

Blessed Are The Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

Every person walks around with two buckets. One bucket contains water and the other bucket contains gasoline. We all continually come across small fires, and we could pour water or gasoline on a fire. It is our choice. When you choose the water bucket you are being like Christ and a peacemaker. When you choose the gas bucket you are a peace breaker. Jesus put a premium and a promise on peacemakers. Don't pour gas on it. Pour water.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Matthew 5:9

"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family." Matthew 5:9 (The Message)

The dictionary says peace is: A state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom. Freedom from oppressive people or circumstances. When people live and work together without violent disagreements.

Peace is not appeasing others. Peace is not avoiding conflicts or being passive. Peace is not the absence of war. Peace is a right relationship with God that leads to a right relationship with self and guides us in a right relationship with other people.

The word peace occurs over 400 times in the Bible. There are two words from the original Biblical language that are translated as "peace." The New Testament Greek word is the word "Eirene." In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word is "Shalom," and for years, the word "Shalom" has been a well-known greeting. The original words for "peace" mean a little more than we often think in our English language. The word for peace, "shalom," means more than just the absence of bad. It means, "I wish that you don't have hard times." It also means, "I wish you the highest good."

"Peace" in the Bible is a broad term related to health, prosperity, harmony, and wholeness. When you use the Hebrew word "Shalom!" you are not meaning wishing someone the absence of war, but the full presence and all the blessings of God. The famous Aaronic benediction of Numbers 6:24-25 brings out this idea very clearly.

"The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon you
And be gracious to you.
The Lord turn his face toward you
And give you peace." Numbers 6:24-25

"Blessed are the peacemakers" was a very countercultural statement because everyone there had been raised with the mindset "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." "Someone hits you, you hit them back." "Someone steals something from you, you take something from them." He was saying something that was very shocking, *"Blessed are the peacemakers."* There is a higher calling for those of you that want to follow Jesus.

We desperately need more peacemakers. There is so much war, misunderstanding, bitterness, double-crossing, anger, slander, lying, hatred, and bloodshed. On every hand, we see ruined marriages, broken friendships, shattered relationships, broken promises, and so much heartache.

Think of what we see every day: Estranged children, husbands and wives in divorce court, neighbors who won't speak to each other, commuters who get mad on the freeway, bosses who don't trust their workers and workers who cheat their bosses.

The principle for peace is the same as the principle for crops: Never underestimate the power of a seed. Those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness. Never underestimate the power of a seed. How good are you at sowing seeds of peace?

1. Jesus Is The Peace Bringer.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

When Jesus was born, the angels sang, *“Peace on earth, goodwill toward men.”* Luke 2:14

Jesus said to His disciples, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.”* John 14:27

When the Lord returned after the resurrection, his first word to the disciples was *“Shalom.”* *“Peace to you.”* Luke 24:36.

The Apostle Paul said of Jesus, *“He himself is our peace.”* Ephesians 2:14

“There is a time for war and a time for peace.” Ecclesiastes 3:8

Peacemaking is expensive. The life of Jesus was saturated with his mission to bring the peace of God and to initiate the healing relationships of peace with God. Jesus was the greatest peacemaker of all time. We don't see him settling many disputes or negotiating conflicts, but we do see him cultivating inward harmony through acts of love. He washed the feet of men he knew would betray him, ate lunch with a corrupt tax official, honored the sinful woman whom society had scorned. He built bridges by healing hurts. He prevented conflict by touching the interior. He cultivated harmony by sowing seeds of peace in fertile hearts. He offered peace and they crucified Him. He was called Prince of Peace, yet He hung on a Roman cross. He preached the Gospel of Peace and died in an act of cruel violence.

□ Jesus Traded Power For Peace.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:3-11

Jesus could have worked from a place of power but he emptied himself and served from a place of peace and he call us to do the same.

The Roman emperor Charlemagne knew that. An interesting story surrounds the burial of this famous king. Legend has it that he asked to be entombed sitting upright in his throne. He asked that his crown be placed on his head and his scepter in his hand. He requested that the royal cape be draped around his shoulders and an open book be placed in his lap.

That was AD 814. Nearly two hundred years later, Emperor Othello determined to see if the burial request had been carried out. He allegedly sent a team of men to open the tomb and make a report. They found the body just

as Charlemagne had requested. Only now, nearly two centuries later, the scene was gruesome. The crown was tilted, the mantle moth-eaten, the body disfigured. But open on the skeletal thighs was the book Charlemagne had requested—the Bible. “One bony finger pointed to Matthew 16:26: “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”

Peace must be made. Peace never happens by chance. Someone has to drag the combatants to the table and give them a reason to put down their arms. Jesus never said, “Blessed are the peace wishers or the peace hoppers or the peace dreamers.” But he did say, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” When Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” He doesn't just mean, “I want your home to be strife free,” but “I also want you to have the highest good.”

Peacemaking begins at home when we humble ourselves. It starts with our closest and most intimate relationships: between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts. Then it moves to your extended family: your friends at church, on the job, and in the classroom. Only then does peacemaking expand to more remote relationships: the city, the state, the nation, and the world. Despite our great technological advances, we continue to devise more efficient means of killing each other.

