



## Blessed Are the Peacemakers

### I. INTRO

A. Last Fall I had occasion to visit New York City and while I was waiting for a train to Philly I had the time for a quick visit the World Trade Center (unofficially called the "Freedom Tower"). It is a truly magnificent symbol of remembrance, renewal, and hope. I'd like to go back for a moment to that fateful day in 2001...

1. When the two jets hit the World Trade Center, thousands of people instantly realized they might not survive.
2. As fire engulfed the buildings, many of them grabbed a phone, hoping they could speak to their loved ones one last time.
3. Some got through and had a few priceless moments to exchange final words. Others could only leave poignant messages on answering machines or with emergency operators.
4. Their desperation no doubt stripped away the sometimes superficial words used in many of our conversations.
5. There were **three words** were used again and again that day to say the only thing that really mattered in these final moments of life: "I love you."
6. To some loved ones those words may have included, "**I'm sorry I was selfish and insensitive last night,**" or "**I forgive you for [whatever].**"
7. Through these brief conversations, **many wrongs were quickly and completely forgiven in the few short minutes** before the Twin Towers collapsed.

B. The resulting reconciliation cannot bring people back to life, but it undoubtedly eases the pain of those left behind.<sup>1</sup>

C. Today we will look at Matthew 5:9. I will read it and then pray and ask God to help us to better understand what it means to be a peacemaker: "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*" -- Matthew 5:9

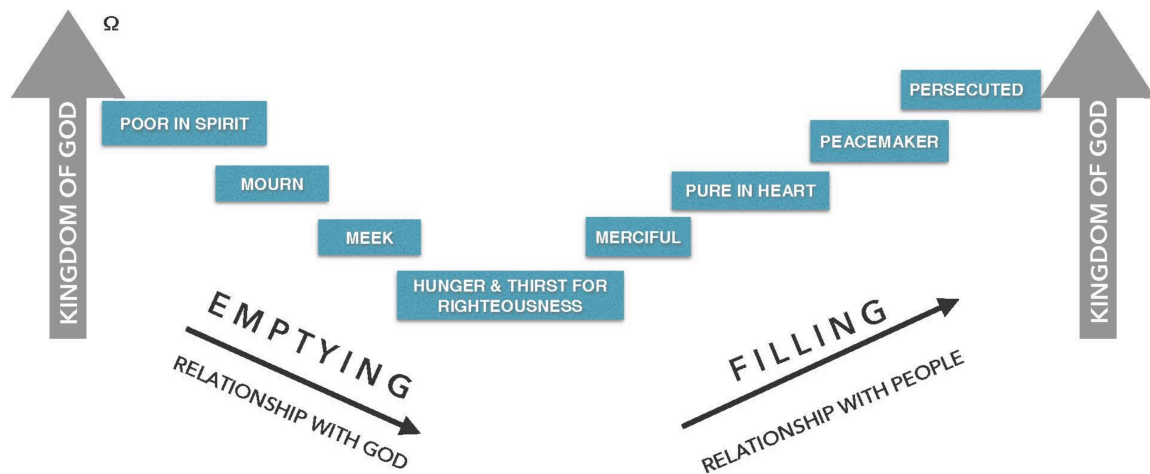
### II. BODY

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande. Copyright © 2015 Gregg Caruso, King's Harbor Church. All rights reserved. We encourage you to use and share this material freely—but please don't charge money for it, change the wording, or remove the copyright information.

A. The Beatitudes are a description of a true Christian's life. And as we noted last week the essential point to grasp is that these "Beautiful Attitudes" cannot be obtained in our own strength and power.

B. We must humble ourselves and move intentionally through the Beatitudes:



1. First we acknowledge that we are not only "poor in spirit," but we are bankrupt, and then we mourn over our fallen state, which empties us and strengthens our relationship with God, transforms us into a humble learners (meek).
  2. A deep hunger and thirst then begins to fill us with mercy, purity, and peace, which transforms our relationships.
- C. Becoming a peacemaker becomes an essential aspect of our life purpose and direction.
1. As we will see over the next 2-3 weeks this does not mean taking everything on the chin and not making any waves.
  2. First and foremost this means not being at war with God. We stop being hostile toward God.
- D. Today we'll be asking two questions: **1) What is a "peace-maker"?** And 2) **Who are the "sons of God"?**
1. **What is a peace-maker?** (First we'll look at the word *PEACE* and then *MAKER*)
    - a. Peace

- 1) As has been the case for a few of the Beatitudes we must first describe what peace is NOT: Our culture – and our world today does not really understand God’s concept of peace. We think that **peace is the absence of conflict**....
- 2) God’s Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the absence of anxiety (or dread) in the midst of inevitable conflict.
- 3) The Gospel of **Matthew** was written BY a Jewish man (former despised tax collector) FOR the benefit of the Jewish people. (**Mark’s** gospel was probably informed by Peter and is thought to have targeted the Romans who understood leadership and power but not the Scriptures, **Luke** was a Greek and wrote to the Greeks who loved culture beauty, and ideas; **John** wrote to anyone and everyone<sup>2</sup>.)
- 4) Our Western concept of peace needs to be considered in the light of the ancient Hebrew concept of peace, that Matthew had in mind as he wrote his account of the gospel.
  - a) The Hebrew word for peace is SHALOM – a succinct definition would be: Undefined harmony with God.
  - b) Here’s a more complete definition: Biblical SHALOM means a universal flourishing, wholeness and delight; a rich state of affairs...the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in equity, fulfillment, and delight. SHALOM is the way things ought to be.<sup>3</sup> --Cornelius Plantinga
- 5) What began in the Garden as a world of undefiled harmony with God, came to an abrupt end when Adam and Eve sinned.
- 6) With their fateful bites, the world was set on a trajectory of fear, greed, isolation, and blame.
- 7) Our core problem...is that the human heart, ignoring God, turns in on itself, tries to lift itself, wants to please itself, and ends up debasing itself.<sup>4</sup> -- Cornelius Plantinga

