

The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.

This was a shocking statement to the Jews. They were subjugated by the Roman Empire. All their thoughts of the coming Messiah were about being set free from Rome. They assumed the Messiah would lead a military revolt.

Throughout His earthly ministry, the common people thought He was going to establish the kingdom. Once, at least, Jesus had to avoid the crowds because they intended to crown Him as their king. It was right after the feeding of the five-thousand with only five loaves and two fishes.

John 6:15 Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

It culminated in the triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, when they shouted, *Hosana!* They believed that Jesus would free them from Rome.

You see this kingdom-thinking even in the disciples, even at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. It was so ingrained in them, they found it hard to understand He was ascending to Heaven without establishing the promised kingdom.

So you see how that they would be shocked at any thought of being **peacemakers**. It sounded, to them, like a compromise at best, a surrender at worst.

Jesus was talking to them about something far greater than a military reign over the earth. His was not to be a military coup over Rome. Jesus was describing an entirely new and different kingdom. He was talking about being at peace with God.

God is reaching-out to lost mankind in order to make peace with them. He sent His Son, Jesus, to (as Paul said in Colossians) make peace through the blood of the Cross.

In Ephesians Paul said that Jesus is our peace:

Ephesians 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;

Like it or not, the Bible says that you are God's enemy, until you are saved.

Once saved, once you experience peace with God, you can be, and are called upon to be, a **peacemaker**.

The idea of being a **peacemaker** is at least two-fold:

1. First, you desire that other men and women would have the same peace with God that you experience as a Christian.
2. Second, you desire to be at peace with others, as much as is possible in this fallen world.

If you have seen yourself as poor in spirit; if you mourn because of your sin; if you are meek, having a proper view of yourself; if you hunger and thirst after righteousness; if you go about showing God's mercy; if you desire purity of heart; **you will not care so much about your rights when others wrong you.** Instead, you will see their need to be born-again. You will understand that their words and actions are directed by their sin nature. You will care less about your temporary trouble and more about their eternal address.

There is no doubting that you are sometimes, even often, mistreated... overlooked... snubbed... **You fill in the word!** The point is to recognize that the person, or people, who are against you,

and causing your suffering and trouble, are taken captive by the devil to do his will. Their supreme need is salvation.

Being a peacemaker doesn't mean you have to take whatever is dished out. You can sometimes quit your job. You might need to file a grievance at work. It might be OK to complain through proper channels.

It does mean that these should not be your first thoughts. Your first thought should be about the eternal condition of the soul or souls or your adversaries. God may have put you in the exact position you are in to reach them with the Gospel. To the extent you are genuinely more concerned about their souls than, say, your salary... They will see the outworking of the new, divine nature within you.

They may respond favorably; they may respond unfavorably. But at least they will have been confronted with the supernatural effect of the Holy Spirit on your life.

This (obviously) overlaps with the second point - that you desire to actually be at peace with others. I want to explore this from within the Church – among believers.

While we strive, as much as possible, to be at peace with all men, we especially do so in the Church. It is among Christians where it is most possible to experience peace, since we are all filled with the same Spirit Who produces the desire in our hearts.

Truth is, there is a great deal of dissent among Christians, and even within a Church. It's wrong; it's carnal; it's sinful. Whenever there is a lack of peace, there is some selfishness; some selfish motive or desire.

I experience this from the perspective of a pastor. Often I will make a decision or a determination about a ministry. My decision or determination isn't on a par with Scripture! I never think I am always right; or that I cannot be wrong. But I also think that God has put me in a position to decide.

Folks affected by the decision react in a variety of ways – and, sometimes, sadly, their reaction is carnal and sinful. They seek the ‘counsel’ of others – which means they go about trying to stir-up dissent. They say mean things, both to me and about me. Ultimately, they may leave the Church – which is the ultimate expression of their dissent.

The issues are almost never doctrinal! They are personal.

What is the solution? To desire to maintain peace! I think these situations come in order to give us the opportunity to practice our peacemaking. Being at peace is more important than getting my way.

What becomes the deciding factor? There are lots of things... One is the hierarchy God Himself has established. Move out of the Church and into the home. Do your wife and you ever disagree? When you do, you should desire to be at peace. Still, a decision needs to be made. In God’s marital hierarchy, the wife submits to the husband. It doesn’t make you right and her wrong. It maintains peace.

What about the world at large? How can we be peacemakers in our volatile, violent world? Does it mean we become pacifists? Or, on the other end of things, strap on Colt .45’s, called, *The Peacemaker*?

- being changed to bring change -
No. At least to being pacifists! God has raised up nations, and governments, to steward over the well-being of their citizens. He has given government the power of the sword – of life and death, and to wage war when there is no alternative. God’s Word does not contradict itself; therefore, it is not contradictory to be a peacemaker but also wield the power of the sword.

A peacemaker must sometimes declare the death penalty, or declare war, to stop the aggression of those it is not possible to coexist with in peace.

God is the ultimate peacemaker. One day, though, He will judge those who have finally rejected His offer of peace. He will punish them severely. It is perfectly within His character to do so; in fact, He could not be God unless He judged sin.

The blessedness of being a **peacemaker** is that **they shall be called sons of God**. **Called** means *owned*. God will *own up* that He is your Father when you are His peacemaker. It simply means that His nature is recognizable in you. We would say, *Like Father, like son*.

God is called, the God of peace (Romans 15:33). The Bible opens with peace in the Garden; it ends with peace in eternity. Although peace was interrupted by sin, Jesus offers us peace. He can reign in peace in our hearts; and we are His peacemakers, while we await His return as Prince of Peace.

We are the messengers, or ambassadors, to spread the peace of God. Start seeing your conflicts with others as opportunities to be God's peacemaker.



