

May 31, 2020  
The Sermon on the Mount (8)  
**Finding Your Missing Peace**  
Matthew 5:9  
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Today we are going to focus on Matthew 5:9 in which Jesus said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God."* Jesus' words were a radical, counter-cultural statement to make. At that time the Jewish people were struggling under the offensive domination of the Roman Empire. The heartfelt desire of every Jew in Jesus' day was to see the Romans run out of their country. They were convinced that wasn't going to happen without a major conflict. In fact, they wanted a fight! They wanted a battle in which they would absolutely crush the Romans. The only peace the Jews wanted was one that came after a war in which the Romans were totally crushed! It was their hope and dream. It was their prayer that God would send a mighty Messiah and, like the famous warrior King David, lead them to a great military conquest over these pagan evildoers.

So how can Jesus possibly say, 'Blessed are the peacemakers?' In fact, Jesus' words sound radical in our day as well. We are domineered by the threat of conflict surrounding us all the time. Every day people and situations try our patience. If we're not careful, these situations can easily explode into conflict. We have disagreements between family members. We have disagreements with our co-workers. We have disagreements with friends and neighbors. And, many times we even have disagreements with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

How do we work for peace? What do we do? Peacemaking is hard work that involves persistence, patience, and maybe even persecution. Peacemakers cannot ignore the divisive and divided status quo. Here's what it takes to be a peacemaker:

1. We must try to be reconciled with others. Jesus teaches that if someone has something against us, then we have to go to him/her instead of waiting for him/her to come to us. On the other hand, if we have something against someone, we have to go to him/her. Both the offender and the offended have a responsibility to get together. Literally, they meet each other half way as they are each going to see the other. This means that we do not nurse our grudges. We do not bury our wounds and say they don't matter. We don't suffer in silence and harbor ill-will in our hearts. We need to speak up, seek to resolve the issue, and do something. Do you remember the father in the prodigal son story? He went out of the house, threw the party for his returned son, and tried to reason with his older son who had been offended (Luke 15). That's what peacemakers do. They get divided people back together again. We must be gentle, kind, merciful and loving toward people in trouble and with problems.

3. We must be willing to talk about the problems and the issues that divide us. Some people wish to run from their problems, never to talk about them, and are reluctant to confront them about their life. If there is anything that we cannot talk about as spouses or as brothers and sisters in Jesus, then the issue is not the issue. The real issue is the underlying lack of trust and credibility and the anger accompanying them. When a husband and wife have a problem or when we have a problem with someone, we need to face the person and kindly say, "Can we

talk about this?" If the other party says, "No, not now," then we need to ask, "When can we talk about the problem?" Then try to set a time within the next 24 hours when we can talk about it. A person who refuses to communicate at any time is not following the instructions of Jesus. They are not submitted to his Lordship over their attitudes. We cannot make a person communicate but we can kindly recommend, suggest, and facilitate conversation. This means that peacemakers need to be proactive. We cannot sit back and wait for others to act. If they may never do so, the hurts often grow deeper and more divisive.

4. We must listen carefully to what others are saying and to try to understand their perspective. The Bible says, "*Be slow to speak, quick to listen*" (James 1:18). This will help us gain trust and understanding with both sides. When someone approaches us with a criticism or with a different view than we have, instead of trying to convince him/her to change his/her mind, we need to listen. First, we need to agree with our critics in every area we can, and then move into a constructive discussion. The words, "I appreciate your viewpoint," "Thank you for telling me that," and "Yes, I agree that we need to . . ." have a way of softening opposition and removing heat from the encounter. It is more important to win a brother/sister than it is to win an argument.

5. We cannot have the peace of Christ unless we have peace with God through Christ. The most important thing to do is to try to get a person to be reconciled with God through the gospel. Due to our sin we were once alienated from God. But God sent Jesus into the world to die for our sins and in so doing reconciled all things to God. In dying on the cross Jesus paid for our offenses so that we could come home to God. Romans 5:1 says, "*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" When Jesus lives inside us, we have the power to counteract our sinful tendency toward conflict. We can bring peace by teaching a person how to be saved. The sharing of the gospel of Jesus is the greatest way to begin the peace process. If a person is not right with God, then they cannot be right with others.

Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.*" What does it mean to be called "sons of God"? To be called "sons of God" means that we have the characteristics of God. The Greek text says "sons of God," not "children of God." There is a slight difference in the meaning of the Greek words for "children" and for "sons of." The words "son of" in the Bible mean, "having the characteristics or qualities of" whatever follows those words. Barnabas was a "son of encouragement" meaning that he was an encouraging person. James and John were called "sons of thunder" because they had explosive dispositions. Some unbelievers were "sons of the devil" meaning that they had the characteristics of the devil. Believers are called "sons/daughters of light" meaning that they have those qualities. In our language, we use "son/daughter of," not to describe just parents, but to describe the person addressed. When Jesus said, peacemakers would be called "sons of God," He meant that peacemakers have the qualities of God Himself, that they are engaged in the activities of God, and that they are God-like. When we work for peace among people, we are doing God's work. When we work for peace, we are doing the work of Jesus and we have the blessing and approval of God.

I would like to conclude with the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.  
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 we receive.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

That prayer truly expresses the blessing of the peacemakers. As followers of Jesus we have been called to peace. When He called us, we found peace because Jesus is our peace. Jesus asks us to be peace-makers this morning. *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God."*