

Matthew 5:3-12 (NKJV)

- ³ **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- ⁴ **Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.**
- ⁵ **Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.**
- ⁶ **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.**
- ⁷ **Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.**
- ⁸ **Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.**
- ⁹ **Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.**
- ¹⁰ **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- ¹¹ **"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.**
- ¹² **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

⁹ **Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.**

I mentioned at the beginning of this series how shocking what Christ was about to say would be to his hearers. I haven't revisited that much. But I think this verse gives us a good opportunity.

Let's remember again what the Jewish **expectations** were for a Messiah. While they may have expected Him to do some spiritual things, what many of them were **most interested** in was political and military power. Essentially the Messiah was expected to **inspire, conduct and win wars**. Maybe the typical Jewish beatitude might be something like- **Blessed are those with military might, because they will have freedom from godless oppression**. Or those to be congratulated for their wonderful status are those with military power.

Once we place ourselves in their mindset, we experience **what Christ has to say** in its **dramatic** impact. We can see how He turned their expectations upside down. He not only does **not say** what they wanted to hear. He tells them that the **very opposite** is true.

The common Jewish citizen probably had a formula in their minds about spiritual supremacy. It may have gone something like this. **"If we are ever to be the spiritual people we should be, we must first have power to govern ourselves. This is a requirement for becoming what God wants us to be. So military prowess is an absolute requirement for God's will to be accomplished."** And given some of what scripture prophesies in the Old Testament, it would have been incredibly easy to make that mistake.

But the thing that most of the Israelites at the time did not understand is that Christ came to establish a **spiritual** kingdom. And that spiritual kingdom does not have **any** of the same requirements as a **political** kingdom.

It did not then. It does not now.

The Jewish people were asking the wrong question. And they were destined to apply the wrong answer. They were asking, how can the Messiah fix our country. They were focused on the wrong problem. Christ came to focus on a bigger, more important, and more eternal problem. What can the Messiah do to fix **my soul**.

Political efforts achieve political ends.

Spiritual efforts achieve spiritual ends.

Christ was not here to build the kingdom of Israel. He came to build the **kingdom of God**. And that would have been a major disappointment to those whose focus was on their here and now.

Now I don't think any of us here this morning really believe that political means will produce a spiritual benefit. I don't think any of us believe that more souls will be saved if our government spends less wastefully or more wastefully. Souls are not being saved by either the liberal or conservative agenda.

I think there is wisdom applied when we determine that one view is more truthful, more effective, even often more moral than another. And certainly we should vote for those things we think would benefit our fellow human beings who live in the country. And being a public servant is a very honorable occupation for some. But we all know that government is not where **our help comes from**. The help we need most comes only from the Lord.

So every day we get to make a choice. Which kingdom will we be absorbed with? The most seductive thing about political absorption is that we can actually **play a part** in changing things. It is true. If we pour ourselves, heart and soul, into swaying opinions and changing minds, we **might** have an effect. And we believe politically that would mean we can play a part in a change **for the better**. We might even see to it that less babies are killed and more of them get to live. That is a very good thing. And it is easy to think, if I **can** make these political changes, I **should** make these political changes. And that is the seduction point. That is where we can easily go astray. That is where we can easily choose the **better** instead of the **best**.

When Christ said, blessed are the peacemakers, He was appealing to the very opposite of political might. He was describing people who have a completely different agenda than the rest of the world. He was describing people absorbed with building a **completely different kingdom**. It is a **spiritual**

agenda as opposed to a **political** agenda. And that is clearly the one He calls us to. That is most assuredly the mission of believers. To what degree a believer is **allowed to**, and **should**, do **both** can be argued. But it cannot be argued that, hands down, Christ called us to **His Kingdom work** primarily. And nothing should be embraced that competes with it.

Now let's ask a simple question here. Why are there wars? Why do no political peace keeping organizations have ultimate success? Why are they continually needed?

Eli and Wyatt can probably answer this question. What is the problem with people? SIN. It is really that simple.

Now this peacemaker, again, is not the fruit of a human personality. There are some people who are very easy to get along with. They raise no ruckus. They try to bring people together. They are a voice of reason when tempers flare. We all know people like that. This is not that. To avoid a war does not mean that peace has been made. The problem goes deeper than that. We are not talking about **appeasement**.

