

# Blessed are the Peacemakers

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*Mt 5:9*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Telemachus was a Christian who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.
1. He decided to go to Rome. He put his possessions in a sack & set out for Rome.
  2. When he arrived in the city, people were thronging in the streets.
    - a. He asked why all the excitement and was told that this was the day that the gladiators would be fighting & killing each other in the coliseum.
    - b. He ran to the coliseum & heard the gladiators saying, “Hail to Caesar; we die for Caesar.”
  3. He thought, “This isn’t right.”
    - a. He jumped over the railing & went out into the middle of the field, got between two gladiators, held up his hands and said, “In the name of Christ, forbear.”
    - b. The crowd protested & began to shout, “Run him through. Run him through.”
      - 1) A gladiator came over & hit him in the stomach with the back of his sword. It sent him sprawling in the sand.
      - 2) He got up & ran back and again said, “In the name of Christ, forbear.”
        - a) The crowd continued to chant, “Run him through.”
        - b) One gladiator came over & plunged his sword through the little monk’s stomach & he fell into the sand, which began to turn crimson with his blood.
      - 3) One last time he gasped out, “In the name of Christ forbear.”
        - a) A hush came over the 80,000 people in the coliseum.
        - b) Soon a man stood & left, then another and more, and within minutes all 80,000 had emptied out of the arena.
        - c) That was the last known gladiatorial contest in the history of Rome.
- B. Telemachus was a “peacemaker.”
1. He understood, perhaps better than most of us, that Jesus had called his people to be a peacemaking people.
  2. Jesus spoke this Beatitude to that extent: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”
  3. This morning, we want to examine this blessing for peacemakers.

## BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

- A. We must first understand that Jesus does not pronounce a blessing on those who love peace.
1. The idea here isn’t that we sit around & sing “Give Peace a Chance.”
  2. The word refers to those who make peace, those who actively seek peace. This word is not at all passive, but it’s active—people working for peace.
  3. God did not simply want peace, but he made peace through the blood of Jesus.
    - a. “Through [Jesus God reconciled] to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20).
    - b. God acted in order to have peace.
  4. Christians are urged to make peace.

- a. "Strive for peace with everyone" (Heb 12:14).
  - b. "Let us pursue what makes for peace" (Rom 14:19).
- B. This Beatitude must have sounded quite strange to those who heard Jesus preach this Sermon.
1. There were many Jews expecting the Messiah to come & subjugate many kingdoms under the power of Israel.
    - a. After Jesus fed the five thousand, we read that Jesus perceived "that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself" (Jn 6:15).
    - b. The accusation Pilate heard about Jesus was that he was the King of the Jews (Jn 18:33).
      - 1) That strongly suggests that the Jews who handed Jesus over to the Roman governor were nervous that he was about to "make waves" among the Roman authorities.
      - 2) But, why would they have been nervous unless the Jews misunderstood Jesus' teaching about his Messiahship to mean he was about to establish an earthly kingdom?
  2. Even Jesus' disciples misunderstood & thought of the Jesus' Kingship in terms of earthly power.
    - a. Before Jesus went to Gethsemane, the disciples said to him, "Look, Lord, here are two swords" (Lk 22:38). How they planned to fight off a mob with simply two swords isn't clear, but it seems that they were ready for a fight.
    - b. When the disciples saw that Jesus was going to be arrested, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" (Lk 22:49).
    - c. Jesus doesn't have time to answer, for Peter took out his sword & cut off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant (Jn 18:10-11).
- C. Yet, Jesus himself was an instrument of peace, not strife.
1. The Prophets had predicted him as a peace-striving Messiah.
    - a. The Coming Messiah would be a "Prince of Peace": "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Is 9:6).
    - b. It was the Messiah's suffering that would bring peace with God: "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5).
    - c. The Messiah would bring peace upon the earth: "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zech 9:10).
  2. Indeed, Jesus brought peace upon the earth, but not the peace that many expected.
    - a. While the Jews understood these passages to mean that the Messiah would reign over a multitude of nations in military peace, he brought inner tranquility: "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" (Jn 14:27).
    - b. Jesus not only brought an inner peace, but he also has brought peace with God: "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1).
      - 1) No longer does man need to live in strife—alienation—with God.
      - 2) Through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are able to have "peace with God."
  3. Jesus came into this world & actively brought peace. If we are his disciples, we must seek to bring peace to this world.
- D. How can Christians be peacemakers? How can we, like Jesus, bring peace to the world?
1. Jesus, as we mentioned, primarily brought two kinds of peace, inner tranquility & peace with

God.

