

**The Rock: 05-22-2022**

**A year with the master**

**Title**: Blessed are the peacemakers

**Scripture**: Matthew 5:9, Ephesians 2:14-17

(Black bible Pg. 759, ESV)

**Theme**:

Being a peace maker is harder than one thinks. Jesus is actually not looking for appeasers, but rather truth tellers who operate in love.

**Introduction**:

As we come to this particular beatitude, I am excited and a bit fearful as we look at learning what it means to be a peacemaker.

Excited because we see Jesus as the Prince of peace as we unpack what we should look like as His people. Fearful in that what history has shown, is that peacemakers of and for Jesus tend to be mistreated by this world.

Why is that? Well, truth, by nature is divisive. Truth, when held up and held in honor, when it is stood upon, most often seems to bring anything but peace.

It seems to bring strife, discord, and discontent. Or, does it? For if, truth by nature divides, most especially right from wrong, it actually brings a peace from God even in chaos. That reconciliation which we have through Jesus and His work on the cross in turn allows us to see Him through all the fog of opinion and fighting.

Three times between 1938-1939, Neville Chamberlin attempted to make peace. Actually, what he tried to do was appease a bully -Adolph Hitler, and avoid getting pulled into the issues on continental Europe.

His hope was containment and keeping the "peace in Europe" and ultimately the Isle of Britain safe. Without going into the details of history, the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, and then Poland were all sacrificed to "keep the peace."

But, was that peace, really? No, and sadly we know, while at the outset, being a peace-keeper (appeaser) seems easier, it costs.

Typically, it costs others of course, but it always costs. Truth is also sacrificed in the midst of it as well. Denying the truth which is clear and sitting right in front of us so as not to offend, so as to

keep the peace, will in the end, always fail.

It may take time, and the cost may be high, but it will always fail. Failure to make genuine peace by holding to the truth and not compromising, is our call and our mission in this world.

But the world doesn't live by those standards. By trying to keep "the peace" in 1938-1939, it cost the world five years of war and millions of lives lost.

It also caused a complete reset in thinking.

### **The Story:**

But what does that have to do with Matthew 5:9? Much actually. Because it is one of the best examples which clearly marks the difference between a peace-maker and a peace keeper.

A peace keeper will do anything, will compromise in any way, even ignore the evidence before them, and the truth of Scripture in order to maintain "peace".

Not realizing, that when you operate in that way, you have already lost any peace you felt you may have obtained, if you ever had it to begin with.

A peace maker on the other hand, cannot compromise, and may even seem like a trouble maker, an irritant, an offender. Yet, they will not compromise for "the greater good".

Peace makers will always seek what is right, what is just, and what pleases the heart of God and the commands of God. Never what is easy.

Certainly not for themselves or their position, but God's purposes and plans for His people. There seems to be a connection between the meekness God calls us to and that of being a peace maker.

We have inherited a genuine peace with God because of the cross of Christ.

**-Romans 5:1-5 (ESV)**

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been

poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Jesus knew the cost of our peace, the truth of the Scriptures that there needed to be a repairing of the relationship between God and His creation. He could have fixed it anyway he wanted to, remember?

He told Peter, “Relax and put your sword away, it has to be this way. Listen, I’ve got legions of angels at my command, but God the Father said this is the way.

Peace will come through the cross, through my death, through my sacrifice.” Jesus is the ultimate peace-maker, the ultimate reconciler. But His own people wanted nothing to do with it:

**-Luke 19:41-42 (ESV)**

“And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.”

You see, His own people wanted to keep the peace. In reality however, what they really wanted to keep was their power and position under Roman rule. They wanted their Messiah to rule in the way they saw fit and to their benefit.

But they wanted that without the confession of their need. That in order for genuine peace to rule, they had to come to grips with their need for forgiveness, of repentance before God, and their need of a savior.

Pride, arrogance and a deep desire to be their own gods and kings, caused them to miss the one who would bring them peace. The one who wanted to make them "sons of God".

Taking a page out of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book: Discipleship: He talks about this particular beatitude. Mostly because he was wrestling it through in very real and practical terms.

He was someone who was in the midst of a crisis, where the wider church in Germany had compromised the truth to keep the peace with Hitler. They sacrificed the gospel, for "safety of position" within the new regime.

But when that happens, not only do you find that you have lost all of those things you wished to keep, you have also lost the truth of Christ.

Being a peace-maker, Bonhoeffer was discovering, meant suffering, meant fighting (seemingly counter-intuitive),

it meant sacrifice. It meant being Christ-like. All for the sake of others.

"Jesus's disciples maintain peace by choosing to suffer instead of causing others to suffer."

**-Discipleship Pg. 108**

Lloyd-Jones, years later says much the same thing when sorting this text out:

"Before one can be a peace maker one really must be entirely delivered from self, from self-interest, from self-concern."

**-Studies in the Sermon on the Mount Pg. 104**

Thus, one of the reasons why this beatitude is a difficult one. Being a peacemaker means, putting ourselves in that Christ like position of service for and to others, at the cost of ourselves.

(Bonhoeffer's decision to return to Germany)

You see the connection here between meekness and peacemaker? We can demand things, but we are called to stand on truth, on the gospel on Christ, while at the same time, living in a world which is contrary to that.

