

*"Kingdom Living (part 5): The Path to Perfect Peace"*

**"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS"**

We continue our series on *Kingdom Living*, looking specifically at the Beatitudes. Today I want us to look at Jesus' words: ***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."*** (Mt. 5:9).

Now before you can be a peacemaker, you need to be at peace. We heard from our second reading (Philippians 4:7) about ***"the peace that surpasses all understanding."*** And here we are in the season of Advent preparing our hearts for the Prince of Peace. And yet, there seems to be little peace in our world. In fact, I find it ironic that this season which is about the coming of the Prince of Peace is filled with anything but peace; everyone running about, to and fro, from this shop to that shop, from this mall to that mall. The truth is you won't find peace at the mall. You won't find peace in the giving or receiving of gifts. Peace is something money can't buy. And yet it is the commodity of peace that our world so desperately needs more than anything else.

We can do incredible things as human beings. We can build powerful jets, complex computers, awe-inspiring sky-scrapers. We can even put a man on the moon, but we can't make a lasting peace. We've made the world a neighborhood, but we have not made it a brotherhood. There is a desperate cry, a desperate need for peace on earth. And so the question this morning is why? Why is there so little peace on earth?

**WHY IS THERE SO LITTLE PEACE ON EARTH?**

Why can't we live together? Why can't we all get along? Why is there so much division and discord? The Bible tells us in **James 4:1-4**. James asks, "Where do these conflicts come from?" And then he mentions three different conflicts going on in our world. Let's look at the passage: ***"Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it, so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."***

1) **We are at war among ourselves.** v. 1a – ***"Those conflicts and disputes among you..."*** We are at war with one another; whether it be racial, social, religious, economic, or in the family. Every now and then there might be a truce, but there is no lasting peace. Someone has observed that a truce is simply that period of time you stop to reload. The truth is we are a people at war with one another on this earth. Why are people at war with one another? Why do we war *among* ourselves? The second conflict...

2) **We are at a war within ourselves.** v. 1b – ***"Do they not come from your cravings (i.e. "lusts") that are at war within you?"*** There is a war on the inside that wars in our members. People are not at peace within, and that is why they are not at peace with others. We live in a world upright and full of turmoil. We are at war on the outside because of the war on the inside. But why the war on the outside and the war on the inside? This leads us to the third conflict.

3) **We are at war with God.** v. 4 - *"Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity (lit. hostility) with God?"* There is a war with God going on in our world. We are at war with one another and within ourselves because we are at war with God. The worldly systems of government, business, entertainment, even religion, are in direct opposition to the things of God. And until we are right with God we will be a troublemaker and not a peacemaker.

### **WHAT GOD'S PEACE IS NOT**

Now before we go any further, I want us to make sure we understand what peace is not. When the Bible talks about peace we need to understand what it is not referring to.

**Peace is not appeasement.** Don't get the idea that if you are a peacemaker, you are an appeaser. Appeasement never brings peace. Don't think that you are supposed to get along with every body. We should try as we are told in **Romans 12:18**: *"if possible as far as depends on you, be at peace with everyone."* But the truth is we won't always be able to be at peace with everyone. St. Paul also said, *"All those who live godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."* (2 Tim. 3:12). And Jesus said, *"If the world hated Me, it will hate you."* (Jn. 15:20).

The simple fact of the matter is that sometimes you'll be known by the enemies you make. All who stand for God will have enemies. There are some in the Church who talk about Christian love being some sort of all inclusive acceptance of everything and everybody. That we are never are to offend, or never controversial. Well that's not what happened to Jesus. Jesus did not get along with everybody. Jesus offended others. Jesus had enemies; so much so that His enemies killed Him. Peace is not appeasement. I'll tell you what else peace is not.

**Peace is not a truce.** Peacemaking is not truce-making. You can have a truce, but there is still a "cold" war going on. And then every once in awhile you will have a flare-up and then you got yourself a "hot" war. This just wasn't the case with the West and Communism. It's all of human history. It happens in all families; periods of a truce followed by more war and conflict. God's peace is not appeasement and it isn't a truce. Finally,...

**Peace is not merely the absence of conflict.** When the Bible uses the word, "peace," it doesn't mean in the negative sense (i.e. the absence of war.) Rather, it's a positive word. In the Old Testament and today, Jews greet one another with *"shalom,"* which means "peace" in Hebrew. It doesn't simply mean "no war." It means to have something that is good and wonderful. It means that something positive has happened.

### **GOD'S PEACE IS A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM**

So if peace is not appeasement, a truce or merely the absence of conflict, what is peace? Peace is a right relationship with God that leads to a right relationship with self and guides us into a right relationship with other people. That's what peace is. It is a sense of well-being and literally it's the result of righteousness.

In fact, if there is one thing you will find in the Scriptures it is that righteousness and peace are always linked together. In other words, if you are not a righteous person you will never have peace. **Is. 49:21**, *"There is no peace, my God says, for the wicked."* And notice in the Beatitudes, Jesus first says, *"Blessed are the pure in heart,"* and then He says, *"Blessed are the peacemakers."* There is no peace without purity. That's why **James 3:17** says, *"The wisdom from above is first pure, and then*

*peaceable...*" We are told in **Psalm 85:10**: "***Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.***" There's a love affair between righteousness and peace. There is a marriage between righteousness and peace. And what God has joined together let no one put asunder!

