

The Sermon on the Mount

“The Beatitudes”

Part 7

“Blessed Are The Peacemakers”

Matthew 5:9

Introducing the Text

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus proclaims...

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

Up to this point in the Beatitudes, our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us that to enjoy the approval and favor of God demands that our character be transformed by a...

1. Understanding of our spiritual poverty and depravity apart from the redeeming work of Christ on the cross
2. Brokenness over our wretched and sinful behavior against the holy God
Resistance of the urge to justify and defend ourselves when we are attacked or wronged
3. Hunger and thirst for holy and righteous living that aims to glorify Christ
4. Merciful and gracious attitude toward those who disappoint us, offend us, and wound us with their actions and words
5. Purity in our thoughts, emotions, motivations, and actions

Now, Jesus demands that our character be transformed by becoming “peacemakers.”

Like the previous Beatitudes, the 7th Beatitude stings the soul. It stings because, by nature, we know ourselves not to be peacemakers. In fact, by nature, we all are troublemakers. Our natural proclivity is not peace; it is war. If you don't believe me, just look at the 20th Century and consider the sobering amount of human bloodshed that stained the earth as a result of war.

Husbands and wives fight over money, sex, kids, jobs and go to bed without making peace. There's not a couple here that hasn't gone to bed with a defiant attitude that refuses to make peace.

Brothers and sisters fight over toys, television programming, video games, and seating arrangements at the kitchen table. The result? Our kids storm out of the room refusing to make peace. Few things are more disappointing and maddening as a parent than watching your kids fight, and then refuse to make peace.

Board of directors, professional players unions, and even church boards fight and argue over all kinds of issues, some of very trivial, and sometimes walk away from the table refusing to work toward a peaceful solution.

We need not probe very far into our personal lives and relationships to find that we are not by nature peacemakers. Our actions and words expose us for who we really are – Charlatan’s. We are sinful, self-centered, prideful troublemakers who want peace without making peace. It’s not a pretty picture, is it?

There’s not a person here this morning that doesn’t want peace in their life and relationships. Nor is there a person here today who, deep down, wouldn’t like to be transformed into a peacemaker.

The question is this, *“Why do so many people, even professing Christians, lack peace and the desire and willingness to be a peacemaker?”*

Maybe the following the video will help us understand?

ENGAGING the Audience

Video *“Where Does Peace Come From?”* (5:08 minutes)

Making the CONNECTION

Outside of one person, the consensus in this video is that peace can be found inside us. Somehow, someday, if we just look deep enough within ourselves, we can either find or conjure up peace and tranquility.

The sad irony of this belief is this – the *enemy* of peace is what lies within us. What is that enemy? SIN! When I look deep within me, I don’t find a wellspring of peace. I find a wretched sinner who is prone to lust, covetousness, materialism, greed, envy, pride, overconfidence, jealousy, and procrastination – just to name a few.

How about you? When you probe deep into your inner being, what do you honestly find? Do you find peace and tranquility? My guess is, like me, you find just the opposite – sin, rebellion, pride, and glaring weaknesses. You find the very things that wage war against peace.

Don’t miss this! Becoming a peacemaker requires that we know where to look for peace.

The world says, *“Look within!”* The world sends us on a fruitless wild goose chase.

God says, "Look to Jesus!" God sends us on a fruitful journey to the Cross of Calvary.

If we have any hope of becoming peacemakers for the glory of God, we must seek peace in the only Person and place it can be found – Jesus Christ and His glorious cross.

Exploring the SCRIPTURE

In *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas a Kempis, the famous Medieval Catholic monk wrote...

"Look, it all consists in the cross, and it all lies in dying; and there is no other way to life and true peace within."

Thomas a Kempis knew where true peace was found – the cross and death of Jesus Christ.

Listen carefully to the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians and Colossians.

In Ephesians 2:11-16, Paul writes to the Church in Ephesus...

*"Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands – remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now **in Christ Jesus you who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 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, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."*

In Colossians 1:19-22, Paul writes to the Church in Colossae...

