

Read: Matthew 5:1-12

Bad or Good?

Matthew 5:11,12

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Devon was having a rough morning when he came down to breakfast. He hadn't slept well because of all the thunder and lightning from the storms last night. And then his morning got worse when he looked out the window and saw his favorite tree lying in pieces on the ground. Devon was ready to cry until his dad said something surprising: it was a good thing the storm caused the tree to fall down.

Devon didn't understand how his dad could be glad about a tree falling down. What a mess! Yes, Devon's dad explained, that was true. But the tree was old and rotted. It needed to be taken down because it could have easily fallen on the house or on power lines. Instead, the tree fell in a way that didn't hurt anybody or cause any major damage. So what looked like a bad thing to Devon was actually a good thing.

Jesus taught his disciples lots of things during their three years together. Some of those things were surprising—like the Sermon on the Mount. In this special sermon, Jesus talks about people who are blessed (or happy). How surprising when Jesus identifies them as the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and so on. He then says something even more surprising: that his followers are blessed when people insult them and mistreat them and tell lies about them because of him. Not only are they blessed when these things happen—they should even rejoice and be glad!

Thankfully, Jesus also explains *why* his disciples should rejoice and be glad. Everything bad that might happen to them because they believed in Jesus was only temporary. Yes, life would be hard for them on this earth because they followed him, but that was only for a short time. They had something much better to look forward to—an eternity in heaven where they would receive their reward.

You likely won't be treated badly in the same way Jesus' disciples were. But what if someone makes fun of you because you believe in Jesus? What if they say you spend too much time at church or that going to church is stupid? Even though it hurts when people are mean to you, remember this: you can rejoice and be glad, because someday you will see God face to face, and that will be your greatest reward!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What did Jesus tell his disciples to do when people made fun of them for believing in him?
- What could Jesus' disciples look forward to?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why can we rejoice and be glad even when people are making fun of us?
- Sometimes our reward in heaven seems so far away. Name one thing that helps remind you of heaven.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Matthew 5:1-12 is called "The Beatitudes" or series of "Blessings." Read the whole section. Which "blessed are you" statement stands out the most to you? Why?
- When you endure something humiliating because of your faith, why is it important to remember your greater reward in heaven?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, it can be hard when people make fun of me for believing in you. Thank you for reminding me to be glad even in those hard times and to look forward to my reward in heaven. Amen.