Now back to where wars come from?

Wouldn't it be nice if they came from lack of information, or lack of money, or lack of opportunity? All those things could be fixed. The warring factions could be satisfied. But we all know that is not the case. James tells us exactly where they come from, both inside and outside of the church.

James 4:1-6

Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

***"God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble."***

War comes, **not** from **not having stuff**. There are lots of things we might not have, but we can follow Paul's example and be perfectly content without the stuff. No, war comes from not having stuff **you think you need**. It comes

from not having stuff you have allowed your heart to become addicted to. It comes from not having that which you have allowed yourself to believe that **you must have** if you are ever to be happy. It means your heart gets **fixed** on something. You think you have **a right** to expect it. You **grow** to expect it. And when you don't get it, there is war.

I think all of us who are married know a little bit about where wars come from. We can often predict them. And think about it. Don't most of those wars erupt from unfulfilled expectations?

If she really respected me she would do this.

If he really loved me he would never do this.

Could she not overlook this one tiny imperfection in me?

Could he not do the simplest task that I expect of him?

The stories are all different, but the wars are the same.

Do you not know what I am talking about? Do wars **not** break out in your relationships? Maybe it is because you are **truly** a peacemaker?

I think it is safe to say that most of us are still learning to be a peacemaker.

Now, if **this** is war. And if unfulfilled expectations and longings and desires is where **war** comes from, how in the world do you **make peace**? How in the world can you be a **peacemaker** if war is so deeply seated in our heart's desires? How can we possibly be an agent of bringing peace to people?

Like we have said. This peace must have to do with dealing effectively with **sin**. Because **sin** is the problem. **Sin** is where war starts. **Self** is the initiating party in all wars. **Self** is the king who declares war in his own name.

How in the world can we get this job done?

Well, let's look at the progression Jesus has provided for us. We will not be peacemakers if we skip any steps. I hope by the time we are done with the beatitudes we will remember the sequence of growth we experience as we move from one step to the other. This is a description of the Christian walk. We may even begin to look at these steps to see why we may have stopped growing. We might want to see if there is a place that we did not make the progression from one step to the next.

We start with the recognition of our spiritual **poverty**, our spiritual **inability**. Then we **mourn** the implications of our failure and the state of God's creation. This leads us to the place of **surrender**, of meekness, where we know that Christ is our only hope, and **submission** is the only rational choice. Then we live life experiencing a **hunger for God** and having that hunger satisfied over and over again. Then we begin to apply our realization of our own spiritual

poverty to the lives of others. We begin to **extend mercy**. We reach out to them in an effort to ease the suffering created in them because of sin. Then our lives gravitate more and more to only willing **one thing**. Our self importance wanes. We want only to be a servant and to be of service. Our hopes and wishes and rights take second place to the pleasure of our Lord and our purity of service to Him.

We must keep in mind that now, and only now, are we ready to be a **peacemaker**. Because we can easily see that being a peacemaker is not a set of skills you learn in a seminar. No. It can only be properly done when the person has reached this stage in their commitment to Christ.

Prior to this point we are too concerned with self. In our household, Carla often needs me to do things for her or the household. And after she asks me, I will most frequently respond by saying, "But what's in it for me." Most of the time I am joking. But this is flesh's default setting. What's in it for me. And it is frequently where our wars come from, from our consideration of what's in it for me.

Well the peacemaker is a different kind of person altogether. As we experience what it means to be pure in heart, as we begin applying the virtue of mercy to all of our relationships, we begin to have the effective traits of a **peace ambassador**.

If you think about what makes a really good ambassador, the one thing that will be the last on the list is **self seeking**. A good ambassador enters relationships representing only one thing- the interests of his country. That is single minded. That is pure hearted. And as he goes about his business, he is not going to be personally insulted by the way that the foreign country treats him. He is not there representing his own interests, so the affront will not be against him. He has reached a state of maturity where he can put his own importance aside and be fully engaged in the higher interests of another higher cause.

This is the mindset needed in a peace maker. This is the place he must be before he will be effective in this ministry of making peace.

