

**“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS”**

Matthew 5:9

**Intro:** This is the seventh Beatitude which our Lord taught to His disciples as He met with them “on the mount.” It describes both that which is to be their character as well as their ministry. In a way this parable belongs to what our Lord said a few verses later when He spoke of His disciples first as “salt,” and then as “the light of the world.” In all three of these terms we are dealing with both character and ministry. That is, they describe what we are to be and what we are to do in this sinful world in which we live. But it is important for all of us to understand that the only way we can best function as “peacemakers,” and as “salt” and “light” is if we have passed through the various experiences which are indicated by the first six Beatitudes.

I have been pointing out to you how one Beatitude leads to another, but we all need to understand that we don’t leave the first behind when we pass on to the second. It is true that one leads to another, but we continue to grow as Christians all through our lives as the Lord leads us deeper and deeper into each one of those six Beatitudes.

For example, a babe in Christ can realize his own depravity, his own spiritual bankruptcy, that which our Lord called, “the poor in spirit.” But as he grows in grace, he is going to understand this more and more, and his life will be affected to a much greater degree by the realization of his need, the longer he knows the Lord. I remember how my own Dad was moved to tears publicly more than once when, after he had known the Lord for many years, he was moved more deeply than ever before thinking of how gracious God had been in saving him. The first president of the Multnomah School of the Bible, as it was called in those days, was Dr. B. B. Sutcliffe. I never knew him personally, but I heard him speak on more than one occasion, and it was always with great blessing for me. But I heard Dr. Mitchell say on more than one occasion, that in the last years of Dr. Sutcliffe’s life, he told Dr. Mitchell that he had never seen himself before as the great sinner that he was. Dr. Sutcliffe was a very godly man, and was greatly used in the teaching of the Word, but as he grew in his knowledge of the Lord throughout his life, the contrast between what he was by nature, and what the Lord was, was so great that he was amazed that the Lord would ever have saved him.

I am sure that many of you could say the same thing. And I will have to say that I understand more now about what Dr. Sutcliffe felt in his heart,

and why my Dad was often moved to tears, than I ever have in the past. It was toward the end of his life that the Apostle Paul wrote “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15). That statement reveals how the Apostle himself had grown in grace and in his own understanding of the truth.

So, as we grow in our knowledge of the Lord, we also grow in our knowledge of ourselves, and the result is very, very humbling for all of us. And as we think back over our lives, we marvel that His grace was extended to us, and we grieve over those times that we have sinned against the Lord.

Now let us consider the question,

## **I. WHAT IS A “PEACEMAKER”?**

The Beatitudes form a kind of a spiritual biography for each one of us as God takes us as we were when we were first saved, and gradually works in us to make us like the Lord Jesus. Alexander Maclaren, a man who was himself deeply taught by the Lord, expressed what I have been trying to say in these words, speaking of the Lord:

His peacemakers are created by having passed through all the previous experiences which the preceding verses bring out. They have learned the poverty of their own spirits. They have wept tears, if not real and literal, yet those which are far more agonizing – tears of spirit and conscience – when they have thought of their own demerits and foulnesses. They have bowed in humble submission to the will of God, and even to that will as expressed by the antagonisms of man. They have yearned after the possession of a fuller and nobler righteousness than they have attained. They have learned to judge others with a gentle judgment because they know how much they themselves need it, and to extend to others a helping hand because they are aware of their own impotence and need of succor. They have been led through all these, often painful, experiences into a purity of heart which has been blessed by some measure of vision of God; and, having thus been equipped and prepared, they are fit to go out into the world and say, in the presence of all its tempests, ‘Peace! be still.’ Something of the miracle-working of the Master whom they serve will be shed upon those who serve Him (Vol. 4, pp. 163, 164).

And so I trust that you can see that our ministry as “peacemakers” is the result of experiencing day by day the development of a godly character which is described in the first six Beatitudes. *There is a very real sense in*

*which God's purpose in our growth is to make us "peacemakers."* This is very clear in the Beatitudes. It was our Lord's purpose for His disciples that they be "peacemakers," but it would take all that the Lord had said in the first six Beatitudes to produce that result in the lives of the disciples.

