

Matthew 5:1-12 (NKJV)

1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.

2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

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.

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

Last week we took a look at this verse. The primary application was what it **takes** to be a peace maker. We discussed what it **is** and what it **does**.

After thinking about it during the week I thought that more needs said about this wonderful attribute. There were things I passed over that were to important to be ignored.

So let's take a second look at it this morning.

The first thing we need to look at is what is this thing called **peace**?

Is what we are talking about just **cessation of war**? We do not need to consider that very long. We know too much about relationships. I read a psychology book once that describes our human condition aptly. I think all of us will recognize ourselves in it. This book talked about emotional trading stamps. When someone does something we don't like, something that hurts us, we determine not to do anything about it. But in our minds we say, **that's one**. Then they do or don't do something again and we are hurt. We say, that's **two**. They do something again. That's **three**. And then one day the poor unsuspecting person does that one more thing, that straw that breaks the camel's back, and we cash all those trading stamps in with a tirade of fury. This is a fury that we feel is perfectly defensible. But to the person who

receives the fury they are often left with the question, where in the world did that come from.

Now prior to the outburst, there was no outward conflict. But none of us would describe that condition as a **desirable peace**. Aren't we often aware of hostility even when it is not outwardly displayed? So this is not the peace we desire.

MacArthur said The scarcity of peace has prompted someone to suggest that **"peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload."**

Obviously. The absence of warfare is not the presence of peace.

The Hebrew word for peace, which is a common Jewish greeting, is Shalom.

This helps us understand the Jewish thought for the concept of peace.

Shalom expresses the desire that the one who is greeted will have **all the righteousness and goodness God can give**. The deepest meaning of the term is **"God's highest good to you."**

The peace we are shooting for comes through the process of hungering and thirsting first for righteousness.

Have you ever been involved in a conflict that will not go away? I am guessing we all have. Sometimes we do everything we can to resolve the conflict. We address every sin in ourselves that we know to address. We try to make it right but we cannot. The problem is not lack of peace. Lack of peace is the symptom. **Lack of righteousness** is the problem.

James 3:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Isn't it interesting how the concepts of purity, righteousness and peace are woven together by James. I think he is preaching our text.

We saw last week that wars come from a lack of purity, from doublemindedness. They come when we have buttons people can press that are sure to ignite fleshly responses. We cannot be a peacemaker without dealing with those buttons. And dealing with our flesh is the result of going through the Beatitude process. After truly repenting and submitting, we hunger for righteousness and we keep being satisfied with righteousness. We grow to want only one thing. And we end up being capable of being the initiator of peace.

In James we see the importance of **righteousness** in this peace process. True peace occurs only between two people who are both in the state of peace themselves. True deep lasting peace happens between two people who are both in the right. It is between 2 people who are surrendering all to God, trusting in God for the results, single hearted in their pursuit of God, and desiring reconciliation for every human. First desiring reconciliation of man to God. Then desiring reconciliation of man to man.

Flesh is the reason there is **so little peace** in this world, in marriage, in families, in the church, in the community, in our nation, in our world. As always, sin is the problem. Christ is the cure.

As long as we have vestiges where we are committed to **living for the flesh**, where we refuse to be meek, where we will not submit to what Christ has clearly spoken, we need not wonder why there is so much conflict in our relationships. Peace cannot reign where wickedness reigns. Isaiah tells us there is no peace for the wicked.

So for peace to reign, there must be two beatitudes people involved. There must be two people hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Two people seeking only one thing at the core of their being. Truth has to be in the inmost places.

And what does this process look like? When peacemakers are at work, **what can we expect?**

Should we expect these peacemakers to always be friendly and gentle, never harsh or confrontive? Should we expect them to be passive and non judgmental? Will they bend most principles in order for everyone to just get along?

We do not see much of that **in scripture**. We certainly do not see that in **our Lord**. Look at the Lord's ministry conversations with individuals. To those who really believed in Him, to those who exhibited faith in Him, to those already at the meek stage, He tended to be very gentle. He was telling people what they needed to hear. And when you have already died to all your alternatives, Christ offers Himself freely.

