

### Bumper VIDEO4:

Pastor Chris Introduction.

### Bless this Home Title

Hey Redemption Church and everybody watching online! I'm so glad to get to be here with you today and get to actually preach to you today. This is our 4<sup>th</sup> and final week of our Bless this home series. Over the past 3 weeks we've been looking at the teaching of Jesus in Mathew, chapter 5, in a section called the "beatitudes" where Jesus gave us 8 different qualities of those who would be blessed, and although Jesus was talking to everybody, what we're doing for the purpose of this series is applying his teaching to a much smaller group... our family. Because the reality is, if you look around today at so many homes where we live, most people wouldn't say, "Man, they're really blessed. They have a blessed marriage, their kids are so blessed." So, we're asking God to teach us to live according to his word so that He would bless our homes.

Do you remember the key phrase we've been using each week as a shift in how to think about faith in our families?

### **We are not just a Christian home. We are a Christ-centered family.**

Some of you may not have been here for the previous 3 weeks and are asking yourselves "what's the difference? What is different about being a Christian home and a Christ-centered family?" Unfortunately today, the word "Christian" doesn't mean what it used to. In fact, where we live, to be a Christian seems to be a default decision. There are tons of people who, if you asked, "Hey, what are you when it comes to your faith?" They'd say "well, you know, I guess I'm a Christian. My parents are Christians and I'm not anything else, so yeah, I'm Christian." This type of cultural Christian makes up a large portion of the population of Christians in our country.

About 80% of the people in our country claim to be Christians, but by looking at their family and lives you might not really see any evidence that suggests that they are. Let's change it up a bit and say "we're not

just a Christian home in the cultural sense, but we are Christ centered in all we do.” This means that Jesus is NOT just a convenient part of our lives, the guy we call (or blame) when things are going wrong, or just going to church on Christmas and Easter because it is tradition. This means that He is truly the center of our life and there will be evidence of this to those who look on. Our values will be different, the way we raise our kids will be different, the way we use our resources, our time, our money, it will all be different. The way we treat people will be different because Jesus isn’t just a part of our lives, he is our lives. We are Christ centered in all we do.

Now, our key thought for today, if you’re ready for some fun...

## **If you are a Christ-centered family, you will be persecuted.**

“Well awesome! That is just what I came to hear today! I can tell I’m so glad I’m spending my day off of work to come and hear this message!” But it is true. If you are a Christ-centered family, what you need to understand is that people will mock you, make fun of you, and ridicule you or worse. I don’t know how it will play out for your family, but it plays out in all different ways for mine. When people find out I’m a pastor’s wife one of 2 things usually happen: 1) they start quoting scripture whenever they’re around me to make sure I know they know it or 2) they start defending themselves over things that are, quite frankly none of my business. We’ve been judged and mocked over our cars. You laugh... but we were dead broke, pregnant, and had a vehicle that would only drive in reverse. We were in need of a car and God provided. He provided us with a 10 year old Kia Rio that was mostly rust, but it ran and had a cold A/C! Most people whispered behind our backs but some came right out and told us that we really should be doing better with the money God has given us then to have to drive “that thing.” I guess they don’t know much about salaries in ministry. Fast forward 3 years a Buick LaCross was given to us. It was 3 model years newer (still 10 years old) but a much nicer car. Now people are talking about how we must have money they don’t know about to be able to waste it on such a nice car. We really should be doing better with our resources than that! What is my point?

## You will be persecuted!

If you remember in week #1 we talked about “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.” If you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness in an unrighteous world, people will laugh at you.

In week #2 “blessed are the pure in heart for you will see God.” If you’re trying to live with a pure heart in a world that idolizes impurity, people are going to mock you.

Week #3 “blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” When we forgive others and show them love and mercy, then we will receive mercy straight from God. When people of this world see this they’ll call you a doormat or a weak person. They will make fun of you.

And, Jesus said very clearly in the 8<sup>th</sup> and final beatitude in Mathew 5:10.

Matthew 5:10 (NIV2011) Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This sounds foreign to us, but Jesus is saying: when people are insulting you – you’re blessed, when they persecute you – you’re blessed, when they ridicule you because of your faith in me – you are blessed!

Some of you might be wondering what exactly this means when I say you’re blessed for being persecuted for doing the right thing. You might be thinking well obviously your family is going to be persecuted – you’re a preacher’s family, you’re a woman who dares to speak God’s word from the pulpit, you’re all a little odd... so you’ve got it coming to you. The hard reality is that you don’t need to be a preacher’s family to be persecuted, you just need to be Christ-centered.

