

Matthew 5:9

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[0 : 00] Last December I was invited by Nathan to give a message for Advent on peace.!

He makes peace and he preaches peace. Today I've been invited again to speak about peace. We had a little laugh at the dinner table when I told our young ladies, Wow, Dad, you just preached on peace in December.

But it's a further aspect that I think somewhat completes the idea that we began to look at back then.

And it has to do or highlights the continuing role that Jesus' followers have in bringing his peace to fruition.

So let's look at, read together Matthew 5 and verse 9. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

[1 : 40] Father, thank you for your word that it is life to us. That your spirit is here with us. And we ask you to awaken our hearts to grasp exactly what you want us to hear and know.

And to strengthen us in order to live faithfully. In the light of your love and desire to bring your kingdom.

In Jesus' name. Amen. I think the topic of peace should pique our interest because the world around us is so much in need of peace.

Someone in 2003 calculated that of the last 3,400 years of recorded history, only 268 of those years have been war-free.

That sink in. These continually present wars show us the desperate need for peace among nations.

[2 : 57] But in addition, lingering racial tensions show us the ongoing need of peace among people groups.

And the present high rate of divorces, broken families, conflicts with roommates, neighbors, and co-workers that we all face show us the need for peace in our interpersonal relationships.

But as much as negotiated truces and discrimination laws and counseling have been helpful, history and our own experience has shown us that the world's peace is at best uneasy and temporary.

But in contrast, the gospel, the gospel that we cherish, the gospel that we love and proclaim every week offers a different kind of peace.

It is a powerful peace. It is a peace that Jesus makes between God and his people and between you and other believers.

[4 : 18] It is a peace that doesn't just restrict hostility. It completely eliminates the hostility. The prophetic portrait of the church in the book of Revelation depicting a great multitude that no one can number from every nation, from all tribes of people and languages, standing before the throne and the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands.

This depiction is not just a roll call of everybody that's going to show up in heaven someday. This is an amazing glimpse into the glorious destiny of the church.

True unity among great diversity. This unity appears to be foremost in the mind of Jesus just before he was crucified.

And we can see it in his prayer in John chapter 17. And I like to read a couple passages out of John 17. First in verse 11, he is praying, And he makes that request even stronger and broader when he continues in verse 20.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. That's us. That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I in you.

[6 : 28] That they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. If this was so important to Jesus, then I hope you agree with me.

It should be a primary concern for us who are his followers. The beatitude we are looking at this morning in Matthew 5 verse 9 affirms this point in the strongest way.

It links the very identity of God's children with the activity of peacemaking.

It must be obvious to us that the church has not yet fully experienced this peace. Our assurance is that one day it will be complete.

But perhaps what is not so obvious is that each one of us has a role in the process. Church splits. Segregated congregations.

[7 : 42] Crises among Christian families. Other broken relationships among believers show us that the task is far from finished.

And what the passage before us this morning suggests is that the peacemaking that Jesus describes is the normal activity of the children of God.

And that which best represents our father's nature. In a fallen and divided and conflict-ridden world. Of course, in this world, peacemaking is usually a painful process. Now, like most Proverbs, Matthew 5 verse 9 has its limitations.

It doesn't instruct us how to be peacemakers. Nor does it even command us to be peacemakers.

[8 : 53] Neither does it show the context for peacemaking. Rather, I believe it simply serves to encourage us that the change that God has worked in us to make us peacemakers is evidence that we belong to him.

And the fact that we thus belong to him is what makes us blessed. I believe this morning Jesus wants to encourage you and me by reminding us of what truly makes up the blessed life.

Each succeeding beatitude affirms this. And in this seventh beatitude, we focus first on the idea of peacemakers.

And then the benefit that belongs to you and I. First, Jesus wants you to know that peacemakers are among those who are blessed.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Very straightforward. So, to begin with, I'd like to consider what peacemaker is. The Greek term that we find behind this word is a compound word that is translated literally peacemakers.

[10 : 25] Really simple. But it's only used right here in the New Testament. When a word is only used once in the scripture, it's difficult to interpret it.

More difficult, perhaps, because we don't have the support of other uses to determine meaning. But in this case, we do have some other help.

In Colossians 1.20, we find a verbal form of the same compound that refers to Jesus as one making peace by the blood of his cross.

And closely related to that is Ephesians 2.15. Where there are two words. Where the two words of the compound are used separately.

To simply say, making peace. And there he describes the mysterious work of Jesus when he created a unity between Jews and Gentiles who were previously enemies.

[11 : 35] Now, both passages emphasize God's work of reconciliation. And the use of the word peace in these passages, I think, aligns more with the Hebrew relational idea of shalom rather than the Latin pacts or the Greek irain.

