

Briefing Document-Matthew Lesson 44

October 26, 2025

Executive Summary

This document synthesizes the core themes and key information from a church service conducted at New Life Benson, centered on a sermon titled "Happy Are the Harassed." The sermon, which is the 44th lesson on the Sermon on the Mount, analyzes Matthew 5:10-12 to redefine Christian happiness through the lens of inevitable persecution. The central argument posits that a life authentically lived according to the Beatitudes will naturally conflict with a godless world, leading to harassment and persecution. This conflict is not a sign of failure but a confirmation of faith, for which the promised reward is the "kingdom of heaven." The speaker contrasts the world's pursuit of circumstantial happiness with the enduring, obedience-based joy described by Jesus. Christians are called not to retreat from this conflict but to act as "salt" and "light," serving as witnesses whose ultimate reward in God's eternal kingdom far surpasses any temporal suffering. The service also included announcements for church programs, notably the Operation Christmas Child initiative, and concluded with a direct call for salvation.

Introduction to Worship

The service began with an introduction to the hymn "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing," focusing on the theological significance of a key term.

- **The Meaning of Ebenezer:** A speaker named Bob explained the origin of the word "Ebenezer" as a Hebrew term meaning "stone of help." He referenced the scripture from 1 Samuel, where the prophet Samuel erected a stone to commemorate God's help in a victory over the Philistines after Israel had repented. The scripture cited was:

- **1 Samuel 7:12:** *"Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'"*

- **Worship in Song:** Following the explanation, the congregation engaged in worship, singing several hymns and songs, including:

- "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing"
 - "The Love of God"
 - "As the Deer"

Church Programs and Announcements

A series of announcements were made regarding church activities, community outreach, and administrative matters.

- **Operation Christmas Child:** Britney, the head of the "OCC group," provided an update on the church's partnership with Samaritan's Purse for Operation Christmas Child.

- **Mission:** To fill shoeboxes with school supplies, hygiene items, and toys for children, with each box containing the message of Jesus. The program is noted as being highly effective in bringing children to faith.

- **Participation:** Shoeboxes are available in the foyer for packing. Participants can also purchase and pack boxes online via a link on the church website.

- **Upcoming Event:** On Wednesday, November 5th, the New Life Kids group aims to pack 100 boxes. Donations are still being accepted, and volunteers are needed.

- **Deadlines:** Completed boxes are due back by November 9th. Collection week begins on the 16th.

- **General Announcements:** The pastor outlined several upcoming events and notices.

- **Meetings:** Fundamentals of Faith class (after the AM service), Elders meeting (Monday at 6 PM).

- **Events:** New Life Kids Harvest Festival (Wednesday, November 5th, resulting in the cancellation of the PM service), "We Care" pregnancy center team trivia night (November 8th).

- **Outreach:** The outreach team meets on Friday at 9 AM.

- **Political Engagement:** Nomination documents were made available for Lupe Diaz, a Republican candidate for state representative.

- **Call for Volunteers:** The church is seeking more singers for the worship team.

- **Pastor Appreciation Day:** The pastor acknowledged Pastor Appreciation Day, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to lead a congregation that "thirsts for the word of God" and noting how rewarding the experience has been.

Sermon Analysis: "Happy Are the Harassed"

The central message of the service was a sermon based on Matthew 5:10-12, exploring the eighth Beatitude and the nature of persecution in the Christian life.

Sermon Text

• **Matthew 5:10-12:** *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

Core Thesis: The Inevitability of Persecution

The sermon argues that persecution is not an anomaly for believers but an inevitable consequence of a life lived in accordance with Christian principles.

• **A Consequence of Righteous Living:** Living by the first seven Beatitudes (being poor in spirit, mourning sin, being meek, hungering for righteousness, being merciful, pure in heart, and a peacemaker) will automatically lead to the eighth: persecution.

• **The Nature of Christian Happiness:** The teaching begins with the Greek word *Makarios*¹ (blessed), which is defined as "happy." Jesus' primary sermon is presented as a roadmap to true happiness, which starkly contrasts with the world's definition.

• **Church as a "Fuel Stop":** The pastor emphasizes that church fellowship is a "fuel stop" where believers are spiritually equipped to go out into an unsaved world and speak the truth.

The World's Hostility vs. Divine Truth

A key theme is the inherent conflict between a Christian worldview and the world's philosophy.

• **Source of Conflict:** The world's hostility arises because it does not know God. The sermon cites Jesus' words:

◦ **John 15:21:** *"But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me."*

• **Exposure of Sin:** Jesus' presence on earth exposed humanity's sin, which prompted hatred. Similarly, when Christians live righteously, they act as "salt" on the wound of a corrupt society, provoking a negative reaction. This reaction is not personal against the believer but is directed at the righteousness of Christ that they represent.

◦ The world hated Jesus without a cause (a concept from Psalm 35, Psalm 69, and John 15), and it will hate His followers for the same reason.

The Christian Response to Hostility

The sermon outlines the proper Christian response to worldly hostility, emphasizing engagement over retreat.

- **Rejection of Retreat:** The pastor rejects monasticism or creating isolated communities as a valid response. Christians cannot withdraw from the world because Jesus commanded them to be active within it.

- **The Call to Witness:** Believers are commanded by Jesus to be His witnesses. This role is underscored by an analysis of the Greek word for witness, *martus*³, which is the root of the word "martyr."

- The sermon references John 15, where Jesus speaks of the Helper (*Paraclete*²) testifying of Him, followed by the command:

- **John 15:27:** *"And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning."*

- Christians are to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14), illuminating the truth about sin and salvation.

The Promise and Reward of Persecution

Enduring persecution is presented not as a burden but as a doubly blessed state with a guaranteed, incomparable reward.

- **The Ultimate Reward:** The promise for the persecuted is the "kingdom of heaven." Any loss or suffering in this life "pales in comparison" to the eternal reward, which will "infinitely compensate" for it.

- **Apostle Paul's Perspective:** The sermon highlights the view of the Apostle Paul, who considered his immense suffering insignificant compared to the future glory.

- **Romans 8:18:** *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

- **A Twofold Blessing:** The blessing is experienced both now and in the future.

- 1. **Present Bliss:** The joy and "bliss of obedience to Jesus Christ" in this life.

- 2. **Future Glory:** The eternal reward of being part of God's kingdom, including reigning with Christ in the millennial kingdom and dwelling with Him face-to-face forever.

Concluding Call to Action

The sermon concluded with an "altar call," framed as an essential and non-negotiable part of the church's mission.

- **The Business of Saving Souls:** The pastor stated that "God is in the business of doing one thing and one thing only: saving souls."

- **Embracing Discomfort:** While acknowledging that some churches have stopped altar calls because they are "inconvenient" or cause "discomfort," he affirmed his commitment to continuing the practice to challenge people to respond to the gospel.

- **A Lack of Persecution as a Warning Sign:** The pastor suggested that a Christian life devoid of any persecution may indicate one of two things: either the person is not actively speaking about Jesus, or they may not be genuinely saved.

Glossary of Terms

Term	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition from Source Context
<i>Makarios</i> ¹	mah-KAR-ee-os	The Greek word for "blessed," defined in the sermon as meaning "happy."
<i>Paraclete</i> ²	PAIR-uh-kleet	The Greek word for the Helper (the Holy Spirit), defined as "the one who comes along beside you."
<i>Martus</i> ³	MAR-toos	The Greek word for "witness," presented as the root for the English word "martyr."