecuted"*

*September 1, 2024*

## 1. Intro

- a. In the country of China, Christianity is viewed as a security threat to the Communist government that is in power there
  - i. Bible apps, and thousands of Christian websites have been blocked
  - ii. Websites that contain the lyrics to Christian hymns have been blocked
  - iii. According to the website [globalchristianrelief.org](http://globalchristianrelief.org), China's 135 million Christians are currently facing a level of control never seen before...
    1. As the government is now using modern technology such as AI and facial recognition software to track their people and monitor their gatherings
- b. In India, where the government is now fully a Hindu nationalist government
  - i. Christian schools and institutions have been shut down
  - ii. State-supported violence against Christians has seen substantial increase since 2014
  - iii. And over 19,000 charities and NGO's have seen their licenses revoked
    1. This means that the vast majority of Christian missionaries serving in India through these charities and NGO's, have now been forced to leave the country
- c. In African countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Niger, fully armed Islamic extremists have been flowing in from the Middle East for the past 13 years
  - i. The growth of Islamic extremist groups such as Boko Haram, and the Fulani Muslims, has resulted in MILLIONS of Christians fleeing these regions with great urgency
    1. Those who stay experience rejection by their own families, beatings, torture and mutilation, and even death
- d. All across the world, Christians are increasingly dealing with four common lies that are told about them
  - i. The nationalistic lies say, "If you are a Christian, you are not Indian."
  - ii. The familial lies say, "If you are a Christian, you dishonor your Muslim parents."
  - iii. The criminal lies say, "Christians are guilty of committing terrible crimes in our country – they are the ones responsible for all of the unrest."
  - iv. And the extremist lies say, "Christians are violent and evil, so we must kill them all first."
- e. Now, we may hear all of that and think to ourselves...
  - i. "Yes, those things are awful and we should pray for our Christian brothers and sisters OVER THERE, but thank God we don't have to face any of that HERE"
    1. In March of this year, in Katy, Texas, a teacher there in the Katy schools named Staci Barber was officially reprimanded by the principal of the school for praying with the students at their "See You at the Pole" rally
      - a. Barber was also not allowed to start a campus chapter of Students for Christ, and the school board then instituted a policy mandating that "employees will neither advance nor inhibit ANY religion"
    2. You can just do a simple search on YouTube for "Christian Apologists on College Campuses,"
      - a. And you will very quickly see that these men and women who are taking the Gospel to the students there – as we are commanded to do in the Scriptures – are increasingly facing harsh discrimination, and just plain UGLY responses from both students and professors

3. Last year, when we were stranded in Gunnison, CO for a few days, we visited a church there on Sunday morning
  - a. The pastor, who had planted the church a few years before, told us about how, on multiple occasions, he had been threatened with arrest because he was out sharing the Gospel at different city festivals and events
4. Thankfully, we Christians here in the US are not yet having to face PHYSICAL persecution, and PHYSICAL violence
  - a. But clearly, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, the sentiment against our faith is rapidly shifting toward that general direction
    - i. We may not feel that much, if at all, here in the “buckle” of the Bible Belt
      1. But that doesn’t mean these trends do not exist
    - ii. Thankfully, Jesus does not leave us in the dark when it comes to the threat of persecution, does he?
      1. In fact, even though they may not be the words we’d really like to hear, Jesus actually gives us MUCH hope and encouragement in our passage for this morning
        - a. So let’s begin by looking at Luke 6, verses 22-23
          - i. A couple of weeks ago, we talked about Jesus’ words regarding financial wealth
            1. And we saw that Jesus unapologetically said, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.”
            2. And “blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.”
          - ii. Last week, we heard Jesus say to us, “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh,”
            1. And we saw how we as Christians are to be a people who are DEEPLY mournful over the sin in OUR OWN LIVES, and yet also JOYFULLY HOPEFUL as we proclaim the eternal salvation that is found in Christ and Christ alone
        - b. And now, in verses 22-23, we read this...

