

Series: The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Living 101

Main Idea: In Matthew 5:9 Jesus teaches us two important truths about peacemakers.

I. Peacemakers are blessed.

A. Peacemaker is what God is.

1. He is peace.
2. He makes and gives peace.

B. Peacemaker is why Christ came.

C. Peacemaker is what we are to be.

1. We have peace (Eph 2:14-17).
2. We are to live in peace with one another (1 Thes 5:13; Heb 12:14; Rom 12:18; Rom 14:19).
3. We are to minister the gospel of peace and help others experience peace with God and each other (Eph 6:15).

II. Peacemakers will be called sons of God.

Implications: What does it take to be a peacemaker?

1. We must know the Peacemaker.
2. We must work hard at being like the Peacemaker in every situation.
3. We must find our greatest joy in being called the Peacemaker’s kids.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

This morning we come to the seventh beatitude. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God,” says Jesus in Matthew 5:9.

If there’s anything we need in the world today, it is peacemakers. Countries are at odds. Our country is filled with relational turmoil. Families are fragmented and not speaking to one another. Husbands and wives are throwing in the towel. We get calls regularly at WBC from people in our community requesting help. The need is tremendous for what Jesus says His people are to be. Peacemakers.

A peacemaker is someone who helps bring people who are at odds into a wholesome relationship. A peacemaker in essence *makes peace* come into existence where previously there was no peace.

And of course, where the peacemaker is most needed is often with people who don’t think they need it. “Oh, I’ve made my peace with God. I’m alright.” Ever heard those words? But of course, peace goes two ways, and the real question is, has He made peace with you?

This is the task of the peacemaker, to help people experience peace with God, peace with one another, and peace within. And this is the assignment Jesus gives to those who follow Him. He gives us peace, not so we can hoard it, but cooperate with Him in making it. Blessed are the *peacemakers*.

It’s our privilege to return again to Jesus’ sermon on the mount. To those who would follow Him, Jesus delivers this message on the nature of His kingdom. Kingdom Living 101. He begins with eight beatitudes. Blessed, happy, fulfilled, approved by God, are...

The poor in spirit. Not the righteous, but those who admit they are not righteous, the spiritually destitute, the ones with a heavenly bank account that’s in the red. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Who goes to heaven? Those, says Jesus, who admit they lack the qualifications for being there.

But they don’t just admit it. *Blessed are those who mourn*, says Jesus. They don’t just agree intellectually with their depravity. They grieve over it. They’re heartbroken. They mourn over the tragedy of sin. “Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” is their cry. And He

*** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the series preached at WBC in 1988.

hears them, *for they will be comforted*, and they, the sinful mourners, receive that comfort from Him.

And because they do, their disposition begins to change, from being self-assured and proud, to *meek*. *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth*. These are God's kind of people. The meek and humble. I've stop being impressed with myself, and am now amazed at what I have undeservedly received. Meekness is poor in spirit turned outward. I'm a citizen of the kingdom of God, but I don't let it go to my head. How could I? I can never forget I didn't deserve this glorious honor. So you fall short of God's standard in the way you treat me? I can relate, and I choose to treat you the way I've been treated, with power under control, meekness.

So if God grants His kingdom to those who don't deserve it, does that mean that righteousness doesn't matter to God, that He's just a big, soft-hearted grandfather who is blind to our faults? No, says Jesus. Righteousness is a big deal to a Righteous and Holy God, and it will be as well to those whom He approves. In fact, it becomes their consuming appetite.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Not self-righteousness. That's the Pharisee, the person who thinks he contributes something to his right standing with God. The blessed person hungers for what God is (He is perfect and righteous) and what God requires (the righteous life that pleases Him). 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that Christ is our righteousness. So to hunger and thirst for righteousness is to hunger and thirst for Christ. And those who do...*will be filled*. Righteousness is not earned, but received. God gives it to the person who hungers and thirsts for His Son.

Then, once righteousness is received, it is shared. *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy*. These are my people, says Jesus. They treat others the way God has treated them. Mercifully. When sinned against, rather than retaliate, they make the choice *not* to treat the offender as deserved. Therefore, *they will be shown mercy*. For it's not that I used to need mercy, but that I still do. I show mercy as an admission that I still need mercy from God.

