

THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE

Matthew 5:9

Intro: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

The word “peace” is one of the most important words in the Bible. It appears over 400 times in the Old and New Testaments. One of my first lessons in peace was when I was growing up in Tacoma and Robert Harkness came to speak in our church. He wrote the music to “Jesus, What A Friend of Sinners,” and probably several others. (Related about Psalm 119:165.) It tells us that peace comes through loving the Word of God.

Many are the promises given to us of peace – peace with God, peace in this sinful world, peace with one another, and peace through all of the trials and changing circumstances of life.

But what is a “peacemaker.” This is the only time this word is found in the Bible. The dictionary describes a peacemaker as a person who reconciles individuals who are at variance with one another. But as I have been emphasizing and will repeat again tonight, this is a special title for those of us who know the Lord. It has to do with our relationship with God. We know that in salvation we have peace with God, and are promised the peace of God, but because we are human and still sinners, we don’t always experience the peace of God. And we are aware of other Christians around us who are having the same trouble. So every Christian is to become a peacemaker, using the tools that God has given us to make peace where for the moment there may be turmoil and distress. So this is a very important Beatitude.

As we look at another Beatitude tonight, I want to keep reminding you that this is God’s word picture of a Christian. When the Lord gave these, He was speaking to His disciples, four of whom were mentioned in Matthew 4, and all of them at the beginning of Matthew 10. I think that the Lord had them in mind, and, of course, those to whom the original disciples ministered throughout their lives, and on down to all believers who have lived since then. And so what we need to realize is that no one but a true child of God can attain the happiness that the Lord was speaking about in these Beatitudes. The Lord did not intend for everybody in general to take these Beatitudes, and try to live by them. That is impos-

ible! Only those who have been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit can possibly attain such a standard of life. And none of us can do them perfectly. But by the grace of God we are to make progress in each of them beginning at the first, and coming down to the last.

I want also to make another point. As we come to this seventh Beatitude, and read about peacemakers, we are obviously talking about either our relationship to others, or how we can be of service to other Christians who may be having trouble with each other. So this has a direct bearing upon the second greatest commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. If we are having trouble with another brother or sister in Christ, or if we know of other believers, two or more, who are having trouble with each other, and we are in a position to help them, this Beatitude is for us. There also are times when we have lost the peace of heart that we should have, and in times like that we need to help ourselves, trusting the Lord and using the Word, until peace is restored in our own hearts.

Let me make another point about this Beatitude. Charles Spurgeon, the great English pastor and preacher of the 19th century, pointed out that this is the seventh Beatitude, and that the ancient Jews believed that seven was the number of completeness. The number of the days of creation can be an example of this. Now maybe the Lord did reach a climax in this Beatitude because when we go on to verses 10, 11, and 12 we have two Beatitudes of an entirely different kind. These show the world's attitude toward us when we manifest the traits that are mentioned in the first seven. The one thing that we are to do when we run into the kind of opposition that is mentioned in 10, 11, and 12, is to "rejoice and be exceeding glad" because our experience identifies us with the prophets who were before us, and who were persecuted by the world. We must be living like they did if we get the same response from the world that they did.

The more we read over our Lord's Beatitudes, the more we can see what the Lord had in mind for all of us when He first gave these Beatitudes to His disciples. But we must always remember that salvation is the absolute necessity before anyone can possibly seek to be like the Lord wants us to be, or to be able to help others who need help. No one can live the life of a child of God until he has eternal life. And no one has eternal life except those who are trusting the Lord Jesus for salvation from sin.

Now I want to call your attention which links the Beatitude we have

tonight with the Beatitude we had last Sunday night. Last Sunday night we considered what it meant to be pure in heart; tonight we are going to be talking about peacemaking. The passage that I want you to see is in James 3. The whole chapter is worth reading for our subject tonight, but I am thinking especially of the last verse, James 3:13-18:

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

The wisdom that is recommended to us in the Bible is not human wisdom, but divine wisdom, the wisdom of God. James says in his passage that the characteristic of being peaceable has to be preceded by purity. The reason that the people of the world are not peaceable, is because they are not pure. Purity from sin comes through faith in Christ, and that brings us peace.

I know a man who is totally miserable. And I know why he is miserable. And I know he is miserable because he looks miserable, and he has told me he is very unhappy. But the problem is that he doesn't believe that his lifestyle has anything to do with his unhappiness. People go deeper and deeper into sin looking for happiness, but happiness is not found that way. It is found in purity, and purity produces peace, peace of mind and heart.

So what people need to do is to stop sinning and start looking to God, and the only way we can do that is to read the Bible. That is where God has given us His wisdom. When we study the Beatitudes, this is not what the world wants, nor what the world calls wisdom. But it is wisdom, infallible wisdom, the unchanging wisdom of God. But people won't turn to the Bible unless they are moved by the Spirit of God to do so.

Now this should show us that one major form of peacemaking is to witness to people in the world, giving them the Gospel, and praying for them, and urging them to put their trust in Christ.

But we need to be warned even by the last Beatitudes in this list, that a strong witness for Christ, while it may result in some people coming to peace with God, it is never going to be a message that will be received by the world. Nevertheless, those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ need to be peacemakers, telling others about the Savior and praying that they will trust in Him.