## 2. Luke 6:22-23

- a. *<sup>22</sup>“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.*
  - i. Those are powerful, yet sobering words, aren’t they?
    1. If you’re on social media much, you’ve probably seen the Christian trend of people posting an open Bible laying on their table on the back porch
      - a. They’ve got a nice cup of coffee sitting next to it
      - b. Maybe they’ve got a fire going in the chiminea
        - i. And in their post, you’ll often see the tag, hashtag... “blessed”
          1. Now I don’t want to diminish the fact that a quiet morning on the back porch, being able to freely open up the Word of God and study and meditate upon it TRULY IS a blessing
        - ii. But it is so very important that we see that Jesus ALSO says, blessed are you when people hate you...
          1. Blessed are you when people exclude you...
          2. Blessed are you when people revile you...
          3. And blessed are you when people spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man

iii. These things can all be summed up in the eighth Beatitude of Matthew 5:10,

1. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

2. So what I want to do this morning is to break down the four different areas in these couple of verses that Jesus says we are blessed when we experience them

3. The first category Jesus gives us is, "Blessed are you when people HATE you"

a. While there are certainly times that Christians will experience a TRUE hatred and anger and animosity against them and their faith, this word that Jesus uses here is actually a little more nuanced

b. In this verse, Jesus uses the word, *miseo*, for hate

i. This word conveys the idea of making a moral choice, or of elevating one value over another

1. We get a better understanding of the nuance of this word in Luke 14:26, when Jesus says to the great crowds that are following him,

a. *"If anyone comes to me and does not HATE his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."*

i. Clearly in this passage Jesus is not talking about an angry or a bitter hatred like we might usually think

1. We are called to LOVE our neighbor as we love ourselves

a. And the closest neighbors we have are our father and mother... our wife and children... our brothers and sisters

2. So Jesus must be talking about a DIFFERENT kind of hatred, right?

ii. He is talking about making a moral choice... an elevation of one value over another...

1. The TRUE follower of Jesus must choose Christ over EVERY earthly relationship

a. You must CHOOSE Christ over your own parents

b. You must CHOOSE Christ over your own siblings

c. You must CHOOSE Christ over your own spouse and children

d. You must even CHOOSE Christ over your own life

i. And Jesus says that, if we are not willing to value him over ALL these things, then we CANNOT be his disciple

ii. So when Jesus is saying, "Blessed are you when the world hates you," in essence he is saying to us...

1. "Blessed are you when the world rejects you, because you have chosen me"

a. Blessed are you when the world hates your values, because you have decided to live according to the values found in the Scriptures

b. Blessed are you when the world calls those values found in the Scriptures as bigoted and intolerant and unloving

c. Blessed are you when you CHOOSE to live your lives as if you were NOT of this world

i. And as a result, the world CHOOSES to hate you

1. In John 17:14, Jesus says to his Father,

a. <sup>14</sup>I have given them [the disciples] your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

2. And in John 15:18-20, Jesus says,

a. <sup>18</sup>If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup>If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

2. Brothers and sisters in Christ, blessed are you when people hate you, because that is the evidence that Christ himself has chosen you out of this world

a. Rejoice when you are hated by the world

4. Second, Jesus says in Luke 6:22, "Blessed are you when people EXCLUDE you"

a. The word that Jesus uses here is actually a contraction in the Greek

i. The first part of the word means "to be separated from something"

ii. The second part of the word means "to make defined boundaries"

1. So the picture we get here is that these people Jesus is referring to, they create these social or relational boundary lines, and they look at the follower of Jesus and say, "You are not welcome here."

a. The true follower of Jesus is cut off and ostracized

b. The true follower of Jesus is weeded out and kicked out of the club

i. Isn't that what we are seeing all around us in our world of increasing secularism and their message of "tolerance"

1. Everyone is welcome in these clubs

2. Every voice is important

3. Every feeling is validated

4. Every viewpoint is tolerated

a. EXCEPT FOR those who hold a traditional Christian worldview

i. We will tolerate people identifying as cats and dogs...

ii. We will tolerate people who worship trees as gods...

iii. We will tolerate the Muslim, the Hindu, the Mormon and the pagan

b. But for all you fundamentalists who say that Christ is the ONLY way to eternal life...

i. Well, we have no room for that kind of closed-mindedness here

c. The boundary lines are increasingly being drawn

i. And those who cling to Christ will increasingly find themselves on the OUTSIDE of those boundary lines

2. But Jesus says to us who are on the outside, "Blessed are you when people EXCLUDE you... for that is exactly where you are supposed to be!

a. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be HOLY

- i. And at the very heart of the definition of the word HOLY is the idea that we are to be DIFFERENT...
          - 1. Set apart...
          - 2. On the OUTSIDE of a world that has rejected Christ as the Son of the Living God
  - 3. Brothers and sisters in Christ,
    - a. When you find yourself excluded from family gatherings because of your faith in Jesus...
    - b. When you find yourself excluded from conversations at your place of work because of your stance on the Bible...
    - c. When you find yourself excluded from people who were once your friends, because you refuse to compromise on your convictions...
      - i. Then know this: Jesus says that you are BLESSED
        - 1. For this is a mark of the growing HOLINESS in your life to which you have been called
5. Third, Jesus says, “Blessed are you when people REVILE you”
  - a. What we are beginning to see in these categories is an ESCALATION against the followers of Jesus
    - i. Before, Jesus just said that you are blessed when people exclude you and keep you out of the circle of the “cool kids”
      - 1. But now, Jesus is saying, “Blessed are you when they begin to actively speak against you in all sorts of ugly ways”
  - b. This word that Jesus uses for “revile” means:
    - i. To mock, to reproach, to insult
      - 1. But it is not JUST mocking or reproaching or insulting
        - a. Literally, it means that they are doing all of these things as they are baring their teeth at you
          - i. Just think about the level of intensity in someone’s emotions for them to get to that point
            - 1. We’ve all been frustrated with someone else’s words or actions
            - 2. We’ve all probably dealt with a pretty serious anger towards someone at one point or another
              - a. But just imagine, being so filled with hostility and loathing that as you are speaking out against them, you are also uncontrollably baring your teeth at them
          - ii. Can you feel how this marks a SIGNIFICANT rise in the hatred within their own hearts?
- b. In Mark, chapter 15, as Jesus is hanging upon the cross, Mark writes starting in verse 25,
  - i. *<sup>25</sup>And it was the third hour when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup>And the inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” <sup>27</sup>And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>29</sup>And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, <sup>30</sup>save yourself, and come down from the cross!” <sup>31</sup>So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>32</sup>Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.*

1. Jesus, our Messiah, our Savior, KNEW what it meant for this intense reviling and hatred to be directed his way
    - a. But as we heard earlier, a servant is not above his master...
    - c. As Christ was reviled, so also was his servant Stephen reviled in Acts chapter 7, when the people were so enraged that they ground their teeth at him, and then they cast him out of the city, and stoned him to death
    - d. As Christ was reviled, so also was his servant Paul reviled, when he stood before the Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 22, and they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, and calling for the Roman soldiers to flog him with the whip
    - e. As Christ was reviled, so also was his servant Peter reviled when he was crucified upside down in Rome
      - i. So also was his servant James the brother of John, reviled, as he was seized by Herod and killed with the sword
      - ii. So also was Jesus' own brother, James, reviled, as he was thrown off the roof of the temple
      - iii. So also was Matthew reviled, when he was slain in Ethiopia for his faith
      - iv. So also was Andrew crucified in the Greek city of Patras
      - v. So also was John thrown in a vat of boiling oil, where his skin was burned, his eyes were destroyed, and yet he would survive, exiled to the island of Patmos
  2. So also have countless martyrs throughout the history of the church lost their lives for the sake of Christ
    - a. You see, when the hatred of the people intensifies to such a degree that they are reviling the followers of Christ with their teeth bared against them.
      - i. Then it is just a short step to the final category that Jesus gives us in Luke 6, when he says...
6. Blessed are you when people SPURN YOUR NAME AS EVIL
- a. When Jesus speaks of these people spurning the name of his followers he uses the word, ekballo
    - i. This word literally means, "to throw out; to cast out permanently, to banish FOR GOOD"
      1. In other words, your name is not even worth saying
        - a. But its not just that your name has been banished
          - i. No, your name has been cast out AS EVIL, on account of the Son of Man
          - ii. On account of the fact that you unashamedly proclaim the name of Christ above all other names in heaven and on the earth,
            1. The world will hate you...
            2. The world will exclude you...
            3. The world will revile you...
            4. And the world will cast out your name as EVIL
      2. Think about the four lies that we heard about at the beginning of the sermon
        - a. The nationalistic lie says, "If you are a Christian, then you cannot be a good citizen."
        - b. The familial lie says, "If you are a Christian, you cannot be a good son or daughter."
        - c. The criminal lie says, "If you are a Christian, then YOU are the one responsible for all the disharmony and unrest in the land."

