

## **Blessed are the Peacemakers**

Call to Worship: Psalm 33  
1st Scripture: James 3:13-4:10  
2nd Scripture: Matthew 5:1-9

Hymn #87- *Holy, Holy, Holy*  
Hymn Insert- *The Power of the Cross*  
Hymn #713- *I am Thine, O Lord*

### **Introduction**

This morning, we move on to consider the seventh beatitude listed here, in Matthew, Chapter 5: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” And as we have been doing all along, we will begin by considering the object of the blessing (the first portion of the verse), before considering the actual blessing itself (the second portion of the verse).

### **I. Blessed are the Peacemakers**

“Blessed are the Peacemakers.” Once again, as we consider the concept of being a peacemaker, we would do well to see this virtue as a necessary consequence of the earlier ones that have preceded it. Those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn the effects of sin in the world, those who are meek...etc, will, of necessity, be peacemakers. A peacemaking disposition is the certain by-product of the former beatitudes.

To this end, as we consider what it means to be a peacemaker (at the practical level), we begin by first recognizing the *attitude* that one must have toward himself/herself, before such a disposition could ever even begin to exist in some consistent sense. Contrary to the world, which values its own interests first, and which centers *itself* upon the throne of all governing motivations, the peacemaker, being meek and lowly in heart; recognizing his utter dependence upon God for all things, and being repulsed by the effects of sin in the world (and especially in his own heart), has the God-given desire to put Christ above His own interests. And as he seeks to put Christ above his own interests, he finds it necessary further then, to put others above his own interests, as well. And so, the peacemaker must first be one who has released his grip on the world, putting the interests of Christ and others above his own, which then, and only then, will permit him to deal with others in such a way that would be willing to suffer loss and wrong, for the spiritual good of others.

A true peacemaker must be bound to the big picture of redemption, of salvation and eternal matters, driving him to be willing to expend all that is temporal, for the sake of that which is eternal. This is critical to the whole of understanding what our Lord intends here, by this beatitude. If my interests are fixed on my own personal ambitions, then I will not be able to promote peace, particularly when my ambitions are hindered by the designs of others. Indeed, this kind of selfishness is at the very root of the contentions and disputes that bring about division and strife, the very opponents of true peace.

James makes this very clear in the first Scripture that we had read earlier. Does he not lift up the veil, and expose the very cause of all division and contention, when he states in James 4:1, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” Moving on, James calls such people, “adulterers and adulteresses,” because ultimately, idolatry (the replacement of God with anything else) is at the root of all contention. You see, if Christ’s interests supersede our own interests, and we all share that same plane, then an unbreakable unity will form, and contention and schism and division will find no resting place in our midst. It is when “my desires and my ego and my feelings and my priorities and my rights and my privileges and my prerogatives and my, my, my, my anything” becomes paramount, that contention and unrest ensue. And so, that is why the preceding beatitudes are important prerequisites to this one. The peacemaker’s mindset must be set to the tune of asking first and foremost, in any circumstance, “How do these things affect the glory of Christ and His Gospel, and the good of His church and others,” rather than, “How will these things affect me?” And the natural, fallen mind, is simply not programmed to do this. That is why these beatitudes are *fruits* of true salvation and conversion, and not *means* unto salvation and conversion. Those who are blessed here, according to Jesus, are blessed, because they have been supernaturally changed *from the inside* out, by the hand of Almighty God, in the particular work of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the will of God in Christ! To this end, we have a nice glimpse into understanding our Lord’s teachings about bearing a cross, and about the necessity of one losing one’s life, if he is to find true life.

All of that said, what then are we to understand about the peacemaker? Having this right and proper and biblical view of one’s self and of one’s own interests; seeing the cause of Christ

and His Gospel as the highest priority, then drives one to, both, passively and actively pursue peace. Now, what do I mean by this; pursuing peace, passively and actively? Well first, for a moment, let me just ensure that we understand what *peace* is. Peace is that which seeks to, within the bounds of God's moral laws, allay contention, quarrel, schism and division, while striving to join together. Positively, pursuing peace means thinking redemptively, always working in the direction of reconciliation, restoration, healing, unifying and bringing together, in the context of a fallen world, the effects of which, still permeate all of mankind (saved and unsaved). And all of this is done without compromising the clear will of God, as given in the Scriptures. In other words, we don't break peace with God; we don't welcome or allow for the things that contradict God's moral will, so as to bring peace among others. Peace begins with bringing man to God, and it seeks to keep man there, while then, further working on bringing man to one another. To this end, peacemaking has, as its target, both, working with the unsaved, so as to see them reconciled to God and others, and working with the saved, to see them continuing to walk faithfully with God, while remaining united with the brethren, all for the glory of Christ and His Gospel! Peace heals division and promotes unity.