Are you at this stage in your spiritual development?

If situations arise, and tempers flare, and passions rise, and insults are hurled, and hurtful things are said and done, this is where you find out if you are fit to be a peacemaker.

Can you enter that arena only representing your **Master's** interest. Can you enter that arena and have it not be about **what you deserve** and **what you need** and **what you expect** and **what you think is fair**, and on and on we can go? Can we be undistracted by what we think should have been done and

should have been said? Can you enter that arena asking this question- what should I do to **best reflect my Master's interest?** What can I do to facilitate **peace with God** and the resulting **peace between people?** And with all of our emotions tempting to distract us, we stay the course of that pure heartedness?

Can we control **ourselves** and our **emotions** to the place where we do only those things that we have deemed are **faithful expressions** of our obedience to our Master.

That is the requirement for peacemaking. Anything less will serve better to perpetuate enmity and war. **Representing one's self focus in relationships is the source of continuing conflict.** If peace is to be had, one party must let go of that and seek only the Master's interest in the matter. There may still be war, but at that point every effort has been exhausted. At that point wickedness has been revealed. Until a party takes that approach, the mess becomes impossible to sort out because fault can be distributed all over the place.

Now being a peacemaker is bitterly hard on our flesh. But our flesh **deserves** bitterly hard things. Our flesh does not represent God's interests and it never will.

Here is the fruit of the flesh again from Galatians 5

¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

It is terribly clear that there will be no **peacemaking** when we come from this platform of flesh. There will only be **war** making. Do you see why I am saying that this peacemaking cannot be learned at a seminar? No. To the degree we are effective at peacemaking, it will be to the same degree that we are dead to our flesh, dead to self, alive to Christ.

Any unsubmitted thought, un submitted expectation, un submitted wish or dream or hope, will serve as an **obstacle** to peacemaking. That is why it is so rare in a person to be truly a peacemaker. They have to be dead to themselves before they will be good at it.

At the end of the day the peacemaker sees himself as being fully expendable in His Master's service. What all parties think of him is not the primary consideration. How all parties treat him is not the real concern. There is no button they can press in that regard. The overarching concern of the peacemaker is that all parties will make much of God. All parties will come together at King Jesus's feet.

That is what a peacemaker shoots for at the end of the day.

Now, when the peacemaker exhibits this proper attitude, they still have a King to represent. They are still seeking to issue peace between parties. They are seeking to bring all parties to unity under King Jesus.

How does that happen?

Well we can get some help from James again.

James is particularly good at showing us how NOT to make peace.

James 3

⁸ But no man can tame the tongue. *It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.* ⁹ With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

Since our tongues are the primary tool of peacemaking, our initial interest should be drawn to the use of the tongue. Here we see the problem. We become unrestrained in what we say. Our passions rule us and out of our mouths come all kind of divisive things. Once out, we cannot take them back. If we are wise we will quickly confess our sins. But sometimes our pride will not allow for that and enmity festers on.

I think I have been very wrong about a great many things in my life. I think when I stand before Christ, one of the greatest wrongs will be how flippantly I assessed the lives of others. I have said way too much and have prayed way too little. What I have said to people's faces is not the primary problem. It is how I have assessed their lives in conversations I regarded as **helpful processing** that I think is the problem. I hope to make changes in that regard. Our words are often the source of conflict. What we say about others can do great damage. And yet it is easy to excuse it with all kinds of excuses. Have we told others about bad things others have said of them? We should really ask ourselves why we do such things. Oh sometimes there are good reasons. But those are the kinds of things we should be very very sure about before we let ourselves off the hook. We need to allow time for our prosecuting

attorneys on those things. Because our hearts are slippery. They cling to theories of good motives like, as Martin Luther's wife said, a burr clings to an overcoat.

Eph 4

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Do you see the discipline in this speech. It runs things through a sieve. It asks questions before the jaws ever begin to move. It asks, **what will this speech accomplish?** What will it do? How will it be useful?

It asks, does it need to be said?

It asks will it **impart grace** to the person it is spoken to?