- d. And the extremist lies say, “If you are a Christian, then your name should be spurned as EVIL. YOU are violent and evil, and therefore YOU must be dealt with, violently”
    - i. Friends, this is the inevitable conclusion as persecution intensifies all across the world
      - 1. This is why we find John writing in Revelation 17 that Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of all of earth’s abominations, is DRUNK with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus
  - 3. When we think about the darkness toward which we are heading on this earth, how could we possibly view ourselves as “blessed” when people spurn our names as evil, and then become drunk on the blood of the saints
    - a. Friends, we are blessed in this one simple and foundational truth
      - i. All of those whose names have been spurned as evil on account of the Son of Man, will rest in the fact that their names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life
        - 1. THEIR name will never be blotted out
        - 2. THEY will remain faithful, as the rest of the world falls to its knees in worship of the beast
        - 3. THEY will conquer in the end... THEY will be clothed in the white garments of the saints
          - a. And Christ will confess THEIR name before his Father and before his angels
  - 4. Christians, you are blessed when the world hates you and excludes you and reviles you and casts out your name,
    - a. For IN CHRIST, your name is SECURE, for all eternity!!
      - i. What greater blessing could there possibly be?!
7. So what is our response in light of these incredible realities that await us?
- a. Jesus tells us in verse 23...
    - i. REJOICE in that day!
    - ii. On the day when the world speaks all sorts of evil against you on account of the name of Jesus, LEAP FOR JOY!!
      - 1. Why???
      - a. Because this is the evidence that your reward is INCREASING in heaven!
        - i. I know that the expected Christian response is, “Oh, I don’t need rewards in heaven.... I’ll have all I’ll need for all eternity in Christ.”
          - 1. That is absolutely TRUE
          - 2. But the fact is, the Bible DOES speak of varying levels of reward – whatever that reward might be – based upon our faithfulness in this life
            - a. And one of the ways that Jesus himself says we will reap GREAT reward in heaven is if we embrace persecution on this earth
      - b. And in order to illustrate this biblical promise, Jesus points our gaze BACK into the Old Testament, and he says “Look to the example of the prophets”
        - i. We don’t know the exact historical details of the deaths of the more well-known prophets in the Bible, but according to long-standing church tradition,
          - 1. The prophet Isaiah was sawn in two by King Manasseh

2. Jeremiah is said to have been stoned to death in Egypt
  3. Ezekiel is believed to have been martyred in the land of the Chaldeans
  4. Micah is said to have been killed by King Jehoram
  5. Amos was believed to have been tortured by the priest Amaziah, and then martyred by Amaziah's son
  6. And of course, John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, was beheaded by Herod at the request of his wicked stepdaughter
  - c. All of these prophets were FAITHFUL in proclaiming the Word of God, even though it cost them dearly in this lifetime
    - i. And Jesus says, "If you would follow after me, then you must be willing to suffer in the same way."
      1. BUT, if you are willing to suffer in the same way, then your reward will be GREAT in heaven!
  2. My friends, Hebrews chapter 11 makes it abundantly clear
    - a. All of the Old Testament saints were able to endure suffering well because they had their gaze set on a BETTER country
      - i. They didn't dwell on the difficult circumstances of the here-and-now
        1. Rather, they were looking FORWARD to the City that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God
          - a. And verse 16 says that, because their gaze was fixed upon Zion, then God was not ashamed to be called their God, and He has prepared for them a City.
        2. THIS is where we place our hope, Christians
          - a. THIS is what will help US to endure when people hate us, and when they exclude us, and when they revile us, and when they spurn our name as evil on account of Christ
        3. THIS is what will help us to say, like the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
          - a. <sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup>as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
8. Well, to conclude our time in Luke's Beatitudes, we have to finish as we've finished the previous two weeks
  - a. Jesus pronounced a blessing on the poor, but then he pronounced woes upon the rich
  - b. He pronounced a blessing on those who weep and mourn over their sin, but then he pronounced woes upon those who laugh as if nothing in the world is wrong
  - c. And in our passage or today, Jesus pronounced blessings upon those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
9. But woe to you WHEN PEOPLE SPEAK WELL OF YOU
  - a. Here we must quickly make a distinction about how we are to live as Christians