*"For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, **making peace by the blood of His cross**. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him."*

Jesus Christ is our peace. In fact, thru the prophet Isaiah, God promised that He would send Israel, as well as the entire world, a Prince of Peace. Jesus is that Prince of Peace.

Prior to Jesus invading humanity's depravity thru the incarnation, as Paul so vividly describes in these two passages, we were alienated from God and without hope. We were hostile toward God and engulfed in evil deeds. Because of sin, we were enemies of the holy God.

Prior to Christ and His cross, there was no peace between man and God. We stood before God as enemies of His righteousness and holiness. We stood before God guilty and deserving of His wrath and eternal condemnation.

But, as we see throughout the redemptive story of the Bible, God is the God of peace. God relents of His wrath toward hostile sinners and instead, pours out His reconciling peace. God broke down the "dividing wall of hostility" that separated us from Him. God "killed our hostility" toward Him and reconciled us for His glory.

How did God do this?

He nailed His Son to the Cross of Calvary. He sacrificed His only begotten Son. God, thru Christ Jesus the Lord, poured out His sinless, holy blood as an atoning and cleansing sacrifice for the sins of the elect.

When God, thru the prophet Isaiah, promised the world a Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), He saw the cross. God saw sacrifice. God saw the precious blood of the Lamb, His Son. God saw the lifeless, bruised, pierced, bloody, and dead body of His Son hanging cursed on a tree.

God also saw reconciliation between man and Himself. God saw forgiveness of sin. He saw cleansing of unrighteousness. He saw the heavy yoke of guilt and shame destroyed. God saw peace.

For man to enjoy peace with the holy God, God had to exercise His rich mercy and become a Peacemaker thru the death of His Son Jesus Christ.

Friends, we must know where to find the peace we all crave. Peace does not come from within. What comes from within is enmity with God, dividing walls of hostility, and alienation. What comes from within is sin. Look deep enough in your soul and you will find this true – whether you like it or not.

Before you can ever become the peacemaker Jesus calls you to be, you must first bow before the Cross of Christ, repent of your hostility and sin toward God, and surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as Savior.

This is our only hope for peace; peace within, as well as peace with others. Becoming a peacemaker begins with knowing the Prince of Peace. Do you know the Prince of

Peace? Has the blood of Christ cleansed your sin, destroyed your hostility toward the holy God, and filled you with the peace of salvation?

We can only say that peace comes from within if Christ lives within us as Savior and Lord. A life without the lordship of Christ is a life without peace. And...a life lived without saving peace cannot function as a Christlike peacemaker.

Peace comes from the Prince of Peace and His bloody cross. Becoming a peacemaker starts nowhere else.

Being a Peacemaker

For those who have fallen before the glorious cross and surrendered their lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ, we have peace with God. Now, we must live out our peace by being peacemakers.

Once again, we must look no further than Christ Himself in order to learn how we are to live as peacemakers.

We must ask the question, **“How did Christ bring peace between God and man?”**

No text paints a more vivid and glorious picture of Christ as a peacemaker than the great Christological hymn of Philippians 2:5-11.

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

If you have any desire to fulfill the command of Christ to be a peacemaker among men, then you must meditate and memorize this glorious passage of Scripture.

To be a Christlike peacemaker, we must first and foremost...

Pursue peace at all costs!

Jesus Christ left the glory of Heaven and his face-to-face fellowship with God the Father to bring peace to depraved souls held captive to sin and unrighteousness. Jesus did not

wait for depraved men to seek peace with Him, for He knew it would never happen. Man, in his depraved state, was utterly helpless and could not seek peace with God. Not only was man incapacitated, he lacked the desire. Man was infected with a prideful and rebellious heart.

Becoming a peacemaker requires that we, like Christ, proactively pursue peace at all costs. Our ego and pride sometimes get in the way, resulting in our arrogant tendency to sit back and wait for peace to come to us.

This is not the way of Christ. This is not the way of the cross.

Jesus said...

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

Paul said in Romans 14:19...

“So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.”

The Psalmist writes...

“Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 34:14)

Are you a pursuer of peace? Being a peacemaker demands that you proactively pursue peace with all people, regardless of the circumstance.

