

“Kingdom Character: The Beatitudes” (part 8)

Matthew 5:9

Foxe's Book of Martyrs tells the story of Telemachus, a monk who lived in the 4th century. Sensing God's call, he put his possessions in a sack and set out for Rome. When he arrived in the city, people were crowding the streets and filling the coliseum. He asked why all the excitement and was told that this was the day that the gladiators would be fighting and killing each other, the day of the games. He thought to himself, "Four centuries after Christ and they are still killing each other, for enjoyment?" As he entered the coliseum and heard the gladiators saying, "Hail to Ceasar, we die for Ceasar," he thought, "this isn't right." He jumped over the railing and went out into the middle of the field, got between two gladiators, held up his hands and said "In the name of Christ, forbear." The crowd protested and began to shout, "Kill him! Kill him!" A gladiator came over and hit him in the stomach with the back of his sword. It sent him sprawling in the sand. He got up and ran back and again said, "In the name of Christ, forbear." The crowd continued to chant, "Kill him!" One gladiator came over and plunged his sword through the little monk's stomach and he fell into the sand, which began to turn crimson with his blood. One last time he gasped out, "In the name of Christ forbear." A hush came over the thousands of people in the coliseum. Soon a man stood and left, then another and more, and within several minutes all had emptied out of the arena. It was the last known gladiatorial contest in the history of Rome.

The story of Saint Telemachus illustrates the difference that Jesus Christ makes in the lives of people and their relationships.

We live in a world that is extremely violent. Jesus said that in the days before His second coming, nation will rise against nation, and there will be wars and rumors of wars.

Will and Ariel Durant (The Lessons of History) - *"War is one of the constants of history, and has not diminished with civilization and democracy. In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war."*

Anonymous - *"Peace is that moment in history when everyone stops to reload."*

Just consider the conflicts that are going on presently:

- War in Afghanistan--138 lives in 2014
- Civil War in Somalia--854 lives in 2014
- Islamist insurgency in Nigeria--2,081 lives in 2014

- Insurgency in Iraq--4,050 lives in 2014
- Civil War in Syria--28,680 lives in 2014

All told, there are approximately 34 armed conflicts going on right now on nearly every continent of the globe. We are a world of people in desperate need of peace. Yet the superpowers of the world don't have the answers. No president, king, or politician can provide the solution.

What man desperately needs is a radical change of heart. Peace can't be known in this world apart from the Prince of Peace who changes hearts, transforms lives, and rearranges priorities.

Peace and peacemaking is the subject of the seventh beatitude. Jesus says that those in His kingdom are known for being peacemakers.

This is only because they have been made to be at peace with God in their own heart and life through faith in Christ.

Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." What does it mean to be a peacemaker? Our understanding of this compound word comes from understanding the two words that make it.

"Peace" - *carries the idea of wholeness and overall well-being*

Whenever a Jew said "Shalom" to a fellow Jew, he was wishing the other more than simply the absence of trouble; he was desiring for that person to be in possession of all that made a complete life.

"Maker" - *demands that the person is not passive but is a source of peace; actively pursuing peace*

The peacemaker is one who pursues more than simply the absence of conflict. The peacemaker is one who pursues all that constitutes a complete life that God longs for people to have.

In what ways are the followers of Christ 'peacemakers' in the world?

1. A peacemaker is RELATED to God through faith in Christ

In the Beatitudes, Jesus is describing the character of His followers as it is produced by His Spirit living in them.

The world and its policymakers try to be peacemakers.

Yet true peace is impossible apart from faith in Jesus Christ. The world's problems will never be solved by policymakers; the world's problems will only be solved by the true Peacemaker--the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 2:14 - "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Jesus is the ultimate Peacemaker who brings peace in several different ways:

Jesus brings peace to the SOUL

Ephesians 2:12-19 - "Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 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, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

This passage explains how I have been made to be at peace with God by the finished work of Jesus Christ on my behalf.

Romans 5:1 - "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The world and its policymakers put a lot of emphasis on being at peace with one's fellow man. What they fail to realize is that every human being is at odds with God because of sin. Before peace with man can ever be realized, there needs to be peace with God.

