

Title: Upside Down: Blessed are the Peacemakers (Beatitude #7)

Text: Matt 5:9

Date: Nov 1, 2020 at FBCW

INTRO. Let me be clear: when we first planned this Beatitude sermon series, it was not intentional that “Blessed are the peacemakers” would occur on the Sunday before the most hostile and contested election we’ve seen in our lifetime.

- But here we are!

First, the whole earth has been suffering from a lack of peace since Genesis 3.

- Everything God created was originally good and peaceful.
- But there was the Satanic rebellion in heaven (Isaiah 14:12).
- The serpent tempted Adam and Eve; they took the bait.
 - Eve was frustrated with Adam.
 - Adam was frustrated with his work.
 - Cain killed Abel in a fit of jealous rage.
 - By Noah’s generation (Genesis 6) – everything was horribly off course:

Gen 6:5-6, *When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved.*

Gen 6:13, *Then God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them from the earth.”*

Hear what I am saying:

- First lives – broken.
- First marriage – difficult.
- First family – dysfunctional.
- First set of siblings – hatred and murder.
- The first generations of man – violent, wicked, and consumed with war.

Will and Ariel Durant in *The Lessons of History* → “War is one of the constants in history, and has not diminished with civilizations and democracy. In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 of those years have seen no war.”

- What an unsettling statement!

From world history – to the sandbox on the playground – men and women are known...to not necessarily get along.

- Nations...governments...wars.
- Ok, ok – so you aren’t directly impacted by a war.
- And you aren’t in a major city on the giving/receiving end of some violent crime.
- But what about your marriage, family, home?

How many arguments? How much tension? How many times has a “fight” of some kind broken out, if not physically, then surely verbally?

The fall of the devil from heaven...AND...the fall of Adam/Eve into sin...and every person on earth since then...has established a world without peace.

Satan, and every person on earth – are engaged with the God of Peace in a battle:
Who’s going to be in charge of my life?

Second, what does it mean to be a peacemaker? This beatitude is not about being a passively peaceful person.

- It means to be an active reconciler of people.
- It means to diligently work for peace.

The theme of peace (Hebrew “shalom”) permeates the Bible. → it means completeness and wholeness in every area of life, including our relationships with God, family, neighbors, everyone!

Paul speaks of the peace that passes all understanding (Phil 4:7).

- When you are praying...not anxious...grateful...sharing all requests/burdens with God.
- “Then the peace of God will guard your hearts/minds in Christ Jesus.”

Paul begins all of his letters with these words: “grace and peace to you from Jesus Christ...”

- I’ve been given a gift...it’s changed my life!
- I want the sweet presence of Jesus (loved/accepted/forgiven/secure) to be yours, too.

Third, we know that God is a peacemaker.

- We ALL were at enmity/odds with God.
- Our sin/rebellion severed the relationship with God (Rom 3:10; 23).
- God didn’t move away from us...we moved away from Him.
- Now for us to be made new...God had to move, because we couldn’t.

The Gospel means → God took the initiative to love us first, in our sinful condition.

- When it came to sin: I made the move!
- But when it came to grace: God made the move!

Eph 2:12-13, *At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace...(multiple times Paul proclaims: peace, peace, peace.)*

Notice this: the Bible begins with peace (Eden) – and the Bible concludes with peace (New Jerusalem, Heaven).

- But in between, the only true peace belongs to those who relate correctly to God by faith!

We originally had peace in the beginning (but it was stolen).
 We will enjoy peace in heaven in the future (it is promised).
 But in the meantime – the only way to enjoy true, ongoing peace is through Christ!

Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah: *His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor...Mighty God...Everlasting Father...AND the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).*

On the night of Jesus birth, the angels declared: *“Glory to God in the highest...and on earth peace and good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).*

Fourth, it is difficult for broken people to reconcile with other broken people. But Christians are called to be different. This is quite obvious, but just so that everyone understands:

- If I want something “a” – but you want something “b” – we can’t both get what we want!
- Someone is going to lose, or be disappointed.

But Christians don’t pout. Christians don’t get personal and nasty. Christians are called to put the interests of others before themselves – IF – it’s not a matter that directly affects eternity.

I know I previously told you that Jesus Christ is the personification of peace. But this is also in the Bible:

Matt 10:34, Don’t assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, etc. and a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.

Is Jesus calling us to grab swords and fight one another? No, of course not.

What Jesus is saying here is that conflict will be the inevitable result of His Kingdom coming – because God’s Kingdom directly clashes with the interests of this world.

- God wants us to love Him first/best – even above our nearest/dearest relatives – if their values are not in line with Christ!

To be clear: Jesus NEVER taught us to seek conflict or be responsible for conflict...BUT...Jesus also reminds us that when we stand for Him...we will encounter difficulty, peace will be elusive.

Do everything you can to establish “peace” by the power of God.

But at the end of the day, you don’t walk away from biblical truth just to appease the world.

- Rom 12:18, *So far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people.*

Fifth, Christian peacemaking is precisely what identifies us as the children of God. Jesus is drawing the natural characteristics of parents and children. Usually – biologically – children have a physical resemblance with their parents.

Christ is loving – so we must be loving.

- Matt 11:19 – Christ, the friend of sinners!
- John 13:35 – whole world will know we are His, if we love one another.

We never have a right to be unkind.

- Even when we disagree, we must do so respectfully, humbly, cordially.

We are called to be mature (mindful of our weaker brothers/sisters) (Romans 14).

- We recognize that other Christians are different from us.
- We recognize that other Christians are not at the same maturity level.
- We recognize that we have freedom to do certain things – BUT – if it causes someone weaker to stumble in their faith...it's not worth it!

Bottom line: if Jesus Christ, the Son of God – willingly chose to love imperfect, broken, unrighteous people and call them His friends – how can I do less?

- Jesus didn't accept them on the basis of where they needed to be...
- Jesus accepts people exactly where they are – so how can I do less?

Sixth, how can I earnestly work for peace?

Never forget this: God loves the person that you have an issue with.

- Christ died for them. God views them as just as valuable as you are.

Remember: it says something about my character/maturity level when I can...or when I cannot get along with someone.

- Matt 5:47, *And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than other? Do not even the Gentiles and tax collectors do the same thing?*

Remember: our children are watching us. They'll learn their behavioral patterns from us.

Remember: the lost world is watching us.

- Col 4:5-6, *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders...let your speech always be gracious...*

A peacemaker → someone who prioritizes the relationship over having to be right!

A peacemaker → a good listener...empathy...imagines being in their shoes.

A peacemaker → processes their heart/offense before Jesus...not some other person.

A peacemaker uses these words often → *I'm sorry...please forgive me...I didn't realize how wrong I was...You mean a great deal to me...thank you for confronting me...pray I will become more Christlike, and less angry.*

CONCL. If Christ can make me...who was his enemy...a coheir and friend...how can I refuse to make peace with someone else?

Col 1:20, *Through Christ all things are reconciled to himself..by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*