But now let me back up a little. What is it that is going to make our testimony effective with the blessing of God? When we complete the Beatitudes, you can read ahead and see that the next thing that the Lord told His disciples were two things. First, that they (and we) were and are “the salt of the earth,” and “the light of the world.” But what is the first step in making the truth of God sweet to their taste, and convincing them that the light that we are telling them about is the only light that there is in this world where everything else is total darkness?

That which is going to give power and fruitfulness to our testimony is that people will be able to see what God has done in our lives through the Gospel, the Good News of salvation through faith in Christ. What is the Gospel doing in our lives if we really know the Lord and are walking with the Lord? It is that we are “poor in spirit,” humbled before God and men. It is that we know the tragic effects of sin in our lives, and we want them to know how God has given us peace through Christ. It is that they can see evidence of meekness in our lives. What is that? That we know we are not worthy of what God has done in saving us. We glory in God’s grace – not giving us what we deserve, but giving us forgiveness which we could never deserve. It is that they can see that we want to be “righteous,” that they can see in us perhaps ever so faintly, what they would expect to see in Christ. It is that they can see that our interest in their true happiness is an expression of our mercy toward them. And then it is that our desire to see them have peace with God in their hearts, is evidence that we truly are the children of God.

Do you see how all of this is beginning to fit together? Do you see why it is so important for you to be reading your Bible every day, learning about the Lord, and praying that you will be like Him? We are to be witnesses to the world, *not just in what we say, but primarily in what we are!* When

we get just as concerned about what we are as we are about the message that we bring, then the world will be more likely to listen to what we have to tell them.

Put all of this as an interpretation upon our Beatitude for tonight. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” The Lord has left us here in this world after we have experience peace with God in order that we might be peacemakers in bringing others to Christ. We want them to know in personal experience that “being justified freely by His grace,” they too, can have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:).

But now let’s take them a step further. To have peace with God is the prerequisite of having the peace of God in our hearts. Here is another way in which we need to be peacemakers.

A person doesn’t know the Lord very long before they find out that the Christian life is not a trouble-free life. I had one of my students at Multnomah who had not been raised in a Christian home that she never had much trouble in her life until she became a Christian. And she was struggling with that at Multnomah. I had an opportunity to be a peacemaker for her. I don’t remember the verses I used to help her, but one good one that I may have used is Philippians 4:6-7, “Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Another couple of good peacemaking verses are in Isaiah 26:3-4:

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

You don’t have to look very far before you come to some believer who is in need of peace. Perhaps the problem is the need for assurance of salvation. Or perhaps it is parents who are concerned about a wayward child, or one who is inclined toward the world and worldly pleasures. Or it is a person with a serious illness. Or perhaps a loved one has died. Or someone who is in need of work. There is no end of problems in this world, and they all call for a peacemaker. If you love the Lord, you are to

love the people of God. And loving the people of God, you are going to be a peacemaker. Sometimes all you can do is to pray, but that is one of the greatest ways to be a peacemaker.

Yesterday Lucille went to have her hair done, and it is the place where our sister-in-law, Marilyn, used to go to have her hair done. Lucille told the lady who worked for Marilyn all of the trouble that Marilyn is having now, not able to talk like she wants to, and not able to understand everything that is going on with her. And this beautician who knows and loves Marilyn told Lucille that she was glad that Lucille told her, and that she would pray for her. That lady is a peacemaker.

Sometimes Christians have trouble with each other. It may be a husband and wife that are not getting along. Or parents and children who are having trouble. Sometimes Christian people who have been good friends for years, have a falling out. Or neighbors have trouble with each other. May the Lord help us to keep our eyes and ears open. We can barge in where we are not invited, but nobody can keep us from being peacemakers on our knees.

Let me close making one more point.

Sometimes we need to be peacemakers for ourselves, don't we? We all have things that trouble us and worry us – our country is a major issue! I am deeply concerned about our beloved America. It is not the nation that it used to be. Wickedness is everywhere, and such wickedness that was not known just a few years ago to the degree that it is experienced today. People use the Lord's name with total disregard for Who He is. Marriage is becoming a thing of the past. Adultery is a way of life for millions of Americans. Our jails are so full that some prisoners have to be released to make room for others that are coming in. And still we ask the Lord to bless us.

There is not a day that I don't need to do a lot of peacemaking for myself.

Church attendance is not what it used to be. Prayer meetings are not well attended. We are desperately in need of a revival. The Devil is busy as never before. We can't see him, but we can see what He is doing after he has done it. As a pastor I want to be a peacemaker for as many people as I can, and I am thankful for all who are acting as a peacemaker for me and my family.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” Be a peacemaker in letters you write or in telephone calls that you make. I had a call from our son, Dwight, this week, and he was in need of a peacemaker. Let us always be sure that when we tell people we are praying for them that we do what we say we will do.

I want to close with two brief prayers – one from the OT, and the other from the NT. They are both divinely inspired and both are peacemakers’ prayers. You pray with me in your heart as I pray these prayers. Let us pray:

24 The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:

25 The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

26 The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace (Num. 6:24-26).

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (2 Thess. 3:16, 18).