

Beatitudes for the Workplace - #9

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Mt. 5-11,12



The Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-12) are Jesus' promises to bless us in every part of our lives, including our work. Following is an explanation on *persecution* for practicing Jesus' values, and how Jesus helps us.

Background:

Historical context illuminates this Beatitude. In the Church's infancy, Roman Emperor Domitian persecuted Christians. His issues were: who is lord, and what gods must be worshipped.

A key word in the Beatitude is *prophet* (vs 12.) Prophecy means, *insight*. Jesus counters persecution by giving his followers insight into (i) how he is present and (ii) what he is doing. Prophecy also declares: this is Jesus' world, and he does not tolerate his people being persecuted, and his values, defied.

Explanation:

1) *Blessed* is what Jesus does. Blessing is the difference, which he makes in our lives and work. Jesus' will for us is to experience life as it can be with God, not as the world imposes.

Life experiences teach us that blessing is neither magic for, nor immunity against, things that hurt us. Rather, blessing is what God does to help us go through difficulties and distress. We live and work in the world, and it can hurt us. But we belong to God, and God is always with us.

2) *Revile* and *persecute*. The workplace-wounded know what it is to feel alone in practicing Jesus' values against corporate ethics, culture, behaviors, or operating systems that counter the well being of stockholders, customers, suppliers, publics or employees. To be a whistle blower is to be on dangerous ground, and to risk becoming workplace-wounded.

Throughout history, God has responded to challenges over whose world this is, and what values shall prevail in it. God has called prophets to declare God's sovereignty over all people, values and things. Since prophets speak God's messages with divine authority, they are often treated harshly.

3) *Rejoice and be glad.* You gotta be kidding!
Your reward is great...? Really? What is it?

There are three kinds of Beatitude blessings. First, there is a promise that God will do something. Second, there is insight and declaration for what God is doing, now. Third, there is a promise and assurance of future blessing.

The first promise is everyone's favorite. We can expect something, now. The second is comforting. It is insight that God is doing something, but hasn't finished yet. The third promise, about the future is where the point about *heaven* comes in.

4) *Heaven.* Jesus taught us that *heaven* is unfolding, here on earth. It is not 'up.' It's not somewhere we go when we die and if we're good.

Jesus' prayer and life taught us: *Your kingdom come on earth as in heaven.* Jesus came into the world to transform it by bringing the Kingdom of Heaven (God's presence and ways) to us, now. The work of spreading the Kingdom is ongoing, and the victories are real, however slow they may seem at times.

Jesus says this about heaven to those who defend his ways:
"Hang in there. I am with you always. The world doesn't know me, but you do. And in case you need proof of how real I am, and what I can do, remember what happened to me. I challenged evil and the world's ways. I felt abandoned, and cried it out from the cross. But, in the next moment, I experienced such strength and peace, I was able to say, *Into your hands I commend my spirit.* Three days later, I rose from the dead – to show everyone my power; go on fighting for you; and continue working with you to transform the world."

Conclusion:

This Beatitude gives us good news in the context of historical events and people's lives. To practice and defend God's values can be difficult. But, God's faithfulness and power are our Good News.

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