But some day just take a look at **all** of His ministry conversations. Look at how He carried out the ministry of reconciliation.

To most of the pharisees, He issued severe rebuke. These people were not even near the **first stage** of the Beatitudes. They thought they had spiritual power and authority. And He rebuked them severely and continually.

Then we see Christ talk to Nicodemus. This man probably saw through some of the charade. He was asking honest questions of Christ. He certainly was not yet meek, but he did not approach Christ in human arrogance. And Christ

answered Nicodemus's questions. But He was forceful at places. He was not going to allow Nicodemus's **rebuttals** to stand. He demolished them without apology. He was **kind** to Nicodemus, but He did not waver an inch in the truth in order for Nicodemus to have peace with Christ. He was offering Nicodemus peace, but it was always on **Christ's terms**. It was never on Nicodemus's terms.

Then we see the woman at the well. Again we see Christ kindly reach out to this woman. But He does not hesitate to be brutally honest about her character. He doesn't tactfully avoid the reality of her sin. He goes straight to it with brutal accuracy. If a person is going to come to Christ, they must worship Him in **Spirit and in truth**. God takes no pleasure in good acting. He wants a true Beatitude process in those who are going to follow Him.

Think about all of Christ's interactions with people. Is it not exactly what we would **expect**? The more a person came to Christ in abject humility, accurately telling the truth about their need for Christ, exhibiting absolute trust in the character of Christ, Christ responded with little hesitation to their requests. He invited them to Himself warmly.

And to the degree that someone came to Him with **objections**, or **trickery**, or **relational slight of hand**, or **duplicity**, He brought those issues to a head. He exposed their sin. He made it known that the sin is an obstacle that must be overcome. Until a follower is willing to humble himself and come to him just as he is, knowing he brings nothing to the picnic except his need, that person would have no success with Christ. They would receive no satisfaction at his hand. You had to hunger and thirst for righteousness before you would be satisfied.

Christ is the prince of peace. He is the greatest of all peacemakers. If we want to follow an example, this is the example to follow.

If your peacemaking feels like you are constantly trying to keep war from breaking out at any front, what you are probably doing is **placating**. Christ didn't do that. He was never afraid to go to the heart of that which kept peace from happening- the absence of righteousness, the absence of being spiritually poor and mournful of one's state. He was not afraid to address those issues in all parties. Even when his disciples tussled, he did not try to placate their fleshly desires. He called them all out.

If we think peacemaking should look differently, we need to reconsider.

To have peace, we must have righteousness. Where we will not bend our knee, we will not have righteousness. Where we will not have righteousness, we will not have peace.

Peacemaking is really **inviting** those who are repentant and **calling out** those areas where a person refuses to bend the knee to Lord Christ. Is that not what Christ always did? Is that not how you and I came to Christ? Oh maybe at first we did not understand. But the longer we followed Christ the more it became clear that our fleshly responses would no longer do. Did we not all have to repent of attitudes and actions that were contrary to Christ? Did we not all have to surrender to Christ's Lordship as we followed Him. Those were all **ministries of reconciliation** ministered to us by the **Holy Spirit** and sometimes through the **means of other believers**.

This ministry of reconciliation is what we are describing here. It is the ministry of bringing people into right relationship with Christ. It is offering peace between God and man. That is where all peacemaking starts.

The most ironic thing about this kind of peacemaking is that it cannot be done by the person who most loves peace. It must be done by the person who most loves God. A person who loves peace will have it at any price. They will overlook sin. And by so doing they assure that they will never usher in any kind of permanent peace.

The person who represents God first would rather die than compromise at the point of truth. This person will offer peace, but it is never peace without a price. There are conditions that His Master lays down and he will not side step them. He will not pretend that sin is not sin. He will not say that sin does not matter. It always does.

The true peacemaker in the Kingdom of God offers peace **just like Christ did**. And that peace is always found at the foot of the cross. It is always found through forgiveness offered through the blood of Christ. It is always found through joint worship of the person of Christ.

