

Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they will be called the Sons of God.
Matthew 5:9

The summer Lise and I were married we lived in Winnipeg, and I worked in a service station that had a convenience store. The station was located in a rough area of the city, and since I usually worked night shifts, I knew when the bars closed at 2 am – we were flooded with people coming to buy cigarettes.

We had all types enter that store, but one-day two extremely large and muscular men entered the store at the same time. I am not sure what set them off, but they were arguing and calling each other names as they came into the store.

As they came to the till, at the same time, it was easy to see trouble was brewing. I looked at the girl at the till and she was obviously frightened and did not know what to do. From the back of the store where I was working I secretly prayed that the police would show up....

When the two brutes at the till started pushing each other, I knew something had to be done. I started to the check out counter, calling out, "Hey, hey, guys. None of that in here!" I strode right up and put my skinny 140 lb frame between these two guys and waited to get killed. I knew I would go to heaven, but wasn't sure how I would explain it to Lise, my bride of less than a month, when she got to heaven...

These two guys, stunned by the runt standing between them, stopped their jostling, looked down at me and for a moment and said nothing. "Here it comes," I thought. Then one of them started to chuckle. Soon the other guy was also laughing. They threw down their money and walked out the door, each going his separate way.

I am still not sure if the whole thing was staged, or if I really had risked life and limb to keep the peace.

But this whole scene reminded me of the seventh beatitude – "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." I have to admit the girl I worked with that night did not call me a son of God – "fool", "idiot" "crazy man", but not son of God. O well, it's God's opinion of us that really counts in the end anyway, right?

Blessed are the peacemakers....

The Bible sure has a lot to say about peace, especially in the New Testament. It is found eighty-eight times and in every book of the New Testament. Each of the Epistles begins and ends with a prayer for peace. Jesus' birth was announced by the angels with a message of "peace on earth, good will towards men", and Jesus' last words to his disciples included this promise:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." John 14:27

And the task of every Christian is to be a carrier of peace to this world:

2 Corinthians 5:18 says: "God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ... gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

Reconciliation is about bringing peace to two estranged parties.

As we look at this call to be peacemakers we are keenly aware that it is not possible if the other beatitudes are not already at work in our lives – we must first be poor in spirit, ready to mourn over sin, meek in temperament, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, merciful and having a pure heart. Being a peacemaker does not come naturally, nor is it an easy calling.

Before we get ahead of ourselves, let's start with a basic definition – what is peace?

1. What is Peace?

Often when we use the word "peace" we are referring to a state where there is no conflict – "There is peace in Gaza today" means there were no bombs, shootings or skirmishes. It does not necessarily mean that the underlying conflict has been resolved.

But the scriptural use of this term is about dealing with the underlying problems – it is about stopping the conflict and actually looking for ways to build the relationship. In Hebrew the word for peace is *Shalom* which speaks of serenity, prosperity and happiness as well as right relationships, fellowship and uninterrupted goodwill between man and man. (William Barclay)

The novel *Ben Hur* is the story of a young man filled with hate, bitterness, and resentment seeking revenge. Then his life is touched by Jesus. Ben Hur then says, "He has taken the sword out of my hand."

Another writer comments on this scene:

"That's exactly what Jesus does when He comes into our lives. He takes the swords out of our hands. We no longer want to hurt ... we want to heal. With his love in our hearts, we shall be able to make peace." (Colleen Townsend Evans)

So peacemakers not only want to stop something – war and conflict – they want to start something – expressions of love and goodness.

2. Where do we start?

We read Jesus' words to us and we say, "I want to be a peacemaker! So where do I start?"

It is impossible to be a peacemaker if we do not have peace within our own hearts, so that is the place where we must start. We must have Christ's peace within us if ever we are to embark on the journey of bringing peace to others. As has been said over and over again, **"You cannot give to others what you do not have yourself."**

Only Jesus can stop the war waged in the heart of every man and woman that asks, "What should I do?" or "What is right and what is wrong?" or more often, "How can I live with my mistakes, my sins?"

The good news of the Gospel is this, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

By His forgiveness and grace Jesus changes us from the inside out – he can make us the pure in heart – our separation from God is gone. We were created for fellowship with God, and because of what Christ did on Calvary we can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

People will try all kinds of things to find peace in their souls – pursuing happiness, or wealth or success or fame, even false religions, but in the end there is no peace until Jesus reigns in our hearts. When repent, and ask Him to forgive our sin and invite him to come in to be Lord of our lives, we will find peace.

When Jesus brings peace to our hearts, it does not matter what is happening around us, we are calm and able to face it. We know that he is in control of our lives and He loves us very, very much.

One day a ship was being tossed around by a terrible storm out on the ocean. A naval officer on board was quite calm despite the storm, and his wife, who happened to be on board, confronted him saying, "Oh, how can you be so calm in such a storm?"

The officer got up, drew his sword, pointed it at the heart of his wife, and said, "Aren't you afraid?"

"No, of course not!" she replied.

"Why?"

"Because I know that the sword is in the hand of my husband, and you love me too much to hurt me."

"Then," the officer said, "remember, I know in whom I have believed, and that he holds the winds in his fist, and the waters in the hollow of his hand."

In order for us to bring peace to others we must first have peace in our own hearts, and only Jesus can bring that.

3. Bringing Peace to Others

It may already be clear, but the greatest way a Christian brings peace to others is through his or her peaceful countenance no matter what is going on around them. If ever we needed people who are peaceful it is today, as we face the Coronavirus. Not panicking, not hoarding, not fearful, simply trusting Jesus. Oh how the world needs the Christians to be peaceful in the midst of this storm.