- a. The only way that we can absolutely be involved in such peace-making ourselves is to share our faith.
    - 1) I cannot give someone peace with God, but I can teach them of Jesus who can give them peace with God.
    - 2) I cannot cause someone to lie down in tranquility believing that I will take care of whatever problems he is facing, but I can lead them to the Father who can give such tranquility.
  - b. We have an obligation to share our faith.
    - 1) “Go . . . and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19).
    - 2) Paul prayed this for Philemon: “I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ” (Phile 6). Do we pray that the sharing of our faith may be effective?
  - c. Are we helping people find peace by bringing them to Jesus Christ, the Chief Peacemaker?
2. In order to bring peace, we must also get rid of all strife & bitterness.
    - a. Strife & bitterness have absolutely no place in the life of the Christian.
      - 1) “While there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?” (1 Cor 3:3). Strife belongs to the flesh; it is not a spiritual attribute.
      - 2) Strife is a work of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21).
    - b. Just before the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, the British naval hero Lord Nelson learned that an admiral and a captain in his fleet were not on good terms.
      - 1) He sent for the two men, and when they arrived, he places the hands of the admiral & the captain together.
      - 2) Then, looking them both in the face, he said, “Look—yonder is the enemy!”
      - 3) Brethren, the same can be said to us!
        - a) We have no use for fighting with one another. We are on the same side, fighting the same war.
        - b) Our enemy, the devil with the horde of sin & suffering he brings to this world, is yonder!
  3. In order to bring peace, we must overlook disagreements about judgment.
    - a. Disagreements are going to occur, even among brethren.
      - 1) Paul had a serious disagreement with Barnabas.
        - a) Acts 15:36-41.
          - i. This was not a dispute over doctrine; it was simply a disagreement about giving John Mark a second chance.
          - ii. Barnabas thought it was wise & Paul deemed it unwise.
          - iii. The dispute was so serious that Barnabas & Paul separated from one another.
        - b) However, Paul did not hold a grudge.
          - i. “Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him)” (Col 4:10)—Paul wrote these words 13 or so years **after** his dispute with Barnabas.
          - ii. “Is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?” (1 Cor 9:6).
            - i) At the end of 1 Cor, Paul says that he is writing from Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8); therefore, Paul is writing during his third missionary journey (3 to

- 5 years after his dispute with Barnabas).
- ii) Paul demonstrates no ill-will at the mention of Barnabas. He does not say, like we might have been tempted, "I and that rotten-scoundrel Barnabas don't work for a living."
  - iii) Does the fact that Paul knows Barnabas isn't working for a living demonstrate that he was still in touch with Barnabas? Even if it doesn't, the fact that Paul mentions Barnabas' name without ill-will speaks volumes.
- 2) At the end of his life, Paul even wanted to see John Mark.
    - a) "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry" (2 Tm 4:11).
    - b) Paul is certainly not holding Mark's leaving Paul & Barnabas in Pamphylia against him!
  - b. Do we overlook disagreements over judgment?
4. We must also appropriately deal with wrongs committed against us.
    - a. Mt 18:15-17.
    - b. Why would Jesus want us to deal with wrongs privately, rather than publicly?
      - 1) Simply put, privately dealing with mistakes leads to peace.
        - a) If I have a problem with you & I tell others, people will likely take sides. The result is disunity, not peace.
        - b) It may be that no wrong was intended.
          - i. It's often the case that feelings are hurt, egos crushed, when that was never intended.
          - ii. Going to others, rather than the person who offended us, can very quickly cause the problem to get out of hand.
            - i) The offending party can have a much bigger mess to "clean up."
            - ii) He can come off as an insensitive jerk when that was **never** what he intended.
          - iii. The result can quite easily become strife, not peace.
        - 2) If I come to you to talk about a problem, even if you meant wrong & you repent, peace will be the result.
      - c. Of course, if there is no repentance, the issue gets bigger, but it's to help the offending party's heart & lead him back to Jesus.

## THOSE WHO MAKE PEACE SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD

- A. The Greek-speaking Jews in Jesus' day had borrowed several figures of speech from Hebrew.
  1. That makes perfect sense on a couple of levels:
    - a. One: They likely spoke Aramaic, rather than Greek as their primary language. Aramaic & Hebrew are quite similar.
    - b. Two: This allowed them to keep a good part of their heritage intact.
  2. "Son of (whomever)" meant two things in Hebrew:
    - a. One: The phrase meant that someone was so-and-so's descendant. Thus, "children of Abraham" meant that the Jews were physically descended from Abraham.
    - b. Two: The phrase meant that someone acted like so-and-so.
      - 1) About being a child of Abraham, Paul writes: "He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so

that righteousness would be counted to them as well” (Rom 4:11).

- 2) How is Abraham the “father of all who believe without being circumcised”? Because, those who believe without being circumcised are acting like Abraham!
- B. Thus, being called a “son of God” in this context means that we are acting like God.
1. There can be no higher aim for the Christian than striving to act like God.
    - a. “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).
      - 1) “Perfect” in this context means “mature.”
      - 2) But, let us not lose sight of the fact that Jesus calls upon us to be like our heavenly Father.
    - b. “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph 4:25).
  2. President Calvin Coolidge invited some people from his hometown to dinner at the White House.
    - a. Since they did not know how to behave at such an occasion, they thought the best policy would be just to do what the President did.
      - 1) The time came for serving coffee. The President poured his coffee into a saucer. As soon as the home folk saw it, they did the same.
      - 2) The next step for the President was to pour some milk & add a little sugar to the coffee in the saucer. The home folks did the same.
      - 3) They thought for sure that the next step would be for the President to take the saucer with the coffee & begin sipping it. But the President didn’t do so. He leaned over, placed the saucer on the floor & called the cat.
    - b. While the home folks were, no doubt, embarrassed by their social faux pas, they did precisely with President Coolidge what we need to do with God.
      - 1) We need to examine the Scriptures, see how he acts, & respond the same way.
      - 2) Are we acting like God?
- C. As we’ve noticed in the other Beatitudes, this one, too, the blessing here shall be most fully realized in heaven:
1. “The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (Rv 21:7).
  2. Will you be a “son of God” in heaven?