George Gallop recently conducted a survey of Americans and asked what is your greatest question, number one was “Will there ever be world peace?”

Into this ugly world filled with violence and hate, Jesus sends us to be peacemakers. We aren't given the choice of whether or not we would like to be peacemakers, and we certainly aren't given the choice of what kind of world we would like to live in. As bad as things may be, this is the only world we have, and if we are going to be true to our Lord, we must be peacemakers.

Muhammad Ali was the unprecedented three-time world heavyweight boxing champion. His face has appeared on the cover of Sports Illustrated more times than any other athlete. When he was “floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee,” he was king of his profession. An entourage of reporters, trainers, and support staff tailed this comet as he raced around the world. But that was yesterday. Where is Muhammad Ali today? Sportswriter Gary Smith went to find out. “Ali escorted Smith to a barn next to his farmhouse. On the floor, leaning against the walls, were mementos of Ali in his prime. Photos and portraits of the champ punching and dancing. Sculpted body. Fist punching the air. Championship belt held high in triumph. “The thrilla in Manila.”

But on the pictures were white streaks—bird droppings. Ali looked into the rafters at the pigeons who had made his gym their home. And then he did something significant. Perhaps it was a gesture of closure. Maybe it was a statement of despair. Whatever the reason, he walked over to the row of pictures and turned them, one by one, toward the wall. He then walked to the door, stared at the countryside, and mumbled something so low that Smith had to ask him to repeat it. Ali did. “I had the world,” he said, “and it wasn't nothing. Look at it now.”

2. Sin Is The Peace Breaker.

We have all been peace breakers at some point because “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” Romans 3:23

Peace is from God. It is based on being in a right relationship with Him. Peace is a state of being, a condition. It is healthy and harmonious relationships between God and people and results in wholeness, completeness and well-being.

Sin destroys innocence, and in the process creates fear, cynicism, guilt, and restlessness. Sin destroys the will, gradually removing the barriers to sin more. Sin separated us from God. The Lord used Isaiah the prophet to convey the depths of our separation. “*The wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”*” Isaiah 57:20-21

But Jesus is the peace bringer in our lives. *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Romans 5:1

Through Christ God was pleased “. . . to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross.” Colossians 1:20

“His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.” Ephesians 2:15

Jesus saw the gravity of our problem and he refused to sweep it under the rug or stick his head in the sand. Only a drastic solution would suffice, so he “made peace” by shedding his blood on the cross. Christ is our supreme example in bringing peace in our hearts, our relationships, our church, our nation, and our world.

3. We Are Called To Be Peace Bearers.

“Blessed are the peacemakers” Matthew 5:9

The word “make” in the term “peacemakers” comes from the Greek verb “poieo.” It’s a strong word that means “to do” or “to make.” Peace doesn’t naturally or passively happen. Peace must be made. Peace never happens by chance. Peacemakers always take the initiative. So when these two words are taken together, “peace” and “maker,” describes one who actively pursues peace.

Are You a Peace Maker or a Peace Breaker?

Are you bringing people together or pulling them apart?

Peacemaking is not an easy. It is costly ... time-consuming ... painful ... and emotionally exhausting. Those who do it will often be misunderstood. Paul wrote to Romans, he exhorted them to *“If it is possible, live at peace with everyone.”* Romans 12:18

In 1781, Ben Franklin wrote to John Adams, *“Blessed are the peacemakers* is, I suppose, for another world. In this world they are frequently cursed.”

Seven hundred years ago, the son of an Italian cloth merchant and destined to be a knight, he forsook the path of wealth and fame, choosing instead to wear a ragged cloak tied with a rope borrowed from a scarecrow. He spent his days preaching and giving to others. He chose to live in utter poverty. History records that he was a noble, kind, humble, Christ-like man who was one of the greatest Christians who ever lived. We know him today as St. Francis of Assisi. Centuries after his death, someone translated one of his prayers into English. It was later set to music.

“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
Where there is sadness, joy
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console

To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.”

There is no lasting peace in the world because a civil war rages in the heart of man. There is no national peace because there is no personal peace.

Want to see a miracle? Plant a word of love deep in a person’s life. Nurture it with a smile and a prayer, and watch what happens. An employee gets a compliment. A wife receives a bouquet of flowers. A cake is baked and carried next door. A widow is hugged. A gas station attendant is honored. A preacher is praised.

4. We Are Rewarded For Being A Peacemaker

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Matthew 5:9

A Change Of Identity.

The word “*called*” means to be designated as holding a particular rank or office, as when you name a chairman or choose a captain or designate a spokesman. It means you at some point were different than that title but now you have been named that title.

“Children of God” is a bestowed title that indicates a special family relationship. You will be recognized as a son or daughter of the Living God!

Peacemakers bear a family resemblance that even the people of the world can see. When you make peace, you become like the Prince of Peace.

“Children of God” refers to a filial relationship in which the son formally takes the father’s name and become heir to the father’s fortune.

Jesus is saying that as His followers become known as peacemakers, they will be recognized as the children of God who share His name and are heirs to His fortune.