And God is my greatest need and longing. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God*. This is what matters most to the Jesus-follower. Seeing the One who created me and all that is. Seeing the One who rescued me from my spiritual poverty and gave me His Son's righteousness. Seeing the One who sees my heart, which once was black with sin but is now clean, because He cleansed it and made it clean.

This is the blessed person, says Jesus. "There is nothing in the whole range of Scripture which so tests and examines and humbles us as these Beatitudes..." says Martin Lloyd-Jones. "There is nothing more fatal than for the natural man to think that he can take the Beatitudes and try to put them into practice... This is utterly impossible. Only a new man can live this new life."²

And now we come to the seventh. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God*. In Matthew 5:9 Jesus teaches us two important truths about peacemakers.

I. Peacemakers are blessed.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." That immediately raises the question, *why?* As in, why are peacemakers blessed? After all, put Jesus' words into the context of when He spoke them. The Romans ruled the known world, and those ruled by the Romans despised it. Including the Jews. Especially the Jews. You don't make peace with Rome. You long for the day when Rome is destroyed. That's what the Messiah is going to do, destroy the Romans.

But King Jesus says, no, that's not the way my kingdom works. In my kingdom, which is God's kingdom, peacemakers are blessed. Which again raises the question, *why?*

² Lloyd Jones, p. 117.

Listen to Lloyd Jones, “Why are peacemakers blessed? The answer is...because they are so absolutely unlike everybody else. The peacemakers are blessed because they are the people who stand out as being different from the rest of the world, and they are different because they are the children of God.”³

In the world in which we live, *blessed are the peacemakers* is radical teaching. This is not the way the natural man thinks. Look out for number one. Mind your own business. Get what’s coming to you and get out of there. That’s natural. But being a peacemaker? Who does that? Why do that? And if you are crazy enough to try, how in the world do you do that?

Let’s bring these questions to the Scriptures, and as we do we’ll learn three things about the peacemaker.

A. Peacemaker is what God is. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Why did God do that? Because He, by nature, is the Peacemaker. And why is that the case? We go back a step further to answer that question. It’s because...

1. *He is peace.* What does that mean? For us, peace is often the absence of a negative. No fighting. No turmoil. But for God, peace is much fuller and deeper. In the Hebrew, *shalom*, in the Greek, *eirene*. “Completeness, soundness, wholeness, well-being, harmony.” Look at the Trinity, and you see three equal persons who are different in function yet enjoy perfect peace and harmony with each other. This is who God is.

Judges 6:24 “So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord is Peace.” Romans 15:33 calls Him, “The God of peace.” Romans 14:17 tells us, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” This leads us another insight. Not only is He peace, but...

2. *He makes and gives peace.* We see Him doing this from the very beginning. In Genesis 2:16–17, “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’”

And you know what happened. Adam and Eve ate, and God cast them into the lake of fire, right? No, He didn’t. Why not? Why did He announce that, though their sin separated the human race from Him, He was going to do something to reconcile sinners back to Himself? He did so because He is a peacemaker. And so we read the Bible, from Genesis 3 onward, and we see in action the One who makes and gives peace.

Ezekiel 34:25 “I will make a **covenant of peace** with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety.”

Isaiah 26:3 “You will keep in **perfect peace** him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.”

Isaiah 32:16–17 “Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field.¹⁷ The fruit of righteousness will be **peace**; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”

This brings us to a second insight. First, Peacemaker is what God is.

B. Peacemaker is why Christ came. Isaiah announced this seven centuries before He came. In Isaiah 9:6–7, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.⁷ Of the increase of his government and **peace** there will be no end.”

And Isaiah even foretold how the Prince of peace would bring peace. In Isaiah 53:5, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us **peace** was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

³ Lloyd Jones, p. 119.

Notice that. What brought peace to a world alienated from God? The punishment of the Peacemaker. *The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.*

And so, two thousand years ago, the Peacemaker entered the world. The heavenly host heralded His arrival, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** to men on whom his favor rests (Luke 2:14).”

