

The Beatitudes: Blessed are the Peacemakers

Peace-making is not optional for followers of Jesus Christ . . . it is God's calling upon His followers to make peace.



The Transformation for Adult LifeGroups

Matthew 5:9

July 21, 2019

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Matthew 5:9**

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Remind yourself that there is a progression as we work through the Beatitudes – with each beatitude the challenge increases as the next one builds on the previous one. You have to have a grasp of all the previous beatitudes in order to get hold of the next one. And so, in order to become a peacemaker, poverty in spirit, mourning, meekness, hungering for righteousness, mercy and purity of heart – must all be in place. Maybe that's why peacemakers are hard to come by.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

- **We are called to seek peace** - *God has called you to peace.* 1 Corinthians 7:15 (ESV).
David loved his son Absalom but he was unable to make peace with him.
For it is not an enemy who taunts me— then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me— then I could hide from him. ¹³ *But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend.*
¹⁴ *We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng.* Psalm 55:12-14 (ESV)
David experienced the pain of a family member – his son – setting his face against his father and refusing reconciliation. Anyone who has experienced a breach of trust from a family member can relate to the depth of the pain David felt.
Peacemakers strive for peace with everyone (Hebrews 12:14). We work hard at resolving conflict, seeking solutions, and persevering through the most difficult of issues.
- **We must first check our heart** – peace flows from a pure heart (*blessed are the pure in heart*). Conflict seems to follow some people around . . . it goes with them because it lives in them.
But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* James 3:17-18 (ESV)
- **There is no peace for the wicked** - (Isa 57:21) The wicked cannot have peace because they do not have purity.
- **There will be limits to our peacemaking** – *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.* Romans 12:18
- **Peacemaking does not mean avoiding conflict** . . . it often causes a great deal of trouble. It is not for the fainthearted; it takes courage. Conflict avoided is often conflict postponed . . . and therefore becomes worse. Peacemaking begins with the honesty and courage that will recognize a problem and face it.
I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. Matt. 10:34

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. **God is the source of peace.** Six times in the NT He is called "the God of peace." There are no conflicts within the nature of God. He is perfect peace. Jesus Christ is God's Peacemaker – For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. Ephesians 2:14-16 (ESV)
2. **The enemy of peace is sin.** People are at war with one another because they are at war with themselves.
What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² *You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.* ³ *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* James 4:1-4 (ESV)
3. **Only the pure in heart can be peacemakers.**
But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* James 3:17-18 (ESV)

4. **The minister of peace is the follower of Jesus Christ** - *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Romans 5:1 (ESV)

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." Matthew 18:15-20 (ESV)

Seven Tactics for Peacemakers

1. **Recognize where there is a problem** - *They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.* Jeremiah 6:14 (ESV)
2. **Deal with conflict early** - *The beginning of strife is like letting out water; so quit before the quarrel breaks out.* Proverbs 17:14
3. **Practice restraint, especially with your tongue** - *Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.* James 1:19
4. **Prepare for a long journey** - *Seek peace and pursue it.* 1 Peter 3:11
5. **Take a step toward peace** - *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.* Romans 12:20
6. **Aim at humility, not humiliation** - *Being found in human form, he humbled himself* - Philippians 2:8
7. **Entreat the injustice you have suffered to God** - *For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.* 1 Peter 2:19 (ESV)

Peacemakers are like God in that:

- They have peace within themselves
- They surrender their rights
- They move toward trouble
- They love others before they are loved in return

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

There is a price to pay for being a peacemaker. Is it worth it? Yes! There will be limits to our peacemaking, as there are limits to our purity, mercy, righteousness, meekness, mourning, and humility in this world. There will be situations where you cannot make peace, but don't let that stop you from trying.

Aims, limits, and possibilities give a good framework for understanding the Christian life. If you forget the limits, you will find that you are constantly chiding yourself for your lack of progress. If you lose sight of the possibilities, you will default to accepting yourself as you are, and little progress will be made. To have a balanced, biblical approach to peacemaking, embrace the aim, recognize the limits and go after the possibilities.

Questions:

- Do you know any peacemakers? What are they like? What characteristics have you observed in them?
- Are you a person of peace? Why or why not?
- Have you been a force for peace in your family, work, church, community?
- What struggles do you need to sort out in order to be at peace?
- What rights do you cling to and prioritize over your relationship with God?
- What conflict do you need to move toward?
- Who is the one person you could never imagine making peace with? Why?

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- Next week we conclude our study of the Beatitudes with talking about the blessing that comes when we are persecuted.
- Begin thinking about ways Christians are persecuted around the world and in the United States. Look for stories of persecution that you encounter this week in the news or online.
- Read the story of persecution of Daniel in the Old Testament and see how he responded in Daniel 6.

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

21st - 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 32; James 5 | **22nd** - Isaiah 36-37; Psalm 76; 1 Peter 1 | **23rd** - 2 Kings 20; Isaiah 38, 39; Psalm 75; 1 Peter 2 | **24th** - Isaiah 40-42; 1 Peter 3 | **25th** - Isaiah 43-45; 1 Peter 4 | **26th** - Isaiah 46-49; 1 Peter 5 | **27th** - Isaiah 50-52; Psalm 92; 2 Peter 1