Who do you need to pursue as a peacemaker? The moment we refuse to seek and pursue peace with others is the moment we have forgotten Christ's pursuit of us, which led Him to the cross.

Second, to be a Christlike peacemaker, we must...

Relinquish our rights and privileges!

Jesus was God. Yet, He did not cling to His rights as the divine Son of God. He surrendered certain rights and privileges in order to bring peace to God's elect.

Have you ever considered what Jesus gave up to bring you peace? Jesus gave up face-to-face fellowship with God the Father. Jesus gave up eternal riches and the glory of Heaven. By surrendering to God's will and the Holy Spirit's leadership, Jesus gave up His

independent authority as the second Person of the Godhead – the Trinity. He gave up His omnipresent ability to be in all places at all times.

We will never be Christlike peacemakers as long as we cling to our personal rights and privileges.

What rights and privileges are you clinging to? Becoming a peacemaker demands that you let go of your rights and privileges.

Third, to be a Christlike peacemaker, we must...

Carry ourselves with humility and meekness!

Breaking down the dividing walls of hostility between God and man required Jesus to humble Himself.

Maybe the single greatest barrier to peace, and being a peacemaker is pride, ego, and arrogance. It's the statement that says, "It's her problem, not mine." It's the statement that says, "I am who am and I'm not changing for anyone." It's the statement that says, "I'm right, they're wrong, and that's the end of it."

Guess what? Jesus could have said all those things, but He didn't. He could have looked down on your wretched, rebellious, wicked soul and said – *"It's your problem, not mine. You chose sin; I didn't chose it for you."*

Jesus could have looked down on you and said, *"I'm God. I'm the Agent of Creation. I'm the Alpha and Omega. I'm the Lion of Judah. I'm the Bright Morning Star. I'm not changing for you. I'm not going to become what you need me to be."*

Jesus could have looked down on you and said, *"I'm sinless; you are sinful. I'm holy; you are unholy. I'm righteous; you are unrighteous. I'm the Lawgiver; you are the transgressor. You've made your bed, now sleep in it."*

Praise God that Jesus our Lord didn't respond to us the way we so often respond to others who need us to be peacemakers instead of arrogant and presumptuous judges.

Are you humble? Are you meek? Becoming a peacemaker demands that you humble yourself in meekness.

Fourth, and finally, to be a Christlike peacemaker, we must...

Die to ourselves daily!

Bringing peace to your hostile and alienated soul led Jesus to the cross, where He died for you. Jesus gave up His life that you might have peace and reconciliation with God. Was it not Jesus Himself who commanded His disciples to...

“If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Luke 9:23-24)

When is the last time you lost your life in order to bring peace and make peace with another person? When is the last time you took up your cross and died so that you could be the peacemaker Christ Jesus redeemed you to be?

As long as you are in the foreground, not the background, you will never be the peacemaker Christ calls you to be. As long as this life is primarily about you, not Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, you will not be a peacemaker – you will continue to be a troublemaker.

Becoming a peacemaker demands that you die to yourself daily by taking up your cross and following Christ.

Closing Thoughts

I read a convicting quote this week that I’d like to share with you.

“Our trouble is we want the peace without the Prince.”

Oh how true this statement is.

Friends, peace is only found with the Prince of Peace – Jesus Christ. If you’re life is void of peace, look to the cross and embrace Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.

Becoming a peacemaker is only possible with the Prince of Peace at the center of your life. When we push Christ off the throne of our lives and place Him on the outer margins, we will not have peace - nor will we be peacemakers.

If you have no peace today, then I exhort you to examine your heart. Is Christ on the throne of your life? If not, it should come as no surprise that fear, anxiety, doubt, worry, and depression have gripped your mind and heart. Allow Christ to reign in your life and enjoy the peace “which surpasses all understanding.” (Philippians 4:4-7)

If you look in the rearview mirror of your life and see a wake of broken relationships void of peace, then I exhort you to examine your heart. Is Christ on the throne of your life? Is the attitude of Christ, which is yours, reigning in your mind and heart? Being a peacemaker demands the centrality of Christ in your life. It demands that you crucify your pride, selfishness, and ego and embrace the selfless and humble attitude of Christ.