

Introduction

The past couple weeks have seen remarkable tension and violence reflecting tumultuous conflict and hostility. First, I am thinking of the mounting tensions between the U.S. and North Korea. The North Koreans are threatening to attack the small island of Guam. President Trump has responded with a threat to rain down fire and fury on North Korea like the world has never seen if they do. But there is conflict around the world involving more than threats and intimidation. Such a bloodbath in Sudan has resulted in countless deaths and Sudanese people like Bayak and the Nath community seeking refuge among countries far from home. And even there they experience the conflict. Tribes and factions quarrel and fight and kill. Then there is the thing that happened in Charlottesville. The violence and conflict in the streets spilled into social media and news media as people even argue over what actually happened. A world rife with selfishness, hate, and injustice seeks domination on the one hand and liberation on the other. Conflict is a constant threat. People fight because they feel their happiness is threatened by another. Jesus shows another way to happiness in beatitude number 7.

[Read Text and Pray]

In Jesus' day the Jews had long been under oppression. They were longing for liberation. They were looking for a conqueror to rise up. They were longing for messiah to come. He would show these Romans what-for. He would throw off their interference and hostility and oppressive intrusion into Jewish life. He no doubt would be a man of military might and prowess because the only way to topple a military opponent of incredible strength is greater military strength. They were not looking for a peacemaker except in the sense that he would make peace for them by running rough shod over the Romans who had disturbed their peace. Into that context Jesus the Messiah came preaching. He came proclaiming the truth. At the very outset of his sermon he issues a number of provocative statements. In light of the Jewish expectation none was more provocative than the one we are considering his morning. The sons of God are not recognized for their

might in fight but for making peace. In order to grasp Jesus' message in this beatitude, I want us to look at four biblical marks of a peacemaker. We will speak of the work, the character, the disposition, and the identity of the peacemaker.

I. The Work of the Peacemaker

A. What is it that a peacemaker does? Well, the obvious answer is that a peacemaker makes peace. But what is it to make peace? The idea is to establish peace, to bring peace to reign, to remove conflict and its consequences and produce unity. A peacemaker brings warring factions together to eliminate the cause of contention and establish agreement.

Peace does not exist where strife rages or bitterness boils. Peace is absent when forgiveness is absent. Peace, real peace, involves reconciliation. You can have all the peace accords you can write. But there will not be peace until there is real agreement.

B. Now we need to ask, "what is the focus of the peace about which Jesus speaks?" What kind of peace is he talking about?

1. This same man, who truly is The Only Begotten Son of God, is also called by the Bible, the Prince of Peace. But it is he who made the following stunning declaration recorded in Matthew 10:34. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household."

So it is evident from the Bible that Jesus is not talking about a peace that does not take a stand. It is not a silent pacifist peace that accepts and affirms other persons in the midst of their sin. It is not the kind of peace that is willing to pay whatever-the-price in order not to argue. It is not the kind of peace that says to North Korea, just go ahead, blow up Guam. It will be okay. We will still be your friends. It does not say to sinners, "we affirm you in your sin."

The peacemaker seeks to bring peace, but clearly, his efforts for peace often in fact actually stir up strife. This fact is highlighted by the beatitude that follows this one. Remember these are the characteristics of the citizens of the kingdom of God. They are peacemakers, but they are persecuted for righteousness.

Jesus told his disciples, "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19)

2. The kind of peace kingdom citizens make is not the kind of peace the world wants. And I will show you why. Jesus came to bring peace, right? Yes, but not merely world peace, peace among men on earth. He came and died on Calvary's cross to bring human beings into peace with God.

Colossians 1:20 says that through Christ God reconciled to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

In Ephesians 2 Paul declares that Christ is our peace who by his sacrifice has brought together Jew and Gentile AND has reconciled them together to God.

When we proclaim the good news of reconciliation with God through Christ, the Bible says we proclaim the gospel of peace. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says Christ's followers are ambassadors for Christ and God appeals to the world through them to be reconciled (to make peace) with God. Ephesians 6:15 says we are to be ready with the gospel of peace. Romans 5:1 indicates that since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The peacemaking, then, about which Jesus speaks here in the beatitudes is the making of peace that is first and foremost the making of peace between God and men.

Should Christ followers be peaceable? Absolutely. As far as it depends on us there should be peace. But that does not mean silence and pacifism. It does not mean being silent or affirming in the midst of sin.

But it does mean preaching the gospel to a world that is at odds with God.

C. A. W. Pink writes, "the believer in Christ knows that there is no peace for the wicked. Therefore, he earnestly desires that they should acquaint themselves with God and be at peace. Believers know that peace with God is only through our Lord Jesus Christ." So we speak to our fellow man of their need for him. We invite them to be reconciled with God.

Pink also says the fact that this is the 7th beatitude is perhaps an indication that this characteristic gives completeness or wholeness to Christian character. It is an unspeakable privilege to be sent out as ambassadors of peace. And (I quote) "those who fancy themselves to be Christians, yet have no interest in the salvation of fellow sinners, are self-deceived. They possess a defective Christianity, and have no right to expect to share in the blessed inheritance of the children of God."

D. Peacemakers are ones who, having come to peace with God, seek to make peace between God and men. Are you a peacemaker?

II. The Character of the Peacemaker

Being a peacemaker is more than a thing you do, however. It is also who you are. The pure in heart will see God. And peacemaking as an act is first what flows from the heart.