And remember what Christ said about other kinds of peace? Did Christ act like He came to bring **other kinds of peace** to this world right now?

Did he come to make **all family relationships** better? Did he come to make all **community** relationships better? Or **world** relationships?

No. He said this about that kind of peace.

Matthew 10:34-39 (NKJV)

³⁴ "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

³⁵ For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';

³⁶ and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'

³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

Do we understand this? When we represent the peace of Christ, we are not free to **negotiate the terms**. And the enemies of Christ will not only **not be willing** to pay the terms. They will **hate** them and **reject** them completely. And it will stir up in them a **hateful zeal** that is the very **opposite** of peace. So we see that our peacemaking will only be ultimately successful in those who God is calling to Himself. Our efforts at peacemaking with **others** will actually inspire greater hostility with the enemies of God.

Now what about peacemaking in the church when our efforts appear to be ineffective? Right now I believe that this is what **longsuffering** is necessary for. Long suffering is living in the state where **peacemaking is frustrated**. It is living with others while the Beatitude process is still ongoing. Christ has not yet brought a person to meekness in one area or another. The sin is visible, but it is not addressable. It is not blatant enough for one to **definitively** call it a sin. It may be an internal thing, an attitudinal thing, that the party who exhibits it is unaware of it, or unwilling to deal with it. At this point we pray for each other. We long for our Lord to deal with that sin. And we commit ourselves to **loving this person** in their current state. If we are to have a relationship with another believer, **any** other believer, longsuffering is called for. We all experience blind-nesses toward our self and our sin. And no amount of peacemaking efforts will resolve this until the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. So **long suffering is not peace making**. But it is a stop measure for us to cling to while we hope for peacemaking. And it is always necessary for Christian fellowship.

I want to spend the rest of our time this morning by looking at an example of peacemaking. Carla and I read Table talk magazine most mornings for devotions together. It is put out by Ligoneer Ministries. I encourage any of you, if you do not already do something better, to at least do something like this.

We have been reading about Paul's words to the Corinthians. And it dawned on me one morning that what we were reading about was **peacemaking**. The situation is that Paul is writing to a church that he **fathered**. His ministry **began** the church at Corinth. Now we need to put ourselves in Paul's place. Think about the great effort that Paul made to reach the Corinthians. He could have been home planting his garden and preaching at his synagogue. But he wasn't. He was planting churches at great personal expense. These people

were his spiritual children. He could have easily thought that these people owed him their lives.

So Paul is no longer **on site** and he begins hearing reports. We can imagine how this filtered in. Maybe it was one letter. Maybe it was a bunch over time. And this is what he starts hearing.

Hey Paul, I am really concerned about what is going on here. There is conflict in our church. People are **jockeying for leadership**. And they are doing it by claiming **close association with your fellow ministers**. Some have Apollos as their patron saint. They say, "that is what a minister should really look like. He talks like an angel. He is masterful in his communication. He is clearly the model for superior ministry. That is the way to reach the masses right there. He will impress unbelievers into the kingdom. So we want the Apollos ministry at the expense of any other. And we are tight with Apollos."

Then others are saying, "no, we believe in the passing on of spiritual power. And clearly Peter is our man. Look at the words Christ said about Peter. And he was real apostle. He was picked by Christ while Christ was on the earth. We don't have to believe some cock and bull story about some experience Paul had. Everyone knew that Peter was the right hand man of Christ. So we say the Peter ministry model trumps all the others. And we are tight with Peter." Now Paul, we want you to know that we have been arguing with them. We think **you** are really the minister that should have the most authority here. We are siding with you. We want you to know that we are telling them that we should have the authority at the church because we are tight with Paul.

Now, think about this. If you were Paul how would you respond? What **buttons** would it push in you?

Would you not want to say, who do you think you are? I was doing ministry when you were in diapers?

Would you not want to say, can't you see the great price I paid for you? How dare you respond to me with **so little appreciation** for the price I paid?