1) Now, regarding the *passive* aspect of peacemaking, I simply mean the ability to overlook an offense, when permissible, and the consistent commitment to the biblical principle of being "slow to speak, slow to wrath and a good listener." Again, with Christ at the fore, such a one, must be willing to absorb barbs, if necessary, unto the intent of pursuing reconciliation and peace with others. This passive aspect of peacemaking, especially deals with situations where someone has offended us, personally. Included here, would be the implications of our Lord's teaching, soon to follow, where he charges his disciples to not repay evil for evil, but rather to repay evil with good, and to bless those who curse you, and do good to those who spitefully use you...etc.

None of this is to say that we are to shirk our responsibility of lovingly correcting one another, when patterns of sin, or grievous sins have been committed. Again, the focus is on what is best and good for the spiritual well-being of others, and for the glory of Christ as a whole.

2) Regarding the *active* aspect of peacemaking, this would include doing all that we can to proactively encourage reconciliation and biblical unity, be it, in our own personal dealings

with others, or in seeking to help mediate conflicts between others. We ought to take a proactive, (wise, but proactive) approach in trying to help rescue those who are straying, and we ought to strive to be a mender of broken relationships and disputes, whenever we are providentially given the opportunity to do so. This would include quelling gossip, and seeking to encourage peace, as much as is within us.

And so, the peacemaker is one who strives to wisely, through passive and active means, encourage reconciliation and biblical unity, first and foremost with God, and then with all horizontal relationships that exist within the sphere of our ability to minister. We live in a broken and fallen world. Within the context of this broken and fallen world, relationships are often damaged and broken. Those who have been regenerated and redeemed through Christ, have been commissioned to help heal what is broken in this regard, and that, with the primary tool of the Gospel. God loves unity, and so should we. Indeed, such a desire for unity is wired in the new nature, which has been given in Christ.

Before we move on to consider the specific blessing which belongs to those who are peacemakers, let me leave you, once again, with two examples (one from the OT and one from the NT) to help illustrate what we have gone over so far.

1) Some of you may recall an incident in the OT, involving a woman, named Abigail, who stepped in, to bring about peace, when her husband (Nabal) had foolishly initiated conflict with David. Nabal was a very wealthy man, who had owned a large flock of sheep, which his shepherds had cared for, in a wilderness, where David was hiding with his men, during the time that King Saul was pursuing David. While there in the wilderness, Nabal's shepherds had enjoyed the protection of David and his mighty men, who had kept any harm from coming upon the shepherds and Nabal's flock. Even the shepherds had acknowledged this protection, and had expressed appreciation to David for it. However, when David had humbly asked Nabal to provide some food for his hungry men, Nabal not only refused, but he further insulted David in the process.

Needless to say, David and his men armed themselves and were preparing to go and kill every male in Nabal's house, because of his ungrateful and wicked spirit. However, when Abigail, Nabal's wife, had heard about what David was going to do, she interceded, putting her

own life on the line, going out to David, to humbly appeal for him to extend grace to Nabal's household. She brought a large sum of food to David and his men, and she knelt down before David and pled for him to overlook her husband's foolishness, so that his household would be spared. To this end, Abigail was used to deliver many men from being put to death, because of the sin of her husband. She had served as a peacemaker. [Read 1 Samuel 25:23-35].

2) For our New Testament example, we briefly consider the commendable example of the Apostle Paul, particularly in how far he went to see his own people, the Jews, come to the truth, so as to find reconciliation and peace with God. When you read through the Book of Acts, especially the last several chapters, you can't help but grow in awe, over the testimony of the Apostle Paul to His people. Although, they wanted to kill him; although they persecuted and man-handled him; although they put forth false testimonies against him, he did all that he could to win them to the gospel, longing to see them come to the truth. He knew that they were trapped in the very trap which once held him. They refused the righteousness of God given in Christ, seeking to cling to their own righteousness, which was a dead end. They did not grasp the nature of God's holiness or their own sins. And so, they rejected the free righteousness of God, that comes only through Jesus Christ, and clung to their own. They attempted to use the Law, in a way, which, fallen sinners could never use the law...as a means of justification.

And so, Paul overlooked his own personal interests and comforts, and suffered much wrong, fervently desiring to see his kinsmen come to the truth in Christ. He longed for his own people to experience reconciliation and peace with God. Hear Paul's own words from Romans, which express his sentiments, so well, in this regard: [Read Romans 9:1-5; 10:1-4].

