Good morning, Pine Ridge Family!

*“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Matthew 5:11-12 [KJV]*

The Beatitudes is often quoted and rarely understood. For those outside of the brotherhood and often for those within, the standard here is impossible. That is especially true of anyone looking carefully at the next blessedness on Jesus’ list. “Blessed are the pure in heart.” Solomon does not really need to remind us, “Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *continually* does good and who never sins.” We know this, because we know our own hearts. We do not need to read papers or check the internet to see evil and folly all around us. It is found within us.

So now Jesus gives us a level of commitment that we cannot attain to. We cannot be this. It is not in our nature. CH Spurgeon said, “There are no pure hearts on earth, unless the Lord makes them so, and none shall see God in heaven who have not been purified by grace while here below.” When David was caught by the prophet Nathan in his great sin, David revealed to us how sinners get pure hearts. He said, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Ps 51:10)

This is repentance, which the people Jesus was talking to, had just been through with John’s preaching and baptizing. Repentance has four parts. First you recognize that you are a sinner and that sin matters unto eternal separation from God. Then you must understand that you cannot correct or pay for that sin. It is beyond your efforts. Sorrow for sin comes next. Genuine sorrow for the God you have offended. Then there is change. Purity of heart causes drastic change in action. You will not have one without the other.

“Blessed are the Peacemakers.” If you would understand this one correctly, you would do well to understand it as “Blessed are the Evangelists.” The peace that Christ is talking about here is a critical need of everyone to find that peace between their sinning selves and a righteous God. Biblical peacemakers are sons and daughters of God because they carry His message of redemption and restoration.

Not surprisingly, close on the heels of this evangelizing comes “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness sake.” If you stand for Jesus in this world, you will have persecution (2 Tim. 3:13). The Word of God tells people that they are sinners. It tells them they are not all right but are sick unto death. And it tells them that they can do nothing about. People don’t like that. So persecution comes.

Jesus’ point here is clear. Look at history. Who do we admire and revere in our history? The prophets who were persecuted for standing for righteousness. So you also will be persecuted for proclaiming righteousness.

So “rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great!”

In Christ, our Lord…

Pastor EA