

The Beatitudes

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

Introduction

Can you imagine telling someone like Peter, James, or John, "Blessed are the peacemakers"? They would probably stare at you in unbelief. The motto of Peter, James, and John was "Fight to win!"

Today, many people think the only way to have peace is to destroy those you see as your enemies. History is full of angry disputes. Cruel inquisitions, "crusades" to overthrow rival kingdoms, and demonstrations of military might all in the name of God. There are still some believers who want to dispute doctrine and argue causes which only further fragment the body of Christ.

On the other hand, some people consider the absence of conflict the ultimate achievement of peace. They are prepared and determined to have peace at any price. If a leader would suddenly appear on the world scene who could offer a guarantee of peace, he would have the whole world at his feet. But God is not as concerned with the act of peace as with the attitude of peace.

Being a peacemaker is more than being someone who goes around patching up differences. Peace is more than the absence of conflict. The kind of peacemaker Jesus describes involves the type of peace expressed to others in goodwill and genuine kindness.

Before we begin this lesson on peacemaking, let's read the Beatitudes once again from Matthew Chapter 5. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God."* (Matthew 5: 1-9 NKJV)

It's always easier to define peace than it is to practice it. Even the best of people have either abused a friendship or been the one abused by a friend. Jesus was the perfect example of character and conduct, and yet how often was He criticized, rebuked, and reviled by his contemporaries. The hatred of his adversaries grew so strong they finally had Him crucified.

I. The Peacemakers

Evil is doing its best to take over the world. We don't live in a world of peace and tranquility. Because of evil, the world is becoming increasingly hostile. However, the greater the influence of evil becomes, the more people cry out for peace and

safety. In John 15:18, Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you." (John 15:18 NKJV)

The challenge for the peacemaker is to reflect the nature of God in an environment dominated by evil. That is the mission of the peace of God. A peacemaker is someone who sees the barriers keeping a person from experiencing God's peace and shares how those barriers can be overcome. God's peacemakers are not peace negotiators. If that is what Jesus meant by peacemaking, Jesus himself failed to fulfill it. Neither is a peacemaker one who refrains from taking sides. Jesus has not called us to remain neutral or passive.

Peacemakers are people of action. Edmund Burke wrote, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." One of the great dangers in our society comes from those who imagine they can best serve by never taking a clear stand on anything. If a peacemaker is one who never takes sides, then again, Jesus failed miserably at it. He was the most controversial figure of His time and ours, for that matter. He took sides with a man against a whole town of people who elevated the value of their pigs above the value of a man's life. He took sides against Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, the High Priest, Chief priests, elders, scribes, and even members of His own family. He always stood for what was right and always against wrong.

A chameleon can't be a peacemaker. James 1:18 says a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. You can't be for all sides of an issue or pick your position based on your preferred group. That does not fit Christ's pattern of peacemaking.

The peacemaker Christ is talking about is not a compromiser. A compromiser says, "If you give up something, I'll give up something." While compromising may be a perfect solution for many situations, there are times when it is terribly wrong and even immoral.

A peacemaker is someone who has ended all conflict with God. The New Testament truth is, you can't make peace with others until you are at peace with yourself. And you can't be at peace with yourself until you have somehow resolved the conflict within you. The best way for that to happen is to do what Paul tells us to do in Colossians 3:18 "Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart."

The peacemaker also identifies and accepts the terms of peace by surrendering unconditionally to Jesus – the Prince of Peace. Like Jesus, the peacemaker is willing to confront evil and conquer it. 1 John 3:8 says, "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."
(1 John 3:8 NKJV)

Jesus didn't come to teach people how to get along with the Devil; he came to show us how to claim victory over the Devil. Paul told the Colossian believers in verse 21 of Chapter 1, "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to

present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

(Colossians 1:21-23 NKJV)

A peacemaker follows the example of Christ. Jesus did not make peace with the world; he made peace with His Father. In Matthew 10:34, Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW’; and ‘A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:34-39 NKJV)

The goal of the peacemaker is to bring people into a peaceful relationship with God. The writer of the Proverbs says things like:

- A wrathful man stirs up strife (Proverbs 15:18)
- Where there is no talebearer, strife ceases (Proverbs 16:21)
- He that is of a proud heart stirs up strife. (Proverbs 28:25)
- Hatred stirs up strife. (Proverbs 10:12)
- He that loves transgression loves strife. (Proverbs 17:19)

The nature of evil is to stir up strife and conflict, but the nature of the peacemaker works towards:

- Ending selfish anger and hatred
- Know when and how to keep their mouth shut
- Know when and how to speak boldly
- Does not hold grudges
- And does not engage in quarreling.

The peacemaker Jesus refers to maintains an attitude of quietness and confidence in the face of angry attacks as Isaiah 30:15 says, “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” The peacemaker can endure humiliation and even angry assaults. Peacemakers do not retaliate against evil with evil.