Jesus brings peace to the STORM

Mark 4:39 - "Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still! And the wind ceased and there was a great calm."

It was Matt Redman who wrote these popular lyrics:

*Oh no, You never let go
Through the calm and through the storm
Oh no, You never let go
In every high and every low
Oh no, You never let go
Lord, You never let go of me*

Jesus brings peace to the SERVANT

John 14:27 - "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples on the night of His betrayal and arrest. As His followers, the way would become difficult. Their lives would be persecuted. But He would not abandon them!

2. A peacemaker REFLECTS honesty with oneself and others

As one who has been made to at peace with God by Jesus Christ, I am to reflect that peace outwardly in my relationships with others.

Peace RECEIVED inwardly must become peace REFLECTED outwardly. How so?

A peacemaker is honest. Where there is a problem, the peacemaker admits and confronts it.

Matthew 10:34 - "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household."

Jesus said that the gospel divides, showing us that the truth is never avoided for the sake of peace.

Peace does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict. It does mean, however, that the conflict is addressed so that there can be peace.

This is precisely where many relationships break down.

God rebuked the prophets and priests during the days of Jeremiah because they were avoiding the hard truth of confronting God's people over their sinful ways.

Jeremiah 6:14 - “They have healed the wound of My people lightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

Sweeping sin under the rug and failure to deal honestly with problems will never result in relational peace. Peacemaking requires that we roll our sleeves up and go to work in our relationships with others.

God never said that this would be an easy thing to do.

Colossians 1:19-20 - “...having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

Jesus took on sin and Hell and tasted death so that peace could become a reality for you and me. He saw the gravity of my problem, yet He refused to sweep it under the rug.

There is no pretense in a peacemaker’s life. The world wants peace at the expense of truth, something that can’t happen.

3. A peacemaker REINFORCES unity in the church

Being a peacemaker means that we are intentional in our relationships with our fellow brothers and sisters in the faith. It means that as a disciple, you realize that Christ desires for there to be unity in His church.

UNITY does not imply UNIFORMITY.

1 Corinthians 1:10 - “I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”

The Corinthian church was divided over personalities and preferences. Paul’s word for the church was that they humble themselves, keep their eyes on Jesus, and be at peace with one another.

A peacemaker does not insist on his own way.

Philippians 2:1-5 - “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

A peacemaker is someone who looks out for the interests of other people above their own. A peacemaker is not:

- a fence straddler
- a conflict avoider
- a rabble rouser

Kent Hughes - *"If we are not peacemakers but troublemakers, there is high probability that we are not true children of God, regardless of how prominently we wear our evangelicalism. Peacemakers are sometimes troublemakers for the sake of peace, but not troublemakers who spread rumors and gossip about others. If you are constantly fomenting discontent, if you find joy in the report of trouble and scandal, if you are omniscritical, always fault-finding, if you are unwilling to be involved in peacemaking, if you are mean--if these negative qualities characterize your life, you are probably not a true Christian."*

4. A peacemaker RECONCILES unbelievers through mission

The followers of Jesus Christ are peacemakers who intentionally live their life for the purpose of seeing lost people saved. They recognize that they have been entrusted with the "word of peace" which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A peacemaker obeys the Great Commission.

2 Corinthians 5:17- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. And this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

God has entrusted the church with the special mission of helping to restore the peace which was lost at the Fall.

Being a peacemaker demands that I build gospel bridges in order to reach those around me for Christ. A bridge can never be one-sided. Unfortunately, when we become "one-sided" in the church and focusing only on ourselves, we cease to be a bridge for the lost to cross and come to Christ.

The church is not an island to itself. We are a people who are secure on the Rock, but we are building bridges to try to get as many people off the island to reach others who are stranded.

We cannot give to others what we do not possess ourselves.

What does it mean to be a peacemaker?

- Related to God through faith in Jesus Christ
- Reflects honesty with oneself and others
- Reinforces unity in the family of faith
- Reconciles unbelievers through mission