



Happy are Those Who are Unjustly Persecuted

The last Beatitude is especially true of all the prophets, saints and missionaries who made great sacrifices to live according to the teachings of God.

Jesus tells us that those who are persecuted for doing good are blessed, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The crux of the Beatitude is that as Christians we need to look at persecution as the suffering that comes our way for doing what God requires of us, not what we want. Remember, when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake, the kingdom of heaven is yours.





Australian missionary Graham Staines dedicated his life to nursing and caring for lepers in the eastern Indian state of Orissa (now Odisha). He was burnt to death along with his minor sons, Philip and Timothy, by people who hated Jesus and Christianity.

The January 1999 incident was condemned across the world and the then President of India K. R. Narayanan said: "The killings belong to the world's inventory of black deeds." However Gladys Staines, the wife of Graham and mother of Philip and Timothy, forgave those who killed them by choosing to follow the example of Jesus.

The people affected by leprosy were rejected by their own families and society members but by caring for them Graham Staines offered them love, care and dignity.

And yet, some people in the area did not like Graham Staines and his work because he was a true Christian and unjustly persecuted him and his innocent family. The Staines family was punished for doing God's will of bringing about the kingdom of heaven on earth and among people. And yet, they saw it as God's will.

Christians working for the betterment of humanity are often threatened and harmed. Fr. Bismarque Dias of St. Estevam, Goa, who worked for the protection of environment, was found dead in a river a few years ago. Like Staines, he too received threats and faced death with courage. They are Christian martyrs who lived the

eighth Beatitude and today surely are in heaven.

Through the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to live in the abundance and newness of life. This new life of abundant blessing He gives us through the Signs in the Gospel according to St. John which we will see in the following section.



Word of God

Matthew 14:3-12

For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had been telling him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Though Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and she pleased Herod so much that he promised on oath to grant her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." The king was grieved, yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he commanded it to be given; he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. The head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, who brought it to her mother. His disciples came and took the body and buried it; then they went and told Jesus.



Watch: Out of two movies on Staines, the latest - *The Least of These* - stars Sharman Joshi and Stephen Baldwin and brings out the heroic life of the Australian Christian missionary who literally gave his life for the least of these the lepers. Another film about this unjustly persecuted witness of Jesus is *Warpath Beyond the Life*. Both films show how the Beatitude becomes a reality in the life of a Christian.

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Read about Australian missionary Dr. Graham Staines and his great service and sacrifice for the lepers in the eastern Indian state of Orissa or Odisha.

Bible@Home - Matthew 5: 10

MY TASK THIS WEEK

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