Notice what it does not ask? Do I need to say this? Does this person deserve what I have to say? Has this person hurt me to the place I have the right to say it? Do you see what I mean? It is going beyond all the fleshly motives as if they are a non concern. The concern becomes only how what is said will serve the Master's business. This is peacemaking speech.

What **self control** we are seeing in the Peace Maker's speech. This is a meek person, submitted wholly to the Master's service.

Now we have dealt with the supreme issue in being a peacemaker. We must be supremely submitted to our Lord Christ and be committed to only representing His interests.

Now what do we focus on to do this work of peacemaking? We have seen that we must speak words that have an intentional focus. A peacemaker doesn't get the privilege of sounding off his pet peeves and voicing all his grievances. That is something else. That might be appropriate in dear friendships. But that is not the work of the peacemaker.

What else?

Well it only makes sense that the greatest need for peace is peace between **God and man**. If that is the case, all peace making is the ministry of **reconciliation** between God and man first, and then man and man second. Our first question should be, are we dealing with a believer? If not, we must focus on the greatest need. The person we are speaking to needs Christ more than any other need in their lives. So we start there. We ask, **are you right with God?** Do you **want to be** right with God? If the answer is yes we are smack dab in the greatest work of peacemaking that a human being can be involved in. What a wonderful opportunity to represent God's grace to a fallen human.

If the person says **no**, there is very little that we will be able to accomplish in regards to peace making. Everything will be a disappointment because it is destined to only be temporary.

But we are not to give up when we find that person is taking the position of an enemy. Even our worst enemies we are instructed to love. And that love is not described as simply a change in our feelings toward them. No. We go out of our way to intrude into their lives with **kind actions** that **meet their needs**. Maybe we will have future opportunities to implement true peace with God to these folks. That is how peacemakers think. That is how peacemakers live. They view others evangelistically. As long as people are breathing they are a possibility for peace.

Now if we are dealing with believers, we have every reason to be optimistic. After all, what can possibly be more important than a person being accepted by your master as a child of His? Do we really think some **offense** they can commit **against us** could be more significant than the **forgiveness** that has already been granted to them **by Christ**? Do we think some issue we might have will be more important than the relationship that God has already established with this person? If a person is in faith, we have much to appeal to. We can appeal to that person to do the right thing before Christ. And ultimately, if that person is **in Christ** we will be **successful**. He will not be able to walk away from his relationship to Christ. We can appeal to peace like Paul did with the Corinthians. Ultimately Paul appealed to the unity we have under Christ. Once that is firmly established, all the contrary voices end up silenced.

Now, as always we come back to Christ. How did Christ make peace? How was He a peacemaker? How expensive was His peacekeeping ministry? Here is an excellent passage.

Eph 2:14-18

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Now we know what this peace cost him. It cost Him his very life. His very blood. Now consider this a bit. How much had we **offended Him**? How much

had our prior choices **insulted Him**? How much had we violated that which was **most precious to Him**? In our peacemaking efforts, do we really think there is anyone who has given us **more reason for rejection** than **we gave to Christ**? Can we say, oh but Christ, you do not understand what this person did to me? You can't possibly understand how important this was to me? Do you see what I mean?

If Christ quit in his ministry to make peace with you at the same line, and for the same reasons, that you quit when making peace with others, would you have been saved?

I think we can see that this bar that is set for peace making is very very high. It requires death to self. It requires complete submission to Christ. And it requires us to empty ourselves of all of our selfish motives and represent only Christ's.

And what do we get? What is promised?

For they shall be called sons of God.

The word for called here also means **Owned**. God will **own** us as His children if we are His peacemakers. We will have a family resemblance if we carry out this ministry that cost Christ so much. Think about this. Christ came to the earth to be a peacemaker. Christ came to bring peace between God and man. He came to eliminate the enmity that sin created. His work removed that barrier that **kept man** from having **peace with God**. Christ was the Prince of Peace. It was part and parcel of His title and His character.

Phil 2:5-11

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

There is the ultimate peacemaker. And there is our ultimate example for our peacemaking. Consider this. What relationship do you have that lacks peace? What would happen if you applied the attitude of Jesus Christ to it? Maybe peace is not as far away as we would like to think it is.