



PEACEMAKERS - Committed to Be Reconciled
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are continuing our study called **Different Than Last Time**. We are walking through the most counterintuitive statements of all time: **The Beatitudes**. They are not the philosophy for a good life – they are the values of this new Kingdom Jesus is bringing. They come at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ most famous teaching, and each Beatitude begins with the word “**BLESSED**” (happy or fortunate). Here we see the portrait of a Christian disciple pleasing to God and we are challenged by the words and wisdom of Jesus as He describes peacemakers.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.

Ephesians 2:14-15a For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

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

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

OBSERVATION

The people who were listening to the Sermon on the Mount were a diverse crowd loaded with political expectations about who the Messiah was and what He was going to do. They thought that the Messiah would be a military leader who would usher in peace for the Jewish people. They knew the history of the **Maccabean revolt** – this uprising occurred over seven years beginning in 167 B.C. when freedom fighters came into Jerusalem to recapture the city from the Greeks. They cleansed the Temple and rededicated the altar to God and they brought peace and prosperity to Israel. (This is where the celebration of Hanukkah comes from.) They longed to go back to that peace and prosperity. In Jesus’ day, they hated the Romans who were their current oppressors. In the area where Jesus was giving the Sermon on the Mount, the Romans came in and destroyed two villages, Emmaus and Sepphoris. In this battle, 30,000 Jewish people were sold into slavery and, in a single day, 2,000 Jewish men were marched into the capital and crucified for rebelling against the Roman emperor. So, all of this is at the forefront of their minds. The crowd was politically charged -- longing to overthrow their oppressors by any means necessary and to establish a kingdom of peace. Unfortunately, the Romans overcame the Jewish people completely in 70 A. D. and scattered them throughout the world

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

(The Diaspora.) Their homeland would not be restored until 1948. It is in this context that Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.”

QUESTION: Fill in the blank: YOU + _____ = CONFLICT.

APPLICATION

We notice that Jesus doesn't say peacekeepers or peace lovers. because they are too passive for this conversation. They avoid conflict, walk on eggshells, harbor bitterness and don't share their feelings. Jesus was not a peacekeeper. His purpose was to make peace which is an action word, meaning wading into conflict, humbly pursuing reconciliation, choosing not to be offended and speaking truth in love.

QUESTION: In what circumstances have you been a peacekeeper rather than peacemaker?

We are to be agents of bringing peace to a fragmented world. This involves settling disputes -- relationships with parents, kids, marriages and co-workers. We don't mind being the peacemaker for others, but we don't like turning our cheek to make peace. The two groups Paul is talking about in Romans 12 are Jews and Gentiles. The hostility between them was so severe because the Jews didn't want to give up their religious rules and traditions and invite in enemies with whom they had fought battles for centuries. Today, our differences aren't between Jews and Gentiles -- they are between Republican and Democrat, White, Black, Asian or Hispanic, between the “haves” and “Have-nots” -- the dividing walls are everywhere.

QUESTION: Where are the dividing walls in your life? Who are the people you need to reconcile personally with today?

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you helped others reconcile their differences.

We are to be agents of bringing peace to a fragmented world. This involves settling disputes – relationships with parents, kids, spouses and co-workers. We don't mind being the peacemaker for others, but we don't like turning our other cheek to make peace. Jesus laid the foundation for making peace with His Father and reconciling differences for us. He taught that **peace with God equips us to make peace with others**. He destroyed the barrier or dividing wall of hostility between us, God and each other, and fulfilled the Law and the Prophets.

QUESTION: What does it mean that Jesus fulfilled the Law and the prophets?

It is the death of Jesus on the Cross that brings reconciliation between us and God and us and others . The self-righteous Jews needed it; the pagan Gentiles needed it; and they both needed reconciliation with each other. For us, we can't find peace with God if we aren't at peace with ourselves. If there is an anchor in our past that we continue to carry around on our backs because we can't forgive ourselves, then we are keeping ourselves from being all we need to be for Him.

QUESTION: What is your stronghold that keeps you from submitting everything to Jesus, including hostility?

The Cross is uniquely designed to beautifully illustrate the concept of reconciliation:

The vertical (God) and horizontal (us) connections are evident.	P
Jesus nailed hostility to the Cross for all of us.	E
He paid the ultimate price, but now requires a price from us.	PE A CE
He requires us to be peacemakers, too.	C
	E

QUESTION: How far-reaching is your acceptance of other people?

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus told the people to make a sacrifice for sin every year in Jerusalem. They were to travel there to make things right with God, but, if they had something against a brother or sister, they had to reconcile with them before the sacrifice would be accepted. It didn't matter whose fault it was. Making peace was the purpose. **We are to 1) go immediately – no delays allowed; 2) go directly – no intermediaries allowed; 3) go humbly – no pride allowed. Just US + PEACEMAKING = PEACE.**

QUESTION: What is the tone in your house? Is your family arguing out of pride? What would your home sound like if you began reconciling all of the hostility there?

Christ Himself is our peace – if we miss this truth we will miss the power of peacemaking. The reason Christianity changed the world is because Christians had a vision of everything under the Lordship of Jesus.

They looked at the ways He was able to bring together people from different backgrounds and thinking. He selected zealots and tax collectors and fishermen to be His disciples, He brought value to women in that society as had never been done before, He brought the disabled into the light of acceptance and compassion, and, greatest of all, He released all of us from the penalty and stigma of sin and death.

QUESTION: What other people in Jesus' day were afforded value in that culture because of Him?

Jesus calls us children of God – a term of endearment and affection. Are we hearing Him say, “This is My child in whom I am well-pleased?”

PRAYER

Jesus, Prince of peace, touch us with Your grace as you teach us to be peacemakers in Your Kingdom. Our greatest desire is to emulate You and we pray You take joy in how we live our lives together. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: Fill in the blank: YOU + _____ = CONFLICT.

QUESTION: In what circumstances have you been a peacekeeper rather than peacemaker?

QUESTION: Where are the dividing walls in your life? Who are the people you need to reconcile personally with today?

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you helped others reconcile their differences.

QUESTION: What does it mean that Jesus fulfilled the Law and the prophets?

QUESTION: What is your stronghold that keeps you from submitting everything to Jesus, including hostility?

QUESTION: How far-reaching is your acceptance of other people?

QUESTION: What is the tone in your house? Is your family arguing out of pride? What would your home sound like if you began reconciling all of the hostility there?

QUESTION: What other people in Jesus' day were afforded value in that culture because of Him?