Jesus Christ was and is the supreme peacemaker. As Jesus preached throughout the villages and cities of Israel in the first century, He must have stunned his audiences. His power. His authority. His miracles. Surely this is the Messiah. But his message? His message confused and angered so many. He talked about cross-bearing and dying. He talked about turning the other cheek. He talked about *peacemaking*. Again, the Jews were expecting a military Messiah. One faction of the Jews, called the Zealots, expected the Christ to be a brilliant conqueror, riding a white horse, holding his sword high as he led his people in violent conquest of the Romans.

But Jesus baffled their expectations. He offered and provided peace, yes, but He began with the most needed kind of peace. Peace with God.

Hear His invitation in Matthew 11:28–29, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

This is the sinner’s greatest need, *rest, peace for your soul*. This is why God sent the Peacemaker, Jesus Christ, into the world. As Paul explains in Colossians 1:19–20 “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making **peace through his blood**, shed on the cross.”

So Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection, provided peace with God. But how do we experience this peace, this reconciliation with God? What must we do? What we must *do* is put our total trust in what He *did*. Romans 5:1 makes this clear, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How do we experience peace with God? Through faith in the work of the Peacemaker. Do you want peace with God, my friend? He is offering the olive branch to you right now. Receive the One He sent, the One who said to those who did believe in Him, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27).”

Jesus Christ is many things. Creator. Miracle-worker. Teacher. Master. Redeemer. Savior. Lord. But this sort of sums it up. He is the *Peacemaker*. He, and He alone, offers us peace with God. He, and He alone, enables us to have peace with each other. He, and He alone, gives us the precious gift of peace within.

I think it’s significant how Jesus addresses His followers after His resurrection in John 20:26. “A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said _____.”

Do you remember the first words out of His mouth? They were, “Peace be with you!” That’s what He accomplished. That’s why He came. That’s what He offers. Peace. Because He is the Peacemaker.

Which brings us back to the sermon on the mount, and to point three.

C. Peacemaker is what we are to be. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” So Jesus says we are to be what God is, and what He is. People who work to make peace become a reality, peace with God, peace with fellow man, and peace within.

And it is work, as James 3:17-18 explains, “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. **Peacemakers who sow in peace** raise a harvest of righteousness.”

What is the mission of the church? Jesus will later say it's to go and make disciples of Him, teaching them everything I have taught you (Matt 28:19). Here He says the same thing in a different way. You are to be peacemakers. That's what disciple-making is. We're in the peacemaking business. We offer guilty sinners peace with God, the ability to have peace with others, and peace in their anguished souls. We don't actually give the peace, for we don't have that power. But we are ambassadors of the One who does, and He has "given us the message of reconciliation" (as Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Yes, this is our mission. This is the blessed life. Being a peacemaker.

Is that how you view your job? Peacemaker is what we are to be. That's my role when I'm playing on the ball team (or sitting the bench on the ball team). I am an ambassador of The Peacemaker who has given me a peacemaking assignment. I am here to be a minister and maker of peace, and I do it by pointing people with my life and words to the One who is peace.

Let's talk about three implications.

1. *We have peace (Eph 2:14-17)*. It's true. What we offer is what we have. To make peace we must first be at peace, and if we are in Christ we are at peace. No text makes this any clear than Ephesians 2:13-17:

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our **peace**, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, **thus making peace**, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached **peace** to you who were far away and **peace** to those who were near."

This is where peacemakers must begin, with the affirmation, *we have it*. We have peace with God. God gave it to us on the merit of what His Son accomplished at the cross. And we also have the capacity to experience peace with one another, and within. We have peace because we have Christ, and He is our peace.

And He "created in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace." What's this talking about? The church. The church is the pinnacle of God's plan, "God's new society," as John Stott describes the church in his commentary on Ephesians.

You say, "Then something must have gone wrong, because I don't see peace when I look at the church. I see conflict. I see splits. How do you explain that?"

Look again at Jesus' word. Peacemakers, emphasis on *makers*. What does it take to *make* something? So you make a cake, or a business deal, or a friend. What does it take? It takes time and work. So we have peace, in Christ, but we're called to *make peace*, and that takes time and work. The New Testament talks a lot about this.