Which we get the name Irene. Both which refer to a state of being consisting of no war. There's a, you know, that kind of peace is just the absence of war.

It's a state of quiet. Whereas the Hebrew word shalom refers more to harmony and wholeness and welfare. And it's a relational kind of term.

And the uses in Ephesians and Colossians suggest to us then that Jesus' peacemakers are those who are somehow involved in his reconciling work.

Now, further than that, we have a passage right here in Matthew chapter 5 that appears to shed some light on the idea.

[12 : 48] Look at verses 43 through 45. In chapter 5 of Matthew. I'll read those verses.

You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others?

Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Now, even though the word peace is not used here in this section, the connection to this seventh beatitude is quite strong.

[14 : 02] The main similarity is the use of the phrase, Sons of your Father who is in heaven. And Jesus is saying that contrary to the present religious teaching, he instructs his followers to love their enemies.

And he says it's an attitude that reflects the care that God has for those who are evil as well as good. And the characteristic of love in a follower of Jesus is what designates him as a son. A son of the Father. The same identification we find in Matthew chapter 5 verse 9 for peacemakers. So what I think Jesus is describing is not someone who simply tolerates enemies, but who actually loves and actively demonstrates that love through prayer and interaction with them. And really that's the heart of peacemaking. Verses 44 and 47 provide two simple ways this love is demonstrated.

First, pray for those who persecute you. This is a way in which peacemaking is accomplished. And second, by, interestingly, greeting.

[15 : 35] They're not complex tasks, but they can be difficult. God has not left us alone in the process of peacemaking. It's his task, but he wants us to participate with him.

And so prayer must be natural. And praying for enemies is a first and major, perhaps the most important step. But why does he mention greeting?

Hey, enemy. Hey, enemy. Perhaps it's simply a simple but powerful way of making a bridge. There's someone who doesn't like you, hates you, has a problem with you. John Piper has an insightful insight here.

He says, peacemaking tries to build bridges to people. It does not want the animosity to remain. It wants reconciliation. It wants harmony.

[16 : 41] And so it tries to show what may be the only courtesy the enemy will tolerate. Namely, a greeting. The peacemaker looks the enemy right in the eye and says, good morning, John.

And he says it with a longing for peace in his heart, not with a phony gloss of politeness to cover his anger. Peacemaking is not necessarily a pleasant task.

And there are major areas that fall under this category. Important, serious issues.

But we have to begin right here. Right with our neighbor. Right with the conflict that we are experiencing. And to love.

And to seek reconciliation. Whether it's a conflict between you and another person. Or between two other people.

[17 : 46] Or between groups. The process is difficult. And it's often painful. And it's not always successful. But the point is, it's the normal occupation of every believer of Jesus.

According to Jesus, these, as well as the previous Beatitudes, these peacemakers are the blessed. Nathan has already adequately explained the difficulty in translating the Greek word from which we get the word blessed. Blessed. Blessed. Most translators and scholars understand the limitations of the word blessed.

But they use it anyway. And so I'm using it anyway. I think it's because all the other words suggested have their own problems as well. And we just don't have in English a 100% equivalent word.

And so, blessed is sufficient. But what's really important to see here is that peacemakers are included in this unusual list that is described as having great benefit.

[19 : 11] And so whether you use the word blessed or whether it's fortunate or whether it's happy or whether it's flourishing, ending the peacemaker is a beneficiary and this will be well known.

But also, like the other subjects of the Beatitudes, the benefit isn't the condition or the subject or the activity being described.

in other words there's nothing blessed about the pain of desperation the pain of sorrow there's nothing blessed about the pain of restraint restraint or unsatisfied longing or the pain of of standing in the middle of warring people and getting hit from both sides there's nothing blessed in that the reason they're blessed is because of the promise and that brings us to the second part of the verse not only does Jesus want you to understand that peacemakers are among those who are blessed but he understands he wants you to understand why peacemakers are blessed because they will be called the sons of God now if you were to go to Israel or run into some Israeli people in Walmart

there are various ways to ask someone their name you can simply ask what's your name ma shemcha or ma shmech but you find commonly this other phrase and it's simply eich korim lacha or eich korim lach if it's a female so memorize that when you run into an israeli at walmart and you hear them speaking hebrew you just walk up to him and say eich korim lacha and they'll go oh you speak hebrew okay of course they'll say it in hebrew and you won't understand what they're saying but but it is literally translated how how do they call you eich korim how are they calling you in other words what's your name and i think eich korim lacha and i think it's very similar and i think it's very similar it's very similar to the sense used here by the verb it's an idiomatic way of stating one's identity they will be called the sons of god because they are the sons of god now this concept of the sons of god is an important one for us and it has a rich biblical context context all the way back to the garden god announces something unique about the creation of humanity they among all his creation will be created in the image and likeness of god now though there are various opinions about exactly what that image and likeness referred to there's strong evidence in in the scripture itself and in the context of the the ancient world at that time that both rulership and sonship are in view man was created as the image of god according to genesis 1 26 through 28 and first corinthians 11 7 supports that in relation to the world man is a ruler in relation to god he is a son now this idea of sonship is supported by the use of the same term in genesis chapter 5 verses 1 through 3 they're referring to the relationship between a human father and his son let's look at that just for a minute if you want to turn there genesis 5 1 through 3 this is the second place where image and likeness are used in the scripture and it says there in genesis 5 1 this is the book of the generations of adam