## **II. For They Shall be Called Sons of God**

What then is the specific blessing which belongs to those who are peacemakers, in accordance with this beatitude? "For they shall be called sons of God!" Let me emphasize two aspects of this blessing, which I hope will bring us to greatly appreciate it:

1) The wonder of this blessing: As the Apostle John states, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1a). Indeed, it is no small thing to be called a child of the living God, brethren. But sadly, we can easily lose

sight of this wondrous privilege. When John speaks of the “we” here, it is obvious that there is a great weight of emphasis placed on the term “we,” which really highlights the incomprehensible weight of this blessing, and especially the unfathomable qualitative and quantitative love of God that must be exhibited to grant the “we” such a privilege. You see, when John says “that we,” he is actually saying, God’s love is so great toward us, that He is willing to call, “even us,” His beloved children. In other words, God’s love is so great toward His redeemed people, that it has crossed the great threshold of our damnable, fallen, condemned, defiled, corrupt, wicked and ungodly condition; His pure and perfect holiness has reached into our impure and unholy context, so as to rescue us and justly bring us to Himself, without compromising His holiness to the slightest degree. And the cost, was the giving of His Son to attain this. It cost Him the incarnation, the bearing of sorrow, guilt, shame, persecution, suffering, condemnation, crucifixion and dying, of His own Son! That’s the wonder of God’s love for “us.” That’s the incomprehensible wonder of “us” being called children of the living God. It is not simply the *position* of sonship, where we receive all of the inheritance blessings of the Father (that is indeed beyond comprehension, when you consider the fact of who God is), but furthermore, it is the reality of a former God-hater (with nothing naturally lovable in him), now being brought into the closest possible relationship with God... which brings us to a second aspect of this blessing:

2) One of the reasons that the redeemed peacemaker is recognized most particularly as a “son of God,” is because, in being a peacemaker, the Christian best reflects the glory of God Himself, whose very purpose for the continuance and existence of this creation, is to bring about the redemption of His elect people; is to bring about eternal peace with lost sinners, through the blood of Christ’s cross! In other words, brethren, to borrow the famous expression (in a sanctified sense), “the apple doesn’t fall too far from the tree.” Those who are children of God, will most certainly reflect (though in a finite sense), the redemptive and peaceable heart of God. Listen to a few biblical texts which reference our great and glorious God, in this way:

a- Colossians 1:15-23

b- Ephesians 2:11-18

c- “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:7)

### **III. Conclusion**

1) Let me ask you this morning, are you a peacemaker? Do you evidence this precious fruit of the Spirit, in how you view yourself, God and others? How do you view yourself? Are you overly obsessed with your rights and privileges and prerogatives and desires? Or have you truly been crucified with Christ, such that, in a general sense, you can say that it is no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you? Brethren, this is indeed a struggle for us, but again, there should be some consistent fruit unto this end. One of the critical evidences of our salvation, and in keeping with the rest of the beatitudes that we have gone over, is the recognition of our own unworthiness and a debasing of ourselves, unto the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has freely loved and redeemed us, for His Name's sake. You cannot possibly have a high view of God and His will, while maintaining a high view of yourself.

And does such a debasing of self, and an exalting of Christ, drive you to be a peacemaker? Does it compel you to long to see the unsaved, reconciled to God through the blood of Christ's cross? Or are you unconcerned for the unsaved, because they often get in the way of *your* ambitions and desires? Do you love Christ, in such a way, that this love is exhibited and proven in your love for His imperfect (and yet, redeemed) sheep? Are you a reconciler of the brethren, both to yourself and to others, to the expense of your own pride and comfort zone? Are you a peacemaker? If so, though imperfect, be encouraged, because you evidence the fact that you are, and will be called, a "son of the living God." In the end, the Lord will present His redeemed brethren to the Father, and they will enjoy the unwavering, unchanging, incomprehensible glory, of all that this wondrous sonship entails!

2) But, if you are not in Christ; if you are not a true Christian this morning; if you have not truly come to faith in Christ, repenting of your sins, while casting yourself wholly upon His mercy, then know again, that these beatitudes are fruits of God's prior work in His redeemed people. You cannot aim for any (or all) of these virtues, thinking that only if you can achieve these, God will accept you. No, God only accepts you in His Son, and when He does accept you, He Himself forms these virtues in you. They are fruits of the Holy Spirit's work in those who have come to Christ in truth! And so, I ask you then, are you in Christ? [The Gospel]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Hebrews 13:20-21