Charles Simeon said in a message he gave on this subject that a "peacemaker" seeks to preserve peace where it is, and to restore peace where it is not. See Vol. 11, pp. 71, 72. But we can also add that a "peacemaker" seeks to bring peace into lives where peace has never been experienced before. If you look up this word in a Greek lexicon, or dictionary, you will find that the word describes a person who not only makes peace but a person who does so because he or she is peace-loving.

We all know that peace is not a characteristic of this world in which we live. In fact, just the opposite is the case. Our world is characterized by just the opposite of peace -- turmoil, unrest, confusion, disunity, contention, and the like. And so we are not talking about the kind of peace that supposedly exists now between the United Nations and the country of Iraq. We know that nothing has actually changed in that explosive situation. Peace which is the result of the threat of military action, is not peace. Peace is a personal matter. Peace has to do with the heart. True peace is a work of God. The world, as Jeremiah said so long ago, says, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). And the prophet Isaiah was directed by the Holy Spirit to tell us that "there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; 57:21). So we look at the world today and we see that there is an overwhelming assignment waiting for us in the world, which means, in the hearts of the people of the world.

Breaking down the need that we see in the world, we are very aware that there is a great need for peace in the homes of America. Divorces are very common. Children are often raised with little or no discipline, and so disobedience to parents is very common. And this extends to disobedience to teachers and authority of all kinds. People are freer to do what they want to do, and yet they are not happy, and they are not peaceful. The problems in our homes are overwhelming, and are getting worse all of the time.

But it is not only the people of the world that are in need of peace. We see the same need among those of us who claim to be the people of God. And undoubtedly this is why there are so few among us who can really be called "peacemakers." The Word of God is not ministered in many churches today as it used to be taught, and so there is a lack of the peace which the Psalmist spoke of when he wrote the words we find in Psalm

119:165,

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

And if peace were not a continuing need among the Lord's people, the Apostle Paul would not have begun most of his epistles with a prayer for grace and peace for the people of God.

So this should cause us to ask,

## II. WHAT ARE WE TO DO AS "PEACEMAKERS"?

### A. We are to be a peace loving people.

It is not possible for us to be very effective in ministering peace to others if we are not enjoying the peace of God in our own hearts and lives. This quietness of heart which we call peace comes to us from God in many ways. One of the first ways is by prayer. Listen to what Paul wrote to the church at Philippi:

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7).

We as Christians have our trials just like everybody else has trials in this world. But we have a God to whom we can turn, and He has promised to give us peace. It is a sin for us to worry about anything, and yet it is natural for us to do so. But when we come in prayer to God, "with thanksgiving," we can claim the promise of Phil. 4:7. (Re-read.)

Another factor in our peace was given to us by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah when he wrote what we have in Isa. 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:

When trials come our way, or we have trouble with people, or our prayers are not being answered, it is easy for us to get greatly disturbed. But when we fix our minds upon the Lord, remembering His greatness, His love, His faithfulness, and His glorious power, knowing that everything is under His control, then we have "perfect peace." God keeps us in a deep and abiding peace when we are thinking of Him and trusting Him.

There are many verses which speak of peace. I just have time to give you

one more.

You know, it is impossible for us to have peace in our hearts if things are not right between us and our fellow-believers. And remember that this applies to members of our own families, as well as believers in our church, and even to people who do not know the Lord. The Apostle Paul was speaking especially about our relationship to each other as believers when he wrote these words:

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).

It is the Lord's peace which binds us together in the precious and unique fellowship that we have in Christ, and so we are to preserve that by showing humility and longsuffering and being patient with each other because of the love we have for one another.

Much more could be said on this subject, but I encourage you to pay attention to those passages of Scripture which speak of peace in the lives of believers, and then look to the Lord for the grace to be willing to do what He wants us to do, and then to do it.

But there is something else that we are to do as "peacemakers."

### **B. We are to tell people how to have peace with God.**

People who want peace rarely think that their greatest need is for peace with God. As the Bible says, "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa. 10:4). And so it also tells us that for such people "the way of peace have they not known" (Rom. 3:17).