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Discover the Book*, with Dr. John Barnett

<sup>3</sup> Cornelius Plantinga. *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, Eerdmans 1995:10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*: 62.

- 8) In spite of the effects of sin, we have great hope. The essence of the gospel tells us that God, out of unfathomable love, became one of us, accomplishing for us what we could not do on our own.
- 9) Through what Jesus has done, we are given the promise (and a down payment) that one day SHALOM will be restored in full and humanity reunited with the original purpose of our Creator.
- 10) Christians have the unique privilege today of reflecting glimpses of **life as it ought to be** and that brings us to our second half of the first question...

b. What (or, Who) is a peace-MAKER?

- 1) The Greek word for *peacemaker* is an obscure word found only once in the Greek New Testament<sup>5</sup>.
  - a) The word literally signifies: "A founder or promoter of peace."<sup>6</sup>
  - b) Jesus is not referring to arbitration through making compromises.
- 2) Imagine you were to tell your family that you wanted to be a peacemaker. Would they first think of the Church or the U.N.? The U.N. doesn't MAKE peace, they KEEP peace.
- 3) "Peacemaker" ought to be synonymous with Christianity, but unfortunately it's not...
  - a) There is a clear distinction between a **peacemaker** and a **peacekeeper**. We'll look at this more closely next week but, Peace-**keeping** creates a **false peace** that will eventually erupt in a plethora of unhealthy ways.
  - b) Many of us live out our lives with this **false peace** and say nothing or do nothing to change it—in churches, homes, work places, marriages. *Peacemaking* needs to be distinguished from *forbearance*.

<sup>5</sup> εἰρηνοποιός (Strong's #1518)

<sup>6</sup> M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. I*, MacDonald Publishing, reprint of 2nd ed 1888: 30.

c) A peacemaker is someone who: [**Annie** -- maybe this could unfold on the screen as a series of bullet points?]

- **Makes personal peace with God** – *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope”* --Romans 15:13
- **Helps others make peace with God** – *“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation”* -- Isaiah 52:7 (and Romans 10:14)
- **Helps others make peace with one another** – *“So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.”* --Romans 14:19

## 2. Who are the “sons of God”?

- a. At first glance this phrase may sound terribly sexist, it’s actually just the opposite. Jesus is elevating the status of women to that of sons in His Kingdom manifesto.
- b. Jesus is addressing the ancient patriarchal system that devalued women. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God challenges the cultural mindset to regulate and protect the weakest members of society and (more importantly) systematically undermines and dismantles the ethics that drive that system.
- c. “The actions of Jesus of Nazareth towards women were therefore revolutionary<sup>7</sup>.” -- The Oxford Companion to the Bible
- d. Paul affirms this in his letter to the Galatians...
  - 1) *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus”* -- Galatians 3:26
  - 2) *“Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”* --Galatians 4:7
- e. Jesus and Paul are both saying something radically revolutionary and subversive. Paul says that in God’s family everyone is a son, we are all

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<sup>7</sup> B.M. Metzger & M.D. Coogan. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Oxford University Press 1993: 806-818.

heirs -- male and female were created by God as equal in dignity, value, essence.

- f. Christianity thus elevates the female sex to an equality with the male, on the most important of all interests; and it has in this way made most important changes in the world wherever it has prevailed...Woman has been raised from deep degradation by the influence of Christianity<sup>8</sup>. –Albert Barnes
- g. Having said that we, as a church, have some work to do theologically...

Complementarian-----Egalitarian
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**Complementarian** - The theological view that God created male and female as complementary expressions of the image of God. Though both sexes are equal in being and personhood, each does so in a unique and distinct way in the home and the church. (Biblical / theological complementarity does not condone the patriarchal, societal oppression of women.)

**Egalitarian** – The theological view that God created male and female as equal before God in being and personhood, the redemptive work of Christ restored full parity to both sexes and there are no gender-based limitations regarding functions or roles each can fulfill in the home or the church.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Two things I will ask of you...

1. Read *Making Peace* by Jim Van Yperen
2. Secondly, today is the day to make peace and be reconciled with those we have offended or refused to forgive. (You may want to read the book first.)
  - a. Whatever the wrong, God's grace is more than sufficient to enable us to reach out and seek reconciliation.
  - b. It may require killing our pride, renouncing self-pity or bitterness, or extending mercy to someone who has done great wrong.
  - c. Whatever the obstacle, Jesus' love and atoning sacrifice for us have opened the way for healing, and it is time to act.

<sup>8</sup> *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, On the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Galatians*, by Albert Barnes; Revised by J. Cumming. Revised by S. Green: 347.

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B. Let's pray...