Would you not want to say, I **deserve way better than this**. That is it. I want to have nothing more to do with you. If you can't treat me better than this, I am done. Until you come with your tail between your legs, good luck.

Do you see the buttons I mean. We all have them. And this would have been hard for him too.

But how does Paul respond? How does Paul **make peace**?

I am sure Paul had to give some thought to this. And if he is anything like us it required a great deal of self control to reach the point where he wrote the letter. Paul, being a seasoned minister, knew that he could not give into his

emotions at any point. He could not allow flesh and emotion to determine his reaction. He would know that his fleshly responses would only promote division.

At the same time he knew there were **evil principles** in play that needed to be **harshly dealt with**.

So Paul starts his letter by offering the readers grace and peace from Christ. We see right off the bat he has placed the spiritual well being of his readers above his own personal feelings. Then he tells them of his **thanks** for the work that God has done in them.

After that is done, he begins to address issues. He starts by addressing the issue of unity. Please read 1 Corinthians. I do not want to read the whole narrative to you. But read it with an eye to how **personally offensive** what they did **would have been** to him, yet how he responds, point by point, to fix their problem.

You might look for Paul to break out in a tirade against them for how unappreciative they were. But he does not. You might expect for Paul to voice his **personal grievances** for being **belittled** by them. But he does not. Step by step he takes them through a logical progression that challenges the spiritual issues that threaten their unity and their growth.

Paul **does** defend himself by saying that he, too, could be an impressive speaker if he wanted to be. He does not belittle or undermine the influence of Apollos or the authority of Peter. He does not put himself front and center at all.

He just talks to them about how the kingdom of God works. He tells them how God chooses the stuff that is **not** impressive to do **His most impressive** work. He chooses **foolishness** and **weakness** to accomplish the **spiritually powerful stuff**.

He lets them know that the fleshly stuff that they are appealing to is really an obstacle to real peace making.

1 Corinthians 1:29-31 (NKJV)

29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--

31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

Paul does not only not defend the things that might offend his pride. He basically tells them that **what they are focused on does not matter at all** in God's plan. Paul never tries to prove that he is more worthy than his fellow ministers. That is what **flesh** would do. But no. Paul tries to school them in what real ministry looks like.

Then he brings their sin to the surface, just like peacemakers must do when they encounter resistance.

1 Corinthians 3:3-4 (NKJV)

³ for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?

⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal?

If we are to be peacemakers, this is part of what it will take. Sometimes we must point out the **carnalities**. We must say, the problem is yours. The problem is you. And we know what kind of ruckus-ness might ensue when we enter into those waters. Sometimes we have to cause chaos in the prideful hearts. Sometimes we must stir things up in order to make peace. That is exactly what Paul did.

And what does he point to?

1 Corinthians 3:9 (NKJV)

⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.

This is where true ministry always ends does it not? It is **all about God**. That is the perspective of the **peacemaker**.

Paul as the peacemaker enters into this arena. He puts his pride behind him. He puts his personal offense and woundedness behind him. He puts his fleshly motivations behind him. And he does everything he can for the spiritual welfare of the ones he ministers to.

And could we possibly be surprised? Is that not exactly what **Christ** did for **us**? Is that not our example for peacemaking?

Now in chapter 4 Paul warns them. He lets them know that he is coming and it is not going to be pretty for them if they will not give up the fleshly path they are pursuing. **Warning** is part of **peacemaking**. And it is very likely that there will be some who will not respond well. They will receive no peace. But Paul does a masterful job and portrays a good example of how peacemaking looks in **real life** in the church.

I hope we will consider this, this morning.

What opportunities do we have to call people to peace with Christ? Where is sin creating chaos that we are in the position to address? Where is Christ calling us to represent Him in the relationships we are in? Where do our fleshly reactions keep us from ministering in Christ's stead to bring peace into relationships?

Where are we afraid to address the real sins because we are simply afraid of all the ramifications? Where are we being **pacifiers** instead of **peacemakers**? Where do we love **lack of conflict** more than **love of God's honor**? This peacemaking business is not for the faint of heart.