2. *We are to live in peace with one another (1 Thes 5:13; Heb 12:14; Rom 12:18; Rom 14:19)*. Paul gives this counsel to the church in 1 Thessalonians 5:13, "Live in peace with each other." Hebrews 12:14 says, "Make every effort to live at peace with all men." So in the church we have the capacity for peace, which is something the world doesn't have, but to experience it there must be effort. I love the realism of Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." It takes two people, working hard together, to experience peace. If there's not peace, I need to ask myself, "Am I doing everything possible for us to live in peace?" Like, overcoming evil with good, and feeding my enemy if he's hungry, as Paul says later in the passage.

That's what a peacemaker does. "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Romans 14:19)."

Some people are peace-fakers. They smile and try to act like things are just fine. They remind me of the people God confronted in Jeremiah 6:14, “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”

Friends, it takes work, but peacemakers do the work. They refuse to settle for false-peace. They want to see Christ’s church experience what it has. Wholeness. Harmony. Peace. It’s easy to run from problems, or excuse them, or even to try and compensate for them by doing nice things that avoid the root issue. But peacemakers refuse to do that, for they’re after something much better.

They know what 1 Corinthians 14:33 says. “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.” They also know that God uses our effort to make peace a reality, a connection Paul makes in 2 Corinthians 13:11, “Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace [that’s what we’re to do]. And the God of love and peace will be with you [that’s what God does].”

And motivation is key. *Pure in heart* comes before *peacemaker*. I won’t be a good peacemaker if I’m constantly thinking about how this peacemaking effort is going to affect *me*.

Many years ago two members of our church weren’t getting along with each other. Eventually one of them came and told me what the other person was doing, wanting me to fix the problem. So I did what the Scriptures instruct us to do. Get them together and help them deal with the problem. And what happened? When both individuals saw that I was not going to take sides and agree that the *other* person was the problem, but that both of them shared fault and needed to change, then attitudes changed towards *me*. I now became part of the problem in their eyes. Within a few years both individuals left the church.

I find Lloyd Jones insight so helpful at this point, “Before one can be a peacemaker one really must be entirely delivered from self, from self-interest, from self-concern...To be a peacemaker you must be, as it were, absolutely neutral so that you can bring the two sides together. You must not be sensitive, you must not be touchy, you must not be on the defensive. If you are, you will not be a very good peacemaker.”⁴

To be a good peacemaker, you need to see yourself as a soldier. Paul concludes his letter to the Ephesians, which is a great letter for learning about peace-making, with this final charge in Ephesians 6:13–15. “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”

There’s so much in that powerful word picture. Christians that stand when the arrows start flying are those who put on Christ. That’s what this armor is. Put on Christ. Affirm what you have in Christ. And for our purposes, notice what goes on the feet. The peacemaker puts on his *gospel of peace* boots. Let this sink in. Paul finishes this letter by reminding us that...

3. *We are to minister the gospel of peace and help others experience peace with God and each other (Eph 6:15)*. That’s what mission is all about. Being a peacemaker by taking the gospel to people.

Someone has said, "There is no more Godlike work to be done in this world than peacemaking." The devil is a troublemaker. He sets people against God, and against other people. But God is making peace in the world through the work of His Son. And He calls His people to be peacemakers.

Where should we be involved as peacemakers? Wherever there are relationships that

⁴ Lloyd Jones, p. 122.

need mending. “Lord, how do you want to use me in that situation?” is the prayer of the peacemaker.

We start at home, in our families. There’s no such thing as a problem free home, but a Christian home is a home where we deal with our problems God’s way.

So too in the church family, and in relationships between churches. Since a peacemaker knows that God places a premium on peace, he does what he can to promote peace. When he sees two brothers at odds, he prays for them, and if God gives an opportunity, he seeks to facilitate reconciliation. And of course, since our efforts at peacemaking are greatly hindered by bitterness and ill will, the peacemaker seeks to keep current in applying the gospel to his own life.

So consider a question. When you enter into a room, what type of influence do you have on those present? Does your presence facilitate and promote peace? Are you a minister of reconciliation?

Then we move into the community. Evangelism is peacemaking. Blessed are the peacemakers who partner with the Holy Spirit in the work of reconciling lost men to God through Jesus Christ. We are involved in the very work of God when we help men and women, boys and girls, find peace with God.

You say, “I want to become a better peacemaker. How can I get started?”