Jesus is the perfect model of a peacemaker. He did nothing to invoke the abuse and hostility aimed at him. He was so good it made evil people angry to the point of hating Him. His accusers couldn’t stand Him and finally crucified Him just to appease their own hatred. Yet in the most crucial moments of His persecution, a tough Roman Centurion could look upon His beaten and battered body and exclaim, “Truly this man was the Son of God.” Though they reviled him, he did not revile in return. And though they falsely accused Him, He did not respond with flaming anger. Even at His crucifixion, Jesus experienced the immenseness of their sin and selfishness evil.

And still, he pleads with the Father, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

That is the perfect pathway to peace. Could you do it? Because peacemakers must! A peacemaker will bow humbly and pray to the Father to keep them from sinning through pride and self-righteous justification.

Jesus said peacemakers are so much like God that they could be called the Sons of God.

II. The Sons of God

When Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God," he does not tell us how to become a son of God. He simply says that sons of God are, in fact, peacemakers. People who become peacemakers will be recognized as the children of God at the judgment and welcomed into the Father's house. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." ([John 1:12 NKJV](#))

Galatians 3:26 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." ([Galatians 3:26 NKJV](#))

And in scripture, the word "sons" also means "daughters" too! We become the children of God by trusting in Christ for our forgiveness and hope. The children of God should reflect the character of their Father. We know from Scripture that our heavenly Father is a "God of peace." We also know that Heaven is a place of peace. And most important of all, we know that God is a peacemaker!

2 Corinthians 5:19 says, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation." ([2 Corinthians 5:19 NKJV](#))

Colossians 1:20 says, "and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross." ([Colossians 1:20 NKJV](#))

Jesus made peace for us by the blood of the cross." Because of His sacrifice, Jesus declares that anyone who wants to can come home to God through faith in Him. The whole history of redemption is God's strategy to bring about a just and lasting peace between God and us.

As God's children, we are developing the character of our Father. What he loves, we love. What he pursues, we pursue. As his children, we are willing to make sacrifices for peace the way God did. Paul says in Galatians 4:6, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" ([Galatians 4:6 NKJV](#))

Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."
(Romans 8:14 NKJV)

Being led by the Spirit always includes bearing the fruit of the Spirit. And the fruit of the Spirit is peace! Can you see why, as the children of God, we must be peacemakers? By faith in Jesus and the work of the Spirit, we are transformed into the children of God.

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of peace. A person who cannot yield to the Spirit of Christ cannot be a peacemaker. Salvation, from beginning to end, is a work of grace. The blessing of peacemaking lies in our hope and joy, and freedom through Christ.

III. The blessing of Peacemaking

Many of the New Testament letters begin with the blessing of peace. Paul writes to the young church at Corinth, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

To the Christians in Rome, he says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace." (Rom 10:15)

To the Ephesians believers, he writes, "For he is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down the dividing wall of enmity." (Eph 2:14)

In Colossians 1:20, he writes that Christ "has reconciled all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of the Cross." (Col 1:20)

Peace is not a principle, theory, concept, political program, or social ideal. Peace is an attribute of God. Jesus heals and forgives and reaches out to the very people the world tells us we should avoid, condemn, hate, and possibly even kill. Jesus did not say, "Blessed are those who prefer peace, wish for peace, await peace, love peace, or praise peace." Instead, Jesus blesses the makers of peace. He requires us to take an active rather than passive role. Peace is a dynamic state which can appear to be anything but peaceful to those who think peace is the absence of conflict.

Francis of Assisi has often been identified with the beatitude of peacemaking. After his conversion, while he was still a prisoner, He had only one ambition: to live according to the Gospel. His now-famous prayer is about the blessing of peace.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

That is a prayer that truly expresses the blessing of the peacemakers.

Conclusion

As followers of Jesus, we have a calling to be peacemakers. When Jesus calls us to leave the world and follow Him, we find peace because Jesus is our peace. But then we are told we must make peace which requires us to renounce our desire for any violent retaliation.

In 'The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, John Stott writes,' "Peacemaking is a divine work. For peace means reconciliation, and God is the author of peace and reconciliation. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the particular blessing attaches to peacemakers is that "they shall be called sons of God." For they are seeking to do what their Father has done, loving people with his love."

Being a peacemaker requires surrendering to God. You must be willing to abandon all efforts to satisfy your vengeance through the destruction of enemies. God comes to us in Christ to make peace with us, and when we accept God's grace, it becomes our responsibility in Christ to show even our enemies the way to peace. In his book, *The Ladder of the Beatitudes*, Jim Forest writes, "No one has ever been converted by violence."

Making peace makes us God's child, which means we are related to each other as family. Peacemakers actively work to bring about a spiritual wholeness and healing between sinners and God by introducing them to Jesus. Peacemaking requires time and effort. We must pursue and produce it.

Is there someone you need to make peace with? Is there someone you're holding a grudge against and won't forgive? If there is, then you are denying yourself the blessing of God because Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers!"

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by saying, "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways." That is the very best blessing for those who want to be called the children of God. Jesus said it, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God."