Being a part of the Kingdom: Enduring for the Reward

Zanesville, OH | May 19, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** Matt. 5:10-12

**Intro**:

* Jesus’ main purpose, that for which He left Heaven to come to this earth, was to introduce and establish His kingdom. His kingdom does not denote an earthly court with citadels, armies, weapons and civil wars. Jesus’ kingdom, the Kingdom of God, speaks of His spiritual reign and rule which takes effect now in the church which He established via His death and resurrection, that which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). But as great as the church is and as blessed as many of us are to be a part of the sainthood, it cannot compare to the final consummation of all human history in which the kingdom of God takes on its greatest significance: **God dwelling with man forever in Heaven!** And again, because Heaven is so great, so majestic and so beyond our expectations, we ought to do everything in our power to get there. And that is exactly why Jesus begins His Sermon of the Mount the way that He does. The Beatitudes as we call them, denote these supreme blessings given to a people who not only seek to gain knowledge but those who would act upon the knowledge that He has disclosed to them.
* According to Jesus and based on these Beatitudes, it takes 3 steps to get to Heaven. Step 1 is about entering and accessing the kingdom which deals with the church and becoming saints, chosen and set apart by God (vv. 3-5). To get in it takes humility, repentance and meekness. Step 2 deals with the holy lifestyle we must have and practice every day after entering the kingdom (vv. 6-9). It’s all about seeking God’s righteousness, being merciful as He Himself is merciful, being pure in heart and being peacemakers. These go together and function together for our spiritual benefit and they cannot be separated from one another or else we will be separated from the King and His kingdom. Step 3 pertains to the endurance and perseverance all saints are called to exhibit, without which they cannot receive the reward. In the midst of a hostile environment, trying circumstances and vehement enemies, are we willing to hold fast to Jesus and His lifestyle in order to be partakers of that glorious wedding feast? Being a part of the kingdom means enduring for the reward.

**Enduring for the Reward**

1. **Persecuted for Righteousness (Matt. 5:10-11)**
	1. Jesus here advises that the hungering and thirsting for righteousness (from v. 6) will be sure to draw vehement opposition from the world and those who hate Him. Those who make righteousness a part of their identities can expect that they will face some form of ill-treatment and persecution.
	2. This ill-treatment does not arise because the disciple has done anything deserving of it, but it arises since light and darkness have nothing in common (2 Cor. 6:14) and the darkness hates the light (Jn. 3:20). The world is under the influence of Satan (2 Cor. 4:4) and he hates all that is true and pure. Truth is connected to the light and lies are connected to darkness (Jn. 3:21; 8:44-45).
	3. The ones in pursuit of righteousness and truth can expect that the earth-dwellers, under the influence of the father of lies, will convey insults, blasphemies and false accusations (Gen. 39:7-20; 2 Sam. 16:5-8; Amos 7:10-11; Acts 6:11-14; Rev. 2:9). These who persecute God’s people are children of the devil since he himself is the accuser.
	4. All these things come about because they hold fast to the name of Jesus and His will for their life. Jesus Himself experienced these very things (Matt. 26:59-68; 27:18; Mk. 3:22; Jn. 19:15) and He warned those who would follow Him that they would suffer the same fate (Jn. 15:20). The true disciple of Christ does not seek to isolate himself from society because of what he/she might suffer but instead engages with society in hopes of getting others to come to Christ despite the promise of ill-treatment.
	5. One of the most explicit examples in the bible of someone being persecuted for their faith in God and their righteous lifestyle is Daniel in Daniel 6:1-27. The earth-dwellers in the kingdom of Darius the Mede hated Daniel because he loved the truth and he was shining his light.
	6. If our enemies are forced to come up with a plan to trap us because our righteousness is pervasive and they know how faithful we are to God, then we are doing something right! Peter develops this idea more fully in his first letter to the saints dispersed across Asia and the ancient east (1 Pet. 2:12, 19-23; 3:13-17; 4:3-5, 12-19).
	7. These who are persecuted, ill-treated, insulted, mocked and perhaps even killed for their righteousness, faith and witness to God (cf. Rev. 2:13) will be supremely blessed by having access to the eternal abode of God. Even as Jesus submitted Himself to the cruel intentions of man by being put to death on the cross and received the blessing of being seated at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Rev. 5:1) so we too await the day in which we will be with Him face to face!
2. **The Reward is Great (Matt. 5:12)**
	1. With Jesus’ hard to swallow commendations, He invites our attention to the culmination of all these qualities. Jesus states that we ought to rejoice and be glad (Acts 5:41; Phil 4:4; Jam. 1:2) in spite of the terrifying circumstances we will undergo. Why? Because the reward is great! Heaven is pictured as a place of overwhelming peace, joy and rest!
	2. Heaven is never described in the bible as a place for those who know the message but fail to act upon it. Heaven is never described as a place for those who do step 1 but want nothing to do with steps 2 and 3 (Lk. 9:62). Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared and enduring people (Matt. 10:22; Heb. 6:11; Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:7, 10).
	3. Notice that Jesus here says the reward is *“great”* which in reality still does no justice to what awaits us in Heaven. Paul further develops this idea in Rom. 8:18-19. Paul, who suffered so much in his lifetime (Acts 9:16; 2 Cor. 11:23-27), here stated that it is nothing compared to what Heaven will be.
	4. If Paul who suffered a brutal fate in his lifetime and endured all that he did for this reward, then it can only mean that Heaven will always outweigh the worst possible thing we can think of in this life. No circumstance, no tragedy and no trial no matter how bad and overwhelming it may seem will ever be able to tip the scales in favor of being followers of this world instead of God.
	5. God will always be the answer to life’s toughest problems and He will always be there to help us out of life’s greatest pitfalls if we are willing to be honest with ourselves, confess our sins and reach out to him for help and deliverance (2 Tim. 2:12). Heaven is what we are all looking for but are we willing to do what is required to get there?
	6. In addition to all this, Jesus gives us an important reminder that we may sometimes and a lot of times tend to overlook or not pay attention to. Those who would choose this lifestyle in following Jesus are encouraged to consider that their suffering situations are not unique.
	7. Many of God’s people long before them suffered similar fates (Neh. 9:26; Matt. 21:34-36; Heb. 11:36-38). We may be tempted to ask why me? Why is everybody else fine and I’m the only one in the world going through these persecutions and ill-treatment? We need to be very careful of this. Chances are there are plenty of people in our circles that have experienced these things or are going through it as well. They may not be expressing it as openly and they may even have it worse than us.
	8. It’s not easy to do what Jesus is asking. But He does not ask us to do something He Himself didn’t do. He set the example and the bar for us (12:1-3). He is passing the baton on to us and we must take it and run to end of the finish line. And when we get there, however long it takes to get there, we will be glorified, rewarded and blessed by God the likes we cannot even begin to imagine. But we do know it far outweighs anything this world has to offer and anything we go through now.

**Conclusion:** The kingdom of Heaven is for those who listen to Jesus and who act upon His words (Matt. 7:24-25). Being a part of the kingdom starts by being added to His church (vv. 3-5). It continues by practicing holiness in daily living as long as God gives us breath. You cannot come to Jesus in step 1 without continuing in step 2. He cannot be bought, bullied or bargained with simply because His will does not meet our expectations or desires. This is what it takes and this is what we must do. Step 3 incorporates both and it is through this we will experience the ultimate peace, rest and reward. Heaven awaits those who have what it takes and those who are a part of His kingdom now!