Can anybody tell me when the very first record of persecution took place in the bible? It was between brothers... you may have heard of Cain and Abel. It wasn’t because Abel was preaching to Cain that he was persecuted; Cain was angry because Abel was living the right way and his own sin convicted him. He was angry and lashed out and killed

his own brother, not because his brother did anything wrong, but because he did everything right.

I don't know what it will be for you, but when you are a Christ-centered family you will have different values than the world. Maybe you're a teenager or young adult and you decide to honor God with sexual purity. You decide to wait to have sex until you're married. I made that choice and believe me when I say I heard all of these and then some: "you're an idiot; that is so stupid; who is even going to date you?" They will make fun of you for choosing a different path than the world, but "**Blessed are you when people persecute you for righteousness sake.**"

Maybe, parents, you say "we're not going to put our child in this one sports league because they play games when we go to church." Oh call the cops! How can you possibly put church in front of your 4yr old's future?!?! Maybe church is a better investment in our 4yr old's future... let them make fun.

Maybe you're seeking after God and trying to serve Him and things are not going right in your life. People ask "where's God now? Why aren't things going right?" You need to recognize that things may not be going right not because you're doing something wrong, but maybe it is because you're doing something right! There is a spiritual opposition for it. You are a Christ-centered family, you will be persecuted! Blessed are you when people persecute you for righteousness sake!

So, that raises the question: How do we prepare our families for persecution? How do we prepare them to have roots in their faith in Christ so they can handle the inevitable persecution that will come our way? I have 3 different thoughts on this that I pray will build your faith up.

#1 – we teach them to **EXPECT IT.**

That is right. Jesus said we will be persecuted, so it makes sense to expect to be persecuted right?

2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV2011) In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Who will be persecuted? EVERYONE. That doesn't leave any Christ-centered people out. If your family is Christ-centered you will be different and people won't understand. You won't be different like everybody else, you'll be different in your way because you're seeking God and you're hearing from Him in how he would lead you. I'll give you an example: A few years ago when our oldest son Will was about 1.5 years old I felt impressed by God to homeschool our kids. I did all the research on all the different teaching styles and curriculums out there. I talked about homeschooling and even did my best to line my work schedule up with a life that would be more conducive to it. Fast forward 3 years and 2 kids later and we sent Will to public school. He did the entire Kindergarten year and half of first grade before we decided that public school was not for us and we really should homeschool. This was something God was speaking to my heart years before but we let the words of others get in the way of God's calling. Words like "are they going to learn to read? They're going to be weird and anti-social. They're going to grow up and make their own butter! Dear God, do not home school your kids!" Persecution? Now, my kids are quite social and the butter is amazing!

I don't know what it is going to be for you, but when you're Christ-centered you're going to be different from the world. The world will make fun of you. It may be at Thanksgiving dinner and you're getting jabbed at for wanting to pray over the meal. They may not invite you to certain parties because you ruin keg parties. They may make fun of you when you're doing your bible study at school or because you dress modestly in a world where a lot of women look like they're going to work on the street corner. Whatever it may be for you, they will make fun of you, **EXPECT IT**.

In your life, whatever God convicts you to do, do it. Parents, teach your kids early why you do certain things differently than others. If you don't celebrate Halloween, have a TV, eat meat... whatever it is you feel called by God to do/or not do, let your kids know early on to EXPECT IT. This is so important because the persecution in our country has been relatively light, but it is increasing every day. There is a growing hostility towards Christianity, and Christ's values, and you better learn to stand strong and you must teach your kids to stand

strong because the heat is going to increase. They need to have their roots planted deep. You will be persecuted.

Jesus said it very clearly in John 15:18-20.

John 15:18 (NIV2011) “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

John 15:19 (NIV2011) If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

John 15:20 (NIV2011) Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

We teach our families to **EXPECT IT!**

The second thing we do is we teach them to **ENDURE IT!**

We must endure persecution. Paul told the Corinthians in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:12.

1 Corinthians 4:12 (NIV2011) When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;

What do we not do? We don't whine about it, we complain. This isn't fair. My friend de-friended me on Facebook because I'm a Christian. I just can't suffer anymore.” We don't do that, we endure it. And I would like to remind you that the persecution we've faced so far in our country has been light. There are some of you, maybe watching right now online in other parts of the world where you've confessed your faith in Christ and your family has disowned you. Some of you may be in places where if you are a follower of Christ they will mark you by cutting off your ear or your tongue. There are places even today where people lose their lives for their faith in Christ. This takes a tremendous amount of courage that we can't even fathom here.