Our text is the only place in the NT where this noun, "peacemakers," is used. But the verb form of this noun appears in Col. 1:20 where we read what the Apostle Paul said about our Lord and what He did to make peace. Listen to his words which you will find in Col. 1:20-22:

- 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.
- 21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled
- 22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy

and unblameable and unrepveable in his sight:

When the Apostle Paul said that the Lord “made peace through the blood of His Cross,” he was speaking about peace with God! All people by birth are alienated from God, and enemies of God, because of sin. And so the Bible makes it very clear that our first and greatest need for peace as human beings is to have peace with God. There can be no real peace for people until they are reconciled to God. Salvation from sin brings peace with God. This is what the Apostle Paul was speaking about when he wrote the words we find in Rom. 5:1:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

These verses tell us that the real Peacemaker is our Lord Jesus Christ, and that our task as peacemakers is to tell people about how we need to be saved from our sins, and how we can be saved from our sins through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. So it is inconceivable that we would be able to call ourselves “peacemakers” if we were not faithful in making known to people everywhere the truth of the Gospel of the grace of God.

So, as peacemakers it is our task to tell others about Christ. And it must be our prayer that the Lord would touch the hearts of those to whom we speak about Christ, that they would hear what we have to say, and turn to Christ for salvation. And this peace is a peace that we can never lose because it is not based upon what we do for God, but upon what God has done for us through the sacrifice of His Son.

You see, we are peacemakers, not because we make peace for people, but because we are to tell them Who the Peacemaker is! We tell people that their basic need is for peace with God concerning their sins. This is the true and only sure foundation for real and eternal peace. We need “peace with God,” but peace with God is only possible through Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made for sinners when He died on the Cross. People don’t need humanistic psychology to tell them how to find peace; they need to be told about the Christ of the Gospel. And just as there is salvation in none other but Christ, so there is no true peace for human hearts until there is first of all peace with God. If we are not telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross, we are failing in our work as “peacemakers.”

Finally, on this subject, let me say that

**C. Peace must always have the greatest priority with us.**

I am not saying “peace at any price,” because there can be no compromise with the truth; there can be no giving in to sin. But I am thinking of a verse like Rom. 12:18: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” And the Apostle Paul gave this after quite a list of exhortations which you can read in Romans 12, and this was the climax of what he had to say. Two other verses are Heb. 12:14-15:

14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

“Peacemakers” “follow peace with all men.” And here it is put on the same basis as holiness. In fact, it is holiness to pursue peace. “Peacemakers” are the Lord’s people who seek peace because it is holy to do so. In all of our relationships, our goal is peace, whether with believers or unbelievers, but peace that is consistent with the holiness of God.

Now, as with all of the previous Beatitudes, we come to:

### III. THE PROMISE.

And this is it: “For they shall be called the children of God.” The Greek has it, “For they shall be called sons of God.”

The next three verses do not seem to indicate that this is what the world will call the “peacemakers.” Maclaren said, “They are a great deal more likely to have stones and rotten eggs flung at them than to be pelted with bouquets of scented roses of popular approval” (Vol. 4, p. 169). But this is what God calls “peacemakers.” It is so unusual for a person to be a peacemaker, that one cannot truly be a peacemaker unless he, or she, is in reality a son of God, a true member of God’s family!

But I believe that this will also be the conclusion reached by other children of God, and even by those non-Christians in whose heart the Lord is working to bring them to Himself. It is our lives which manifest with convincing power that we belong to the Lord.

**Concl:** Perhaps you remember what our Lord said about the love that we as His people are to show for one another. You will find these words in John 13:34-35:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye

have love one to another.

Note the words of that last verse: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Most of you know me well enough to know that I would never say anything to minimize the importance of doctrine. Doctrine is foundational for all that we believe, and to teach us how we are to live. *But according to this passage in John, and according to the Beatitude that we have been considering today, it is not our doctrine which is the most influential instrument that God uses to awaken people to what it means to be a Christian. It is our desire for peace, and the way we work for peace, and it is the love that we have for each other. Our lives show the reality of what we believe, and are used by God to open the hearts of people to the message that we bring to them.*

*May God make us real “peacemakers” that we may be His instruments for bringing people to the Prince of peace, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*