Listen to this passage from the NT epistle of James. It's chapter 3:14-18.

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits,

impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Isn't that powerful. Peacemakers do not only make peace. They are peaceable in making it. They make peace by sowing righteousness in peace. A couple things are conspicuously absent when one sows peace.

James names them—jealousy and selfish ambition. These are the things that produce quarrels and conflicts. These are at the root of every outburst of hostility. But gone are these from the hearts of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. They are poor in spirit. They mourn over their sin. They are meek. They are not in this thing for themselves but for the glory of God and of his Christ. They do not hunger and thirst for their own glory and their own pleasure and their own stuff. No they seek first the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness of God. They do not love the world or things of the world, not the property of the world, the comfort of the world, or the applause of the world. So they do not live for themselves. And what is theirs is not theirs but God's. They are happy, humble servants of Christ. And they approach living like their savior did, humbling themselves even to death if necessary in order to obey God.

So what is the character of a peacemaker? Mostly, it means coming to the world the way Jesus came. He came in humility. He came with love. He came with mercy. He came and died to bring peace between God and men. He laid down his life while preaching peace to bring peace.

Practically what does this look like for you and me? It looks like what James says—gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. It is quick to listen and slow to speak and slow to anger. That can only happen when self is out of the way.

These are humbling truths because even those who are reborn still wrestle with the flesh. And sometimes the old self shines through. But here this morning we are challenged to look again at the meekness of Christ and stand in awe. And we are challenged to reflect that same meekness and humility as we go about making peace.

III. The Disposition of the Peacemaker

Blessed are the peacemakers. I have been reminding you that the fundamental idea of the word "blessed" is happy. Satisfaction, joy, the sense that, yes, this is what life is about. This is what gives it meaning. This is the gusto. And here it is peacemaking.

Peacemaking can be a costly endeavor. Peacemaking produces enemies. Peacemaking, in the biblical sense, means enemies bring out swords and swing. Look what peacemaking did to Jesus!

But there are few joys as great as the joy of doing the work of peacemaking. I remember well the night I shared the gospel with my college lab partner. By the grace of God, I fought off the devil and the fear that always wraps around those who would be faithful and went through it. And I still remember the surge of joy that went through my soul. I could not contain it. I went straight to my room to phone my parents and tell them what just happened. And every time I share there is just no joy like it. How many times have I heard others say the same thing.

The devil and the flesh despise the idea of sharing the gospel. It is kinda' like thinking you could be happy by being poor in spirit and sad over your sin. But there is no joy like the joy of forgiveness of sin. And there is no joy like the joy of sharing the gospel of peace for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners.

But that's not even the reason Jesus gives for the blessed state of these who make peace.

IV. The Identity of the Peacemaker

The identity of the peacemaker is the over arching reason Jesus says he is blessed. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.

A. A couple points stand out here. First, "shall be called" is a phrase which indicates that these shall be acknowledged as. They shall be owned as. God will not be ashamed to publicly acknowledge these as his sons. God himself identifies himself with them. And that is ultimately why they are happy. The Bible tells us that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers. And

it also tells us God is not ashamed to be called our God. That is the sense here. God is glad to let the world know that these peacemakers are his. He is their God and they are his people.

B. The other important reference here is the phrase "sons of God." The masculine is important here. Not because it excludes females because it does not. Male and female both can be peacemakers. Male and female both can be sons. The important connection is between fathers and sons. Over in John 5 Jesus speaks of how he (the Son) relates to the Father. He depicts his relationship to the father as fathers and sons normally related in that day. A father would teach his son the trade he had and the son would learn it so he could then be successful in that trade as well. And Jesus says "truly the son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the father doing. Whatever the Father does, that the son does likewise. For the father loves the son and shows him all that he himself is doing." So the son then honors the father by doing as he has been shown and told.

Hebrews 13:20 says the Lord is the God of peace. Therefore, the implication back in the beatitude here is that when we are peacemakers, we reflect the heart of the father. And he is glorified and unashamed, indeed honored, to own us as his sons. And even the creation groans, says Paul in Romans 8, eagerly longing for the revealing, you might say "the calling, the owning" of the sons of God, when God in essence says to all creation, THESE are my sons!

Let that encourage you today if you are a peacemaker. Let it propel you forward in sharing the gospel. Show your father to the world in anticipation of the fact that one day he will show you to the world.

Conclusion

Let me close this morning with this quote from A. W. Pink;

The world may despise them as fanatics, professors of religion may regard them as narrow-minded sectarians, and their relatives may look upon them as fools. But the great God owns them as His children even now, distinguishing them by tokens of his peculiar regard and causing His Spirit within them to witness to them that they are sons of God. But in the day to

come, He will publicly avow His relationship to them in the presence of an assembled universe. However humble their present situation in life may be, however despised and misrepresented by their fellow men, they shall yet 'shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.'"

Are you a son of God? Here is the message of the peacemakers: Jesus died so that if you will repent of your sin and trust in him, you will be adopted into the family. Do not wait another moment to turn to him.

Are you reflecting your claim to be a son of God? Are you sharing the gospel of peace? Resolve afresh to testify to others of the glorious gospel of peace of the gracious God who calls sinners to be reconciled through the blood of His only begotten Son.