That said we are not peacemakers if we are not doing something to bring peace to this broken world. Paul the Apostle said, "Do everything possible, on your part, to live at peace with all men." (Romans 12:18, TEV)

Randal Denny suggests four ways peacemakers ought to bring peace.

a) Peacemakers take the lead in healing broken relationships. We will not sit back and wait until our offended or offending brother comes to us and seeks peace. No, we will make the first move.

Jesus said, ²³ "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23,24

Martin Luther used to tell the story of two goats that met on a log over deep water. The goats couldn't back up, and there wasn't room to fight. After a short conversation one of them lay down on the narrow bridge and let the other climb over him. "If a dumb goat could lay down to bring peace," Luther would say, "think what the kneeling Christian could do to make peace!"

b) Second, the peacemaker should be willing to face the real issue – not run and hide, or hope the trouble will go away. Instead, the peacemaker will face the issue head on – so that real peace can be found.

If the issue that troubles people today is Coronavirus, let's talk about it and see what we can do to be safe and make others safe. But do not pretend it is not happening. Denial brings peace to no one.

c) Third, the peacemaker must be a resilient person. She may have to absorb emotional attacks from others or be the sounding board for the deep frustrations of others. Many people just need someone to listen to them – really listen. The peacemaker will do this.

As one who listens to the beefs and concerns of others, the peacemaker must also develop another skill – the ability to not tell others what they heard.

A little girl, snuggling with her mother at night, said, “Mom, I was a peacemaker today!”

Curious, and with all kinds of images of her little daughter stepping in between two combating peoples, and what could have happened, mom asked, “What did you do?”

“I heard something about someone today, and I didn’t tell it to anyone!” She had stopped the spread of gossip – she truly was a peacemaker that day!

d) Fourth, the peacemaker will emphasize the things people have in common and minimize those things that tear them apart. God says, “Follow peace with all men” (Hebrews 12:14).

I heard a story about a man who had two friends who would not talk to each other. What separated them was a silly little issue, but now it had the two families at odds with each other.

So the friend went to Mr. Brown and said, “What do you think of my friend, Mr. Thompson?”

With anger flashing from his eyes Mr. Brown said, “I hate that man!”

Not to be so easily distracted, the peacemaking friend said, “You must admit that Mr. Thompson is very kind to his family.”

Mr. Brown settled down a little, and grudgingly admitted, “Ya, he is kind to his family.”

The following day the peacemaker called on his other friend, Mr. Thompson. “Do you know what Mr. Brown said about you?”

“Are you kidding? I am sure he said a lot about me, and it was all nasty, unkind and untrue!”

“Well,” said the peacemaker, “he said that you are very kind to your family.”

“He really said that?”

“He sure did. I heard him say it myself. Now, what do you think of Mr. Brown?”

Mr. Thompson wasn't so easily sidetracked. "I think he is a rascal and a dirty rat!"

"But," said the peacemaker, "You will have to admit that he is an honest man."

Softening just a little, Mr. Thompson agreed: "Ya, Mr. Brown is an honest man, but what does that have to do with anything?"

The next afternoon the peacemaker visited Mr. Brown and said, "Did you know that Mr. Thompson says you are an honest man?"

"You've gotta be kidding!"

"No, I heard it with my own ears!"

Well, it wasn't long before Mr. Thompson and Mr. Brown were friends again, and rejoicing that they were!

Blessed are the peacemakers...

More could be said on this, but there is one more thing we need to look at today, and that is the promise at the end of his beatitude...

"... for they will be called sons of God."

4. Sons of God

The peacemaker is first and foremost someone who is at peace with God. This means that the battle within has been won, as there was a surrender to Jesus and He now reigns without any opposition. When Jesus is invited to forgive our sin and come into our lives, we have peace and we share His peace as children of God.

As the Paul the Apostle says in Galatians 3:26: "You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ."

Yet there is something that goes even deeper than the pronouncement that we have been adopted as sons and daughters of God through our faith in Jesus.

The Greek language was lacking in adjectives, so they had no words to describe qualities in people. For example: they had no word for peaceful, ie. A peaceful man. So instead they would say "a son of peace".

If you remember, in the book of Acts we meet Barnabas who was called “a son of encouragement”, or an encouraging man.

So when Jesus says peacemakers are sons of God, he means they are godlike – doing the work of God.

And the greatest way to be involved in godlike work is to help others come to know Jesus too, being a peacemaker who shares the Gospel that can bring peace to a person’s heart. For when Christ truly reigns within the heart of a person, that person can no longer hold grudges, anger or resentment or even fear. This means relationships will be mended, wounds healed and lives restored.

A couple was sharing how they came to Christ. The wife accepted Jesus first and the husband stubbornly refused to submit to Christ. Then one day something happened that softened his heart. He came home from work and accidentally dropped his tool chest on the living room rug. The wife didn’t say a thing, but quietly picked up all the tools, all the while the husband stood by, seething with anger. Before she was converted the wife would have raised the roof. But now she just smiled and said nothing. That spoke to the husband, for he could see the peace Christ had brought to his wife’s life, and he knew that he needed that too. The man confessed his sin and invited Jesus into his life, and Jesus miraculously saved this man too, and gave him a new heart, one that was peace-filled and gentle.

And Jesus is still the Prince of peace today – for us, and through us.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.”