Sadly, and more concerning to me, is that the Church in so many ways, and at so many levels has compromised truth for cultural appeasement, and political position.

The absolute beauty of what Jesus has done for us in the ugliness of the cross, is lost.

**-Jeremiah 6:14 (ESV)**

"They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

Jeremiah the prophet is challenging the people of Israel to stop compromising their faith in God and His promises, in exchange for position and power in this world.

Peace comes when we are in the center of God's will, not our own! Even if that means we are in the midst of very difficult situations and circumstances because we have chosen to stand on and for the Gospel truth.

Up to today, the world still will not understand this. That God is always holding His hand out to us, His people, as well as to the least, the lost and the last, saying: Come to me, come to me, and you will have peace.

When Jesus challenged the crowds in Matthew 11 to do just that. He had in mind a word Jeremiah had said:

**-Jeremiah 6:16 (ESV)**

"Thus says the Lord: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'"

Jesus issued the same challenge, the same plea:

**-Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)**

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Peace comes to us, not on our terms, but on His. That is where we find a genuine peace, a comfort in our souls which keeps us in all situations. Given to us by His Holy Spirit.

God, through Christ, pleads with His people to come to Him to find that peace. It is there where we see God, because He transforms our hearts (purifying them) in a way that only He can. He then sends us out and calls us to be peace-makers.

To compromise that for the sake of appeasement and "peace" with the world around us, actually sacrifices the truth and with it, we forfeit the genuine peace of Christ.

That begins a battle within us because we are now in conflict with God, and He calls us away from that not into that.

Peter finally understood this. Paul finally understood this, and Bonhoeffer too, finally understood it, in very real and practical terms.

In order for peace to rule, one needs to stand unwavering on the truths of God in the face of evil and the foolishness of the world.

If and / or when the Church compromises on this, she has nothing to offer to a lost world. When it comes to fighting for peace, the Church loses the moral high ground when we fight as the world does.

This doesn't mean we are passive and become everyone's doormat as it were. Rather, we are to fight differently and with a different focus and end game in view.

We are called to bring glory to God in all we do. We are called to make much of Jesus in all we do. Because Jesus had

only one goal in mind, and that was to bring glory to His father in Heaven.

As a result, we were reconciled to Him and we found peace. Thus, Paul's statement to the Romans we read earlier as well as out text from his letter to the Ephesians.

Paul tells us what God has done for us in Christ. It is such a powerful statement, when we understand it:

**-Ephesians 2:13-15 (ESV)**

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once 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..."

That is what He has done for us. Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be what? Called the sons and daughters of God.

If we want to be sons and daughters of God, the next question we ought to ask is the how?

How did God do this through Jesus?

**-Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV)**

"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 emptied himself, by 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."

Jesus has become our peace, through the cross, by emptying Himself and serving. As a result, God exalted Him, giving Him the name above all others.

He is the Son of God who has reconciled us to God, making peace by bringing God all the glory. How do we do this, as his sons and daughters in the world?

First, without the Holy Spirit this is impossible. I offer you a few things by way of Lloyd-Jones as well as myself.

**1-Be quiet, be kind.** Don't speak, most especially when you really would like to. That is Christ-like.

**-James 1:19-20 (ESV)**

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of

man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

In our world of needing to be heard, a lot is said that doesn't need to be, or shouldn't be. Sometimes being quiet, even when you are right, is right.

Social media has allowed an unbelievable lack of accountability, an ability for us to depersonalize others, and argue in the ether. Saying things far too often that we probably wouldn't if we were face to face with someone.

Is it kind, is it necessary, is it productive, and does it bring God glory? Let's ask ourselves those things before we fire a shot across the bow.

Jesus had a lot to say, and more often than not, He said very little, or nothing at all.

**2-Empty yourself.** We've talked a lot on this already, so just remember, seek to serve others. That includes your enemies, and those who are not like you and do not think like you.

Jesus said to do good to those who hate you, to love your enemies. Goodness, if we are honest, there are times when we struggle to love our friends, say nothing of our enemies. But it is to this we are called. When we do good to those who hate

us and persecute us (next week), we become sons of God- the outworking of being genuine peace-makers.

Seems quite counter-intuitive, doesn't it? FO course it does, because it is not at all the way our culture and world works. Yet, that is the Kingdom call upon our lives, to live in this way.

**Lastly**-Remember, it is about Jesus. He is our peace, and He came into this world that we may have a genuine peace with God.

Our mission as disciples of Jesus, is to offer Him to the world as the only answer, as the only one who can bring peace, the only one who can bring reconciliation.

"For the peacemaker has only one concern, and it is the Glory of God amongst men"

**-Studies in the Sermon on the Mount Pg. 106**

This looks different every day. Because it's not about a track, it's not about being on the street corner telling people to repent.

It's about doing the next right and true thing. How can I glorify God today, and make Jesus smile? How can I help one person today who may need it?

How do I empty myself of myself and being filled with the Holy Spirit make even a little difference in the place He has set me down?

You may not be changing the entire world, but I can guarantee, that if you are looking to be a genuine peace-maker, you will change someone's world.

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