

Sermon-Based Devotional

Lawrence Free Methodist Church
(Based on a Sermon by Pastor Bill Bump on August 7th, 2016)

Happy Are the Peacemakers! Series: The Beatitudes

In the seventh beatitude, Jesus indicates that we are most like God when we are peacemakers.

Matthew 5:9 (NLT) *God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.*

Matthew 5:9 (NIV) *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

Most of us are aware that a lack of peace in our heart can manifest itself in a lot of problematic ways.

READ the following passages. **Mark everything that stands out to you.**
James 4:1 (NLT) *What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?*

In the beatitudes, Jesus is not making optional suggestions; rather, He is describing the pathway to heaven.

In the seventh beatitude, Jesus tells us what the children of God do, not how to become a child of God. Other Scripture tells us that, and we need to know the how before we can accomplish the do.

John 1:12 (NIV) *Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God...*

Galatians 3:26 (NLT) *For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

Jesus is proclaiming that the children of God are to have the character of their Father. In the above passages, we are told much about what God has done for us in Christ. Take some time to **REFLECT** upon what you marked above? Write what God has done for you in Christ. _____

Now write your thoughts on what the above truths mean to you personally at this time in your life. _____

READ 1 Peter 2:9-12, 17-25. (NLT) **Mark everything that stands out to you.**

[Notice how last week's theme of mercy is connected to the truths in this passage.]

⁹ ... for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, His very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light. ¹⁰ "Once you were not a people; now you are the people of God. Once you received none of God's mercy; now you have received His mercy." ¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls. ¹² Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, & they will believe and give honor to God when He comes to judge the world. ¹⁷ Show respect for everyone. Love your Christian brothers & sisters. Fear God. Show respect for the king. ¹⁸ You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters. Do whatever they tell you—not only if they are kind & reasonable, but even if they are harsh. ¹⁹ For God is pleased with you when, for the sake of your conscience, you patiently endure unfair treatment. ²⁰ Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing right & are patient beneath the blows, God is pleased with you. ²¹ This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in His steps. ²² He never sinned, and He never deceived anyone. ²³ He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When He suffered, He did not threaten to get even. He left His case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. ²⁴ He personally carried away our sins in His own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by His wounds! ²⁵ Once you were wandering like lost sheep. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

What truths from this week relate to the above passage? _____

¹⁸ *Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is for one to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in all the labor in which he labors under the sun all the days which God gives him — for this is his [allotted] part. [1 Tim 6:17] ¹⁹ Also, every man to whom God has given riches and possessions, and the power to enjoy them and to accept his appointed lot and to rejoice in his toil — this is the gift of God [to him]. ²⁰ For he shall not much remember [seriously] the days of his life, because God [Himself] answers and corresponds to the joy of his heart [the tranquility of God is mirrored in him]. [Ecclesiastes 5:18-20, AMP]*

REFLECT Write your observations and thoughts from Ecclesiastes 5:18-20.

i.e.—As I accept my "allotted part/appointed lot" as being part of God's plan for my life—joy, peace, & the "tranquility of God" will be reflected [mirrored] in & through my life to—others.

RESPOND (Application for this week)

BEST verse (write out): _____

WHY that Scripture is significant to me: _____

HOW I can practically apply what God spoke to me about: _____

WHO I can share with – what I learned this week: _____

The Bible tells us that our heavenly Father is a **God of peace**.

READ the following passages. **Mark everything that stands out to you.**

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NLT) *Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.*

Just as importantly, HE is also a **peacemaker**.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NLT) *For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.*

Colossians 1:20 (NLT) *...and through Him God reconciled everything to Himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.*

It is by the **Spirit of God** that we are made children of God, and the **Spirit of God** is the **Spirit of peace**.

In the above passages, we are not only told a lot about what God has done for us, in & through Christ, — BUT ALSO WHY He has done those things— and WHAT our response should be. Take some time to **REFLECT** upon what you marked above? Write your thoughts on WHY God has done those things and WHAT your response should be.

What does it mean to be a **peacemaker**?

A preface to Matthew 5:43-45

By telling us not to retaliate, Jesus keeps us from taking the law into our own hands. By loving and praying of our enemies, we can overcome evil with good.

The Pharisees interpreted Leviticus 19:18 as teaching that they should only love those who love in return, and Psalms 139:19-22 and 140:9-11 as meaning that they should hate their enemies. But Jesus says we are to love our enemies. If you love your enemies and treat them well, you will truly show that Jesus is Lord of your life.

What seems to be a case of Jesus contradicting the laws of the Old Testament deserves a careful look. It is too easy to overlook how much mercy was written into the Old Testament laws. Below are several examples. What God designed as a system of justice with mercy of the law that Jesus attacked.

Jesus and the Old Testament Law

Leviticus 19:18 *"Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."*

Prov. 24:28-29 ²⁸ Do not testify spitefully against innocent neighbors; don't lie about them. ²⁹ And don't say, "Now I can pay them back for all their meanness to me! I'll get even!"

Lamentations 3:30-31 ³⁰ Let them turn the other cheek to those who strike them. Let them accept the insults of their enemies. ³¹ For the Lord does not abandon anyone forever.

READ **Matthew 5:43-45** (NLT) **Mark everything that stands out to you.**

⁴³ *You have heard the law that says, "Love your neighbor" & hate your enemy.* ⁴⁴ *But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!* ⁴⁵ *In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For He gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. [Jesus]*

REFLECT In Matthew 5:43-45, what is Jesus instructing His followers to do?

What does Matthew 5:43-45 say to you personally – in practical terms?

Jesus thinks of peacemaking as all the **acts of love** by which we try to overcome the **enmity** between us and others.

The first thing Jesus mentions in verse 44 is **praying**.

Next, He mentions trying to **build a bridge** to our enemies.

Matthew 5:47 (NIV) *"And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?" [Jesus]*

Peacemaking is not the same as **achieving peace**. We do not always **succeed** in peacemaking.

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

If we claim to be **a child of God**, we must commit to being a **peacemaker**.

Conclusion

To be considered a **child of God**, we must **love** peace and **work** for peace. We must **pray** for those we have conflict with, do **good** to them, and long for the **barriers** between us to be **overcome**.

¹ The New Testament shows the fulfillment of this hope (for an age of peace). In Christ, peace has come (Lk.1:79, 2:14, 29f.). By Him, it is bestowed (Mk. 5:34, Lk. 7:50; Jn. 20:19, 21, 26), and His disciples are its messengers (Lk. 10:5f.; Acts 10:36).

¹ The New Bible Dictionary, Wm. B. EERDMANS PUB. CO., Grand Rapids, Michigan, p. 956

PEACEMAKER – ΕΙΡΕΝΟΠΟΙΟΣ—an adjective signifying peace-making. (*eirēnē*, and *poieō*, to make), is used in Matt. 5:9, "peacemakers." (VINE)
peacemaker – *n.*— One who makes peace or reconciles parties at variance. (Webster)
peace – *n.* – 1. A pact or statement to end hostilities, between those who have been at war or in a state of hostility. 2. A state of tranquility or quiet. 3. Harmony in personal relationships; mutual concord. Freedom from fears, agitating passions, moral conflict. – *v.i.* To become quiet; be silent. (Webster)

After looking at the above definitions of the words **peacemaker** & **peace**, write your thoughts from what you have studied regarding the significance of your relationships with those who do not know Christ & the impact your life can & should have.
