

Devotion THE PEACEMAKERS

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

Matthew 5:9

It was recently announced on a major news network that there are currently 41 wars being fought across the globe. Wars, rumors of wars, terrorist attacks, shootings and stabbings dominate the evening news every single night--whether the attacks are between individuals, families, communities, states, or nations. There has never been a time in our history when this Beatitude was more needed to be incorporated into the lives of our people----both national leaders and citizens alike.

Our world seems to have an abundance of peace-breakers, but only a few **peacemakers**. Peace talks, resolutions, and peace accords never bring lasting peace. Why? Because leaders seem to think the answer to peace lies in finding political, social, or economic resolutions. However, those strategies have never and will never bring lasting peace.

Peace is sometimes defined as harmony, wholeness, safety, contentment or the absence of conflict. But it is so much more. It is seeking the highest good for other people by actively participating in the promotion of peace. I don't think it is a coincidence that this Beatitude comes directly after the previous ones we have studied. Why? Because in order to experience peace, the previous beatitudes need to be incorporated into one's life first: being poor in spirit (selfless), mourning our sin, displaying meekness (strength under control), hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, and having a pure heart.

The reason there are so many anxious, stressed out, depressed and short-fused people in our world is not because they don't want peace. All are searching for peace, but they either don't know where to find it, or are unwilling to do what it takes to receive it. Some people try to find peace by accumulating possessions, seeking power or gaining recognition. Others search for peace through a religion---hoping somehow to please the gods by trying to be good enough to merit their favor. However, lasting **peace** ---that inward settledness that transcends circumstances and surpasses all comprehension (*Philippians 4:7*) will never be experienced by these means as many seekers after peace have realized.

The Scriptures tell us the reason we experience so much war, turmoil and trouble today is because hearts are filled with anger, lust, greed, and selfish ambition as a result of sin. Jesus said in **Mark 7:21**, *“For from within, out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, promiscuity, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness.”*

Until hearts are changed, we will never experience lasting peace. Unfortunately, our world leaders do not recognize this. By the way, that is one of the reasons Capitol Commission exists---to serve God by helping to bring about changed hearts in the leaders of our nation now and the leaders of the world in the years ahead.

The three persons of the Trinity, the God of Peace (*Psalms 85:80*), the Prince of Peace (*Isaiah 9:6*), and the Spirit of Peace (*Romans 8:6*) all focus on the heart. The word **“peace”** is used over 400 times in the Bible and represents the deepest need of our hearts---peace with God. Jesus is

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the **Supreme Peacemaker**, offering peace to everyone (*Ephesians 2:17*). He said in **John 14:27**, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* When Jesus spoke these words, there was tremendous conflict going on in His flesh, but He was indwelt and led by the Spirit. Submitting to the Spirit’s leading is the secret to having inner peace while experiencing outer chaos. It was during this time that Jesus told his disciples that He would ask the Father to send the Spirit to indwell them, whom the world could not receive because they didn’t know Him (*John 14:16-17*).

No one can possess and experience the peace *of* God until they are at peace *with* God. That peace can only come when the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ indwells our hearts (*Romans 5:1-2*). There will be no peace in our individual lives until the Prince of Peace establishes His reign in our hearts. He is the One who provides peace because He alone offers forgiveness of sin and a restored relationship with God. He is our only source of lasting peace. He not only brings peace to our hearts, but also the power to practice it and share it with others. The peace offered by the world is external, unstable and short lived. The peace offered by Jesus is internal, durable, lasting and available to all.

Many may think this solution is too simplistic and that personal peace is insignificant in comparison to terrorist performing mass executions and threats of a nuclear war. Jesus faced heart-wrenching issues in His day as well: unbridled militarism, foreign oppression and political corruption. What was His response to Jewish zealots being slain in the temple by Roman authorities while preparing a sacrifice to God? Did He organize protest marches and attack those with an opposing worldview? No, He responded by focusing the attention on their individual hearts and calling for personal repentance (*Luke 13:1-5*). He knew the eternal destiny of their souls was a much more important issue than the temporary destiny of a nation.

Being **peacemakers** is one of the distinguishing marks of fully committed followers of Jesus Christ. They not only experience peace in their own hearts, but they love peace, make peace, and promote peace by introducing others to the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. We are told in the Scriptures, *“If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peacefully with everyone”* (**Romans 12:18**)

Peacemakers are to live for, long for, work for, and pray for peace. But, experiencing peace with others may not happen. In fact, sometimes the **peacemaker** must disturb the peace. This same Jesus who said *“Peace I leave with you”* also said, *“I have not come to bring peace, but a sword”* (**Matthew 10:34**). This sounds like a contradiction. However, if we go back to the real meaning of peace we see that it is more than just the absence of trouble; it is the possession of positive good when we are in a right relationship with God and with others. The person who is for peace at any cost is no real peacemaker. One should never compromise their own purity for peace with others. James tells us, *“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere”* (**James 3:17**). Notice that purity is first, and peace follows.

In **Matthew 5:8**, Jesus tells us *“the pure in heart will see God”* and in **Matthew 5:9**, He says *“the peacemakers shall be called the children of God.”* Peacemakers are recognized as children

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of God by their Father because they became His children when they trusted Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and seek to model the life of their Lord.

Questions to Ponder:

1. *Do I have the peace of Christ dwelling in my heart?*
2. *If so, how would God have me fulfill my role as a peacemaker this week?*

Thoughts for Prayer:

1. *Do I want to be an instrument of God's peace?* Ask Him to direct you to one who needs an encouraging phone call, a listening ear, a kind word, hands-on prayer, financial assistance or a block of your time. Thank Him in advance for His answer and be sensitive to the Spirit's leading as He directs you.
2. *Do I have a strained relationship with a family member, colleague, neighbor or friend?* Ask God how you might diffuse the discord and bring peace to those strained relationships this week. Thank Him for His answer and the power He will provide to initiate the peacemaking process.

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