



Matthew 5:9

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Reflection

Jesus came to earth to make peace, peace between us and God and then peace between us and each other. This is nowhere better pictured than in John's vision of the end times in Revelation 7 where he sees people from every tribe and nation gathered around the

throne of grace, at peace with God and at peace with each other. This will only come about because Jesus came as a peacemaker and brokered peace between us and God through his sacrifice on the cross, calling his followers also to peace with each other and as much as is possible to peace with the rest of the world. Perhaps no book of the bible captures this better than Ephesians which says Jesus came and preached peace (Eph 2:17) and summarises his ministry as a ministry of reconciliation, of making peace. In the end Ephesians says, the ministry of Jesus will result in all things being reconciled to God (Eph 1:10). Jesus also summarises his ministry in these terms. He summarised the message of the Old Testament and our duty as Christians in terms of making peace with God and peace with others when he gave us perhaps his greatest commandment in Matthew 22

saying,

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and will all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.’

Peace with God, and peace with neighbour. And so it comes as no surprise that in today’s passage Christians are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus by being peacemakers. We’ve been adopted into God’s family and if we are to be called children of God, if we are true heirs of the kingdom of God, true members of God’s family, then we will be like our brother Jesus, and our heavenly Father in that we will be peacemakers.

What is a peacemaker? Well I think it has two parts. Firstly it has to do with living at peace

with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and as much as is possible with the world around us. And secondly, it has to do with being an agent of peace, with promoting peace, brokering peace, championing peace in our Christian communities and in the wider world. Let's have a look at both of these in turn.

Firstly, living at peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus came to tear down the dividing wall of hostility between the peoples of this earth (Eph 2:14). Jesus preached peace to those who are near, and to those who are far off, calling everyone to unity in Christ. And so Christians are called to love one another, irrespective of our differences, as a family united in our love of Christ, a love that is so strong that it overwhelms and makes trivial any differences that otherwise might divide us. We're called to let the peace

of Christ dwell in us richly, and love our neighbour as ourselves which all sounds very nice in theory but in practice it can be very hard. But this is a non-negotiable part of what it is to be a Christian.

An extension of this is to make every effort to live in peace with everyone in this world as Hebrews 12:14 reminds us. Paul says in Romans 12:18 that if it is possible, and as much as it is up to us, to be at peace with all people. And so Christians are commanded to live at peace with each other, and should strive to live at peace with everyone else in the world, except when it comes to living contrary to our faith. And it's into these moments that Jesus so starkly reminds that he has not come to bring peace but the sword (Matt 10:34), because the gospel will divide people, and bring persecution as we'll see in tomorrow's

beatitude – but in every other situation that does not compromise our faith Christians are called to peace.

More than this, and secondly, we are called to be peacemakers. After ensuring that we are personally living at peace with everyone in our Christian community and then as much as it's up to us in our wider community Christians are to actively seek opportunities to broker peace amongst each other and in the world. This should keep us very busy because the prince of this world, Satan, does everything he can to defy the prince of peace (Jesus) and so our relationships and our world are characterised by conflict.

So what is a peacemaker and how can we be one? A peacemaker is someone who sees the world through God's eyes, and sees the gos-

pel as the only true agent for peace. Now you might find this a bit of a stretch, surely this is just a stock, Christian response. Isn't mediation, or couples counselling, or trade sanctions more effective in bringing about peace? Bear with me and I'll explain. The gospel of Jesus Christ brings peace. So if you want to be a peacemaker your number one tool to bring about peace is the gospel. This is because the gospel changes hearts, reconciling people to God and to each other, changing them from the inside out to love each other as God loves us, and so to love their neighbour as themselves which brings about peace. So in your Christian community, if you see a dispute between two Christians then best way to be a peacemaker is to remind them of the gospel, which is to remind them gently and respectfully of how much we've been forgiven by God, and how hypocritical it is to hold a

grudge against a brother or sister over a small matter, when we've been forgiven in such an enormous and grave matter by God.

The same goes for championing peace in our world and again you may find this a bit of a stretch so you'll need to hear me out on this. Your best bet to bring about peace in any situation that you find yourself in is the gospel. If you find yourself in conflict with your husband or wife, or in the workplace, or even sitting on the UN Security Council the best way to bring about peace is to live out the gospel with the aim of sharing the gospel in those situations and bringing people to Christ. If you're still not convinced of this then how about a case study? Cast your mind back over these beatitudes for a moment and picture this person in the midst of a conflict. She's poor in spirit, deeply affected and mourning conflict in the

world, she's genuinely humble, improving equity and fairness in the world is her driving and ambition, she hungers and thirsts for it, she's merciful down to her core and pure in all her motives – that's what a peacemaker looks like. That's the person who has the best shot at bringing about peace in whatever the situation. Be that person, be a peacemaker, be a child of God.

Think

I don't know about you but these beatitudes are cutting me to the heart day after day. And here we go again. Who is it in your church or in your wider Christian community that you have problem with? Who is it that you avoid, that you don't speak to, that you hold a grudge against, that you would find it difficult to look in the eye and call them a broth-

er or sister in Christ? Who is that person? Jesus is calling you this morning to make peace with them. To forgive them, as he's forgiven you, and it's going to be costly, just as it was for Jesus. Who is that person and what can you do to be reconciled to them?

To probe a little further, how active are you as a peacemaker at church and in life in general? What conflict do you see around you into which you can preach peace by living out the gospel? Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Pray

Pray for the peacemakers, and pray that people would come to know you as a peacemaker. Pray that you would increasingly bring your friends, family, colleagues at work and

neighbours over the fence into peace with God through the gospel of his son, and that they and you would go on to be agents of peace in this world.

Thanks for reading and I hope you can join me again tomorrow.