- i. As the early church began to experience more and more persecution throughout the Roman Empire, certain well-spoken and intelligent men began to rise up to defend the Christian faith
    - 1. These men were known as “apologists”
      - a. The Apostle Paul would certainly fall into this category, as he defended the faith before governors and Kings – throughout Judea and even in Rome itself
      - b. But there would later rise up more apologists, after all of the Apostles had died
        - i. Men like Justin Martyr and Tertullian, and many others
          - 1. These men were active in defending the Christian faith before the Roman authorities in their days
        - ii. And one of the most common arguments these men put before the governing authorities was this:
          - 1. Look at the lives of the Christians, and you will see that we are THE most beneficial members of society you could ever ask for!
            - a. The Christians are peaceful... they aren’t stirring up riots or rebellions
            - b. The Christians are industrious and self-sufficient... they work harder than everyone else at what they do, almost as if they were working for the Lord himself!
            - c. The Christians are making great headway in bettering the society as a whole
              - i. They are taking care of the poor and the widows in their midst
              - ii. They are taking the orphans off of the streets and bringing them into their homes
              - iii. They pay their taxes to Caesar
              - iv. They willingly submit to every law of the land that doesn’t contradict what is found in their Scriptures
              - v. The Christians are your MODEL citizens
2. In other words, the argument these apologists made was, “Just look at the lives of the followers of Jesus, and you will see that these are a people who are worthy of being spoken well of!”
  - a. In fact, when Paul wrote to Timothy to be on the lookout for capable men who could help shepherd the churches, he said at the end of his list of qualifications, in 1 Timothy 3:7,
    - i. *Moreover, he must be well thought of BY OUTSIDERS, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*
      - 1. All of this points to the fact that we as Christians ought to be spoken well of by the world
      - 2. But Jesus says “Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets”
- b. So what then is the difference???

- i. The difference is, the prophets were spoken well of by man, for they told men exactly what they wanted to hear – even while living lives of blatant idolatry
- ii. But the Christian is spoken well of by man, for they live their lives FULL of the fruits of the Holy Spirit – even while telling men that they are sinners in desperate need of a Savior

1. Do you see the difference, friends?
    - a. It is absolutely crucial that we do
      - i. In this age of compromise and tolerance, we can EASILY avoid all the hatred and the slander and the persecution of this world
        1. All we have to do is bend when it comes to the Bible
          - a. Just give some ground in the fight to protect the lives of the unborn, and you will avoid being mocked
          - b. Just compromise a little in your stance on gender, or biblical marriage, and you'll avoid getting excluded
          - c. Just keep your thoughts on sin to yourself, and the whole world will speak well of you
        2. But know this: Jesus himself will look to you and say, "Woe to YOU, for you are walking the same path of the false prophets of old, and this road will only lead to your destruction in the end"
          - a. Again, you may be laughing now, but you will weep on the Day of Judgment
  2. BUT, what if we lived our lives DIFFERENTLY than those false prophets of days gone by?
    - a. What if we lived our lives DIFFERENTLY than SO MUCH of the modern-day American evangelical church??
      - i. What if we stood firm upon the Holy Word of God – yes, even all the hard and painful parts of it that cut through to the sin of our flesh
        1. What if we stood FIRM upon the Scriptures, and at the same time pursued lives of love and joy, and peace and patience?
          - a. Lives of kindness and goodness and faithfulness?
          - b. Lives of gentleness and self-control?
        2. Will we be persecuted for continuing to proclaim TRUTH?
          - a. Absolutely.
        3. But in the midst of our persecution, will the world be forced to acknowledge that are actually really good people?
          - a. They will indeed.
3. This is Peter's argument in 1 Peter 3:13-17, as he said to a bunch of Christians who were experiencing MANY trials and hardships...
  - a. *<sup>13</sup>Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup>but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup>having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup>For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*
- c. Brothers and sisters, this is what we have been called to
  - i. In fact, that's exactly what Peter says in the previous chapter...
    1. *<sup>21</sup>To THIS you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup>When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

- a. My friends, persecution – at least to a certain degree – is already here in our midst
  - i. And the Scriptures PROMISE us, it is going to get worse
    - 1. Look to Christ when these things come to your doorstep
      - a. Follow in HIS steps
        - i. When you are reviled, do not revile in return
        - ii. When you suffer, do not threaten
      - b. But in EVERYTHING, continue entrusting yourself to Him who judges justly
- b. For blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.