So, when someone makes fun of you for going on a mission trip instead of partying for spring break, you endure it. Take it like a man

or woman of God. When people make fun of you for having different values, endure it with a smile on your face. When you do this it is amazing what happens. God does something inside of you. When you endure persecution your spiritual roots grow deeper, your intimacy with Christ increases, and your spiritual resolve is strengthened.

I remember being a young girl going to a denominational church where moves of God were not only not expected... they were not believed in. In 2007 when I began going to a spirit-filled church my family was "concerned." When I got baptized in Jesus' name and filled with his spirit, and trying to walk in my God calling... OH MY GOODNESS. I obviously had lost my dang mind. But you know what? It deepened my faith in Christ. It solidified the decision. It helped me to understand that I wasn't living for the approval of others but only of God and it gave me freedom in God that I had never felt before.

If you have not been persecuted it is almost a disadvantage. I would almost say that because we get so little spiritual persecution where we live, it puts us at a spiritual disadvantage. Throughout history the church has been persecuted and the church becomes stronger. There is a sense of unity, passion and a boldness that weeds out those who don't really mean it and strengthens those who do. When your family stands together for Christ; when you are a Christ-centered family, it draws you together. And when your family is persecuted, there is a sense of strength and identity for who God has called you to be. Where there is a deep-grounded spiritual identity, a mission, a calling, the pressure you and your kids face will not be as strong because of you will know WHOSE you are.

We will be persecuted. Expect it, Endure it, and **Embrace it.**

That is right. I said embrace it. You thank God that you get to suffer in some small way like his son, who gave it all for us. I want to read you the words of Peter but first I need to give some context. Peter was talking to a group of Christians that were suffering and being persecuted beyond anything our little safe world can imagine. One of the things they would do is take Christians who refused to denounce Christ and put them into the center of a coliseum in front of huge crowds then release lions who would physically devour these people. These are the people Peter was talking to. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:12.

1 Peter 4:12 (NIV2011) Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

1 Peter 4:16 (NIV2011) However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

When your friends make fun of you for praying over lunch, you praise God that you bear that name. When everybody else is going to the strip club on a Friday night and you say no, I'm not doing that, I'm going to get married one day and I want to honor my future wife today, and they call you an idiot and stop inviting you out with them... Praise God that you bear that name!

Some of you, right now, may feel like you must be doing something wrong because you've got opposition all around you. May I remind you that things may be going wrong not because you're doing something wrong, but because you're doing something right. Blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness sake. You know, I've preached one other time in my life. It was 2.5 years ago on this same stage and it has the most YouTube views and comments of any other Redemption sermon. It was on women keeping silent in the church BTW. Some comments are positive and uplifting, but the majority are cruel and hateful. I was called a liar with a special place in the lake of fire, a harlot, and my current fave... a "damnation station." They say these things because I'm a woman speaking God's word in a pulpit. I let the haters get to me. When Chris would ask me to preach again I would politely decline because of these comments, but now I see I need to embrace it. I'm being used as a mouthpiece of God and I know I need to EXPECT, ENDURE, and EMBRACE persecution.

Here's the deal. Don't worry when your family is being persecuted for righteousness; the only time you should worry is when you're not ever being persecuted at all. If you're not being persecuted you just might be a Christian family in name only. A family going the same direction as the world. We are not about bigger and better cars, homes, vacations... we are about Jesus, his kingdom, his purpose, his glory, and making a difference in this world. You know now, when you make everything about him, you will be persecuted! If there is no spiritual opposition, maybe you're walking the same way as the devil, because



when you're walking toward God there will always be spiritual opposition. Blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness sake. If you are a Christ-centered family, you will be persecuted. It's part of it.

So, to recap: what do we do? We expect persecution. That is what is going to happen. We endure it. We don't strike back and get angry and defensive. We love, love, and love some more. ***Blessed are the meek, Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, Blessed are the merciful, Blessed are the pure of heart, Blessed are the peacemakers, Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*** You are not going to settle for being a blend-in, average, cultural Christian family. God has called you to something much more. We are Christ centered in all we do because we are created for His glory. God bless this home, that this home could make a difference eternally for Your name sake.