

**Series: Loving Jesus #1165**

**Title: *The Persecuted Christ (Part 2)*  
*Matthew 5.10-12***

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. This is a *very* special day in the lives of all of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the full and complete forgiveness of our sins! This is the day when we pause solemnly to remember what God has done for us, through His Only Son Jesus.

Jesus said this in John's Gospel, "<sup>13</sup> **Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.**" That was John 15, verse 13 where Jesus Himself tells us about His sacrificial death on the cross for all who will believe in Him.

The pure, passionate, public, personal *love* of Christ for His friends. Every day, let us be very mindful of the crucifixion of our dear Lord. He paid the penalty in full for *all* of our sins. As 1 Peter 2, verse 24 says, "<sup>24</sup> **and [Jesus] Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross...**" Oh, what can we say, hallelujah, what a Savior!

And so I embrace the day on my calendar marked "Good Friday," and I dedicate this broadcast and podcast to looking at Jesus Christ on the cross. And, as I said to you last time, in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Christ said to the disciples, "<sup>10</sup> **Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** <sup>11</sup> **Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.** <sup>12</sup> **Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**" That was Matthew 5, verses 10-12.

We looked at this word "**insult**" in verse 11. I told you that in Greek this word has this definition: to reproach, to revile, and to upbraid! To reproach is to rebuke, to blame, to discredit, and to disgrace. To revile is to use abusive language. And to upbraid is to criticize severely and to scold vehemently.

But, the Greek language takes this even further. The word here for insult means to "show one's teeth." When someone insults you, it is like they are showing their teeth to you and threatening to bite right into you. This is not the kind of verbal treatment any of us *ever* want to receive. But this is the kind of verbal assault Christ was under at the cross. To be certain, Jesus was under physical assault. His enemies killed Him on that piece of rugged wood. He experienced total physical death. But today I want us to focus on the insults He received. This fits perfectly the context of what He predicted all the way back on the mountain when He gave that unequalled sermon.

And we have time to focus on four New Testament texts. The first is found in Matthew chapter 26, verses 67-68. Matthew 26, verses 67-68. I'll give you time to find it. Matthew 26 is a long and crucially important chapter in the Bible, and when we see Jesus He is before the Jewish religious leaders facing the high priest and his fiercest enemies who are trying desperately to drum up false witness testimony against Him. So that here you have a real mix of the high priest, the chief priests, the elders, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes. They are one angry mob, and listen to how they treat the very Son of God!

I am reading now in Matthew's Gospel at chapter 26, verses 67-68, "<sup>67</sup> **Then they spat in [Jesus'] face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped [Jesus],** <sup>68</sup> **and said, 'Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?'**"

Here we have the physical attack: they spat in Christ's face, which to Jewish people is *the greatest* insult. And then they rolled their hands into fists and beat Christ. They launched a vicious attack on His person, spitting in His face and beating Him with their fists. And then notice verse 68, they turned to a verbal assault in the form of mockery. I [red] the text with a mocking tone, because that is how Christ's enemies meant their statement.

And there is an important piece of information that we should know that Matthew did not include in his account, but Luke did. Here is our second New Testament text. In Luke's Gospel at chapter 22 and verse 64 we read, "<sup>64</sup> **and they blindfolded [Jesus] and were asking Him, saying, 'Prophecy, who is the one**

**who hit You?"** So our Lord was blindfolded. Luke 22.64. In His flesh Jesus could not see who precisely was hitting Him. And then they dared to mock prophecy by saying if Jesus really were a prophet then He could say exactly who they were, but since Jesus said nothing they felt the freedom to ridicule Christ.

My, how we must have the words of Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 rattling around our minds when we read Matthew 26 and Luke 22. Matthew 5.11, **<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you...** And here in Matthew 26 and Luke 22 is the insulted Christ. Here is the persecuted Christ. Here is the Savior on His way to save us from our sins. And all the way to the cross there is persecution: physical and verbal, just as Jesus promised.

And now we come to our third text, also in Luke's Gospel. *Remarkably*, we will now read of Jesus being insulted while He was *hanging on* the cross! If you have your Bible open as you are listening, turn to or scroll down to Luke chapter 23, and be ready to read at verse 39. That's Luke chapter 23 and verse 39.

I want to make certain you know that when Jesus was crucified there were also two criminals crucified on their own crosses beside Him. The Bible says when they came to the place of the crucifixion one criminal was on His left side and the other on His right side. So, picture in your mind's eye three crosses. In the middle is the Christ. On His right is one criminal and on His left is the other criminal. All are hanging off nails driven through their flesh into the old wood. One of the three (Jesus) is completely innocent and does not deserve to die. The other two are completely guilty and do deserve to die.

What a scene. Oh, this speaks powerfully to you and I today. We are just like the two criminals. We are guilty of sin. We deserve to die. We deserve the wrath of God, the justified punishment of God, to fall on us. Jesus Christ is totally innocent. He never, ever sinned. He is *not* guilty of sin. Jesus did *not* deserve to die. *But*, He did die. Please, think of Christ and the two criminals. And when you do, let this impact you and let this stick with you.

And we come now to the comments of the one of the criminals. Verse 39 of Luke chapter 23, **<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who were hanged *there* was hurling abuse at [Jesus], saying, 'Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!'"** Luke 23.39.

Here again are the insults. Luke puts it this way, ***"...hurling abuse..."*** That's what insults are: abusive language. To revile is to use abusive language and that was what this criminal was doing. And what is really shocking about this is that he's being crucified when he says this to Jesus! The man can hardly breathe, his death is painful (agonizing) and imminent, and *still* he verbally assaults in his mocking tone our Lord? Some people will go to great lengths to insult and persecute the Christ and the Christian, even looking up from their place of death (today a bed, then a cross) and *insulting Him*? This is the bold, repulsive intensity of sin.

And, our fourth and final text, just before this in Luke 23, verse 35. (Luke 23, verse 35.) I do not have time to say much about this, but I just want you to hear it. **<sup>35</sup> And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."** Here it is again. The mocking, the sneering tone – the insults slung at Jesus while He was dying on the cross.

Today, as we pause to remember our Lord's death, we have [red] these texts: Matthew chapter 26, verses 67-68, Luke chapter 22, verse 64, Luke chapter 23 and verse 39, and Luke chapter 23 and verse 35. You should read these for yourself this day.

I pray that you see here the connection between Matthew 5, verse 11, **<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me**" and today's passages.

As our Lord was insulted and had all kinds of false statements made against Him, so shall we. But we will never have it as hard as He did. He is God in human flesh. He is our One True Savior from sin, and *the love* of our lives, disciples of Christ! Do you love Jesus? I do. And I honor Him today and every day. Please honor Christ with me. Christ dies, *but* He comes back to life! Enjoy the Resurrection Sunday. He lives! He is Risen Indeed. Join us again on Monday because God Is! ---END---