when god created man he made him in the likeness of god male and female he created them and blessed them and named them man when they were created and adam lived 130 years or when adam lived 130 years he fathered a son in his own likeness after his image and named him seth and on and on it goes and the idea is further supported by luke in his genealogy in chapter 3 verse 38 where he ending the genealogy of jesus says in verse 38 the son of enos the son of seth the son of adam the son of god so as a son adam was to reflect god's likeness in a way that he in the way that he ruled over creation mediating god's will later the designation of son of god was inherited by israel eventually being applied to the kings of israel solomon especially he will he will be a son to me i will be his father and then jesus in jesus the idea of sonship takes on its full significance and then finally the designation sons of god continues to those who believe in him and that's us now some of the translations say children here and that's legitimate because of the fact that it is generic although man in the old testament is generic there at least where it speaks of humanity and not specific man adam but i think the word sons here helps us because it links us back to this rich history of sonship and what god is implying by this term in the old testament this image and likeness was to be reflected in man's dominion over creation in his character in the way he rules he had relationship with god in the garden and from that relationship then he was able to to adequately and and represent god in a way that that was consistent with who god was and is but here in matthew there seems to be an added dimension and that is not just rulership but love motivated peacemaking and it's appropriate considering the state the world is in what jesus appears to be saying is that peacemakers reflect god's heart for reconciliation and unity in such a way that reveals that they are actually the sons of god that is why they are blessed the blessing is that god has included you in his family and this blessing is consistent with the other blessings of the beatitudes possessing the kingdom of heaven being comforted inheriting the earth being satisfied seeing god being called the sons of god these all reflect in different words and different nuances the same idea that the blessing is that we are included the blessing is that we belong to god the blessing is that the kingdom is ours the blessing is that we are a part of god's plan and that's the hope i believe jesus wants you to have to hold on to to take with you this morning now in conclusion

and i know my family's really surprised to hear me say that so soon it's funny because i showed one of my daughters my notes today she goes six pages that's all miracles happen but i believe that jesus's reason for beginning the sermon on the mount with these beatitudes is just as important to us today as it was to the disciples that first heard him just like them he wants to encourage you who follow him to keep your hope fixed on him to understand that peacemakers are among those who are in this way blessed and that peacemakers are blessed because they will be called the sons of god as the introduction to jesus's sermon on the mount the beatitudes have an important place when you think of this in the context of the sermon the sermon is a beautifully structured teaching that warns against deceptive religious hypocrisy that relies on external righteousness that seeks the

approval of man rather than god that exhibits a compromising loyalty to god and to the things of this world and that kind of religion jesus makes very clear is not enough for salvation and will crumble in the storms of judgment the vision of a higher kind of life a better righteousness is cast in the beatitudes and it's unpacked in the rest of the sermon many of us today are in similar or in danger of a similar religious approach to our faith god will love me if i do this you might even be thinking i gotta be a better peacemaker i gotta you know do this kind of thing because i want to be right with god that's that's what he's trying to have us avoid and the sermon on the mount helps us with that but there is also another kind of danger another kind of deception and it's a deception that relies solely on mental assent to certain doctrines as evidence and assurance that we are god's people rather than looking for evidence in our lives we we ask ourselves if we believe the right things or we have a list of things that we know if we believe these things we're okay with god and they even sound good justification by faith scripture alone trinity and we believe these things as long as we've got that together we're okay and yet somehow we might not see the brokenness of spirit we might not see a mourning in us we might not see a desire for the unity of the body that

[31 : 37] Jesus is praying so passionately for and we should be alarmed if we don't see those things in ourselves and I think that's the reason why the sermon on the mount is given to us to show us that the work that the cross accomplished in reconciling man to God and reconciling one another to each other and in changing us from the inside so that can be possible that work will be demonstrated it will happen we should be able to see it in us and that is the evidence that we are among the blessed Jesus wants you and I to escape both deceptions he wants us to look at our hearts and our lives and to evaluate whether or not we see Christ's righteousness being formed in us we should not only ask ourselves if we believe rightly about something but we should also ask ourselves if we see the word of

God in our heart making us long with Jesus for the unity of the church and to be determined to be involved Amen