Series: Kingdom Living in a Fallen World (Matthew 5-7)

Sermon #9: Questions - Following Christ (Matthew 5:10-12)

One of the primary reasons for this message was to show us that suffering, pain and death are built into the human experience because of sin. There is no escape, even though humanity tries and tries. But we also explore suffering as a Christian in following Christ. We ask the difficult questions as to why many seem to suffer so little as believers. But we begin with getting a perspective on the human hope to escape the inevitable.

1. Genesis 2:16-17 recalls for us one of the greatest of all questions. Why did Adam and Eve rebel? What does that tell us about the human race?
2. “*The rumble of panic underneath everything*,” was Becker’s way of describing the condition of all humanity since the fall. What, do you think, keeps that in check, when you observe the people in your world? What does the panic represent, and what does it make people do?
3. I say that Christian’s also face a paradox. There is only two ways in all of life. John Stott put it like this - “*Persecution is simply the clash between two irreconcilable value-systems*.” If that is the case, why do we see so much of the church live lives that seem little different from the system of the world?
4. Give yourself a moment to think about Christ’s words “*blessed are the persecuted*.” How do they make you feel?
5. The Scriptures plainly say that the life of the believer is lived out in a battle zone. “Indeed, ***all*** who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus ***will be*** persecuted,” says Paul. (2 Timothy 3:12) So, do we need overt opposition to experience suffering?
6. I spent a little time tracing the historical and cultural reasons why many Christians live such a passive life in the war zone (quietism, pietism and existentialism). Big words for sure, but they do show us that we can be affected and, to some extent, even molded by history and culture. What do you think about this? Do you agree or disagree?
7. Paul tells us that we are to be transformed in the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2). How is that to happen in combating wrong ways of thinking?
8. Dietrich Bonhoeffer formulated the phrase “**cheap grace**.” He says that “*Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate*.” Is that a fair reflection on today’s easy believism? Has that affected us as a Church? How has it affected us on a personal level?
9. Christ did die to take the curse. And the world of unbelief hated Him for it. Christ, the Son of God, was persecuted by His own creation. But He also said that we would be also! Give some thought to Philippians 1:29, “*For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake*.” It seems like there is a union, not just of the eternal blessings we share in Christ, but also a share in His suffering! How is that a blessing? How can we rejoice in it?
10. We are promised a reward in glory for faithful following. With the **Cross** on one side, and the hope of **Glory** on the other, is that enough for us to willingly following Christ?