Lloyd-Jones gives an excellent piece of counsel. “First and foremost it means that you learn not to speak...That, I say, is one of the best ways of being a peacemaker, that you just learn not to speak. When, for example, something is said to you, and the temptation is to reply, do not do it. Not only that, do not repeat things when you know they are going to do harm. You are not a true friend when you tell your friend something unkind that was said about him by somebody else. It does not help; it is a false friendship...Unworthy and unkind things are not worth repeating...The peacemaker is a man who does not say things. He often feels like saying them, but for the sake of peace he does not.”⁵

E.g.—

You say, “If being a peacemaker is hard, is it worth it?” Oh yes! The reward is tremendous, and Jesus tells us next what it is. Point two.

II. Peacemakers will be called sons of God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”

It’s sometimes said that a child who looks or acts like his father is a “chip off the old block”. The principle holds true for God’s sons as well. When we live as peacemakers, we resemble our Heavenly Father, the ultimate Peacemaker, and resemble His Son who lay down His life to bring us back to Himself.

There is no higher honor than to be called *sons of God*. We used to be His enemy. We used to be His wrath. We used to be without God and without hope in this world. But by His grace He reconciled us to Himself and gave us a forever place in His family. Now, when we do what He did, we are given the title that His Son holds. We are called *sons of God*.

I appreciate D. A. Carson’s insight. “Peacemakers are blessed,” he writes, “because they will be called “sons of God”—not “children of God,” as in the King James Version. The difference is slight, but significant. In Jewish thought, “son” often bears the meaning “partaker of the character of,” or the like. If someone calls you the “son of a dog,” this is not an aspersion on your parents, but on you: you partake of the character of a dog. Thus, “son of God” may have a different connotation than “child of God.” Both expressions can refer to some sort of filial relationship; but the former has more emphasis on character than position. The

⁵ Lloyd Jones, p. 124.

peacemaker's reward, then, is that he will be called a son of God. He reflects his heavenly Father's wonderful peacemaking character. Even now there is a sense in which Christians intuitively recognize this divine dimension in the character of the peacemaker. For example, when Christians at some convention or church business meeting enter into heated debate, the brother who keeps calm, respectfully listens to each viewpoint with fairness and courtesy, and spreads oil on the troubled waters is silently regarded by his peers as spiritual. But such conduct ought to be considered normal among disciples of Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ himself has made it normative. It is part and parcel of being a son of God.⁶

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

Implications: What does it take to be a peacemaker?

Three things. First and foremost...

1. *We must know the Peacemaker.* Only those who know Him personally can be what He is. Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness." Only the Holy Spirit can produce peace, so to be an agent of peace we must possess the Holy Spirit, which means we must possess Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 says, "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you."

God alone can give peace to sinners and make peace between sinners. Philippians 4:7, 9 "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus... And the God of peace will be with you."

Do you know the Peacemaker? Has He made peace with you? If you've His Son as your Savior and Lord, He indeed has. If not, why not now?

2. *We must work hard at being like the Peacemaker in every situation.* Oh, what a price He paid to secure our peace. And so we're told...

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph 4:3)." And "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace (Col 3:15)." And "Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other (1 Thes 5:13)."

Again, peacemaking is not peace at any price. That's peace-worshipping. You probably don't like to be a confronter, and shouldn't. But there are times when the integrity of God's work necessitates confronting sin, and while it doesn't feel very peaceful in the moment, it's the fullness of peace that we are after, not some lesser pseudo-peace.

Many today are settling for "cheap peace." We see it in certain methods of evangelism which proclaim the benefits of the gospel without presenting the cost of discipleship. We see it in those who preach faith without repentance. We see it in the gospel of easy-believism. We see it when people are given a false sense of assurance. Jesus didn't do this. He told His hearers exactly what they needed to hear, even if it upset them in the short run.

And that is peacemaking at its best.

3. *We must find our greatest joy in being called the Peacemaker's kids.* "They will be called sons of God." Oh that people in this community would say that about us. Those people are their Father. They must be His kids.

Next week: Peacemaking in Action—Learning from Philemon

⁶ Carson, D. A. (1999). *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: An Exposition of Matthew 5–10* (p. 28). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.