What is peace? It is a right relationship with God that leads you to a right relationship with self and then guides you into a right relationship with others. It's a positive thing, it is the righteousness of God ruling and reigning in our hearts.

### **THE ENEMY OF PEACE IS SIN**

Now if the friend of peace is righteousness, then the enemy of peace is sin. You see if peace is linked to in righteousness, than a lack of peace is always rooted in sin. Sin is the problem. "***There is no peace for the wicked says My God.***" Sin separates men from God. Sin causes inner turmoil and separates men from men. But not only can there be no peace without purity, there can be no peace without the Prince of Peace.

The Bible calls Jesus the Prince of Peace. The angels declared to the shepherds when announcing the birth of Christ, "***Peace on earth among men with whom God is pleased.***" (Lk. 2:14). And yet Jesus said, "***Don't think I came to send peace to the earth, I came not to send peace but a sword.***" (Mt. 10:34). Now what did Jesus mean by this seemingly contradictory statement? Simply that He did not come to bring a false kind of peace; a peace that is some kind of an amalgamation of good and evil. Rather, Jesus came to send a sword, to set a line of demarcation between truth and error, between light and darkness, between righteousness and sin. For when God's standard of righteousness is set there will always be division. Peace can never come where sin remains. God will never make a peace treaty with sin. That's why the Bible never teaches peace at any price.

There is an account from naval history of British Admiral Lord Nelson after he had won a sea battle. A French Admiral, who was surrendering, came to Lord Nelson. And that French Admiral came dressed up with all his regalia. He came wearing his special hat and gold fringed uniform to approach Lord Nelson on the deck of the ship. He had his sword down by his side in his scabbard. And Lord Nelson saw him coming. Remember the French Admiral was coming to surrender. And that Admiral, almost with a smile on his face, put out his right hand to congratulate Lord Nelson. But Lord Nelson took a step back, and said to the French Admiral, "Your sword, first." In other words, "Lay down your sword!"

Many people think they can walk up to the Lord Jesus Christ and put their right hand out to the Lord and shake His hand as if He were their buddy. But Jesus says, "Your sword, first." "Lay down your sword." "Surrender first." Jesus is not an appeaser. And He will never make a truce with sin. There can never be peace without first surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. So how do we experience God's peace? We need to understand God's plan and provision for peace.

### **GOD'S PERFECT PLAN OF PEACE**

1) **Planned by the Father** - God desires that every human being have peace. **Jer. 29:11**: "***For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lords, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.***" In **Judges 6:24**, God is called "***Jehovah Shalom***" which literally means the "***Lord our Peace.***" Do you know what God wants for you? His peace. That's why He is called the "God of peace" at least six times in the New Testament.

2) **Purchased by the Son** – How does God enact His plan for peace? Through God the Son, Jesus Christ. **Eph. 2:13-14:** *“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace.”* Jesus dying on the cross paved the way for peace with God. At the cross, sin was not overlooked, it was faced head on. It was paid for. God’s greatest righteousness confronted man’s greatest wickedness. And peace was attained. Jesus is our peace.

3) **Provided by the Spirit** – If God’s peace is purchased by the Son, it is provided by the Holy Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23.** One of the fruit of the spirit is *peace*. Jesus promised His disciples in **Jn. 14:16-17a, 26-27;** *“I am going to ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him,...He will teach you all things...Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you, not as the world gives, do I give to you.”* It is the Holy Spirit who brings to our hearts and minds God’s truth and He is the one who gives us God’s peace. The world can’t give God’s peace and the world can’t take it away. And it is this peace that is the peace that surpasses all understanding. And without Jesus Christ, no psychologist, no psychiatrist will have any understanding of this peace. There’s a bumper sticker you may have seen. It reads, *“No Jesus, No Peace; Know Jesus, Know Peace.”*

4) **Partaken by the Soul** – God has done His part in providing us peace. But we must do our part. We are called to respond and that means if we are going to experience God’s peace we need to be partakers of His peace. How do we do that? St. Paul tells us in **Philippians 4:6-9:** *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.”*

### **WE ARE CALLED TO BE PEACEMAKERS**

Now once we have this peace, we are called to be the agents of God’s peace. In fact, the Bible calls us ambassadors. **2 Cor. 5:18-20:** *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ.”* We are ambassadors for Christ. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation. What is this ministry of reconciliation? To make peace. That’s what reconciliation means; to restore relationships; the relationship between God and man.

And that means simply telling people about the good news of Jesus Christ. That’s what it means to be a peacemaker. Not an appeaser, not making peace with sin and unrighteousness, but proclaiming the peace which only comes from a right relationship with the Lord God, lifting up the truth and love of the Jesus Christ. Wouldn’t you rather be an ambassador for Jesus Christ than to be a prince or king on this earth? Do you want to be a peacemaker? Be at peace with God, be in right relationship with God through Christ and let others know about Jesus.

Corrie Ten Boom, a great woman of God, who survived the German concentration camps during World War 2, and went on to have a powerful Christian ministry, once said, *“If you look around you’ll be distressed, if you look within you’ll be depressed, but if you look up to Jesus, you will be blessed.”* Jesus said, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”* In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!