

THE BEATITUDES: Our King — His Kingdom — His Citizens

8. Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

As we look at human history wars have been fought — governments have fallen and others have prevailed — elections have been held — reforms have been made — but despite all of that disagreement and conflict are the order of the day. Thomas Jefferson — one of the greatest political thinkers in human history said that *“Peace is that brief glorious moment in history when everyone is standing around reloading”*

We NEED peace. Not just socially — nationally — or globally.

We NEED peace PERSONALLY! Peace **cannot break out** from people who have no peace.

WHAT PEACE IS NOT — When God talks about peace He is not talking about *“that brief glorious moment in history when everyone is standing around reloading.”* When God talks about peace He is not talking about the absence of conflict.

We need to take a few moments here to get our heads around the not so good implications of thinking that peace is not having conflict.

FIRST — Remember the make-up of the crowd that was listening to this stunning description of our King, His Kingdom and His Citizens.

Within the massive crowd listening to Jesus on that day there was deep fear and a deep hatred for the Romans. In fact — in the region of Galilee — during the adult life of Jesus — the Romans burned the capital city of Sepphoris and sold all of its inhabitants (30,000 people) into slavery. In a single day 2,000 Jewish men were crucified for rebelling against the Roman emperor.

These men and women wanted *Peace* with a capital **P**. In fact, they wanted **PEACE** in ALL UPPER CASE — **bold** font face and *italics*. They were not looking for or hoping for a theoretical or theological peace. They wanted an actual — tangible peace, instituted by a powerful ruler who would bring them the safety and comfort that their hearts desired.

They had a memory of the Maccabean revolt that took place about 200 years before that day in **Matthew 5**. Under the leadership of Judah Maccabeus and his four brothers the Jews were able to overthrow the powers of the day and establish a period of peace and prosperity in which Israel was self-governed and the law of God was honored and held high.

That crowd of **Matthew 5** believed that when the promised Messiah came He would do that to the Romans — and then — from Jerusalem rule over all of the nations. AND..... a whole lot of them were HOPING that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for!

TRY IMAGINE what each of those men and women — with very different ideas about how the Messiah would crush the Romans — were thinking when Jesus said: *Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS — for they and they alone shall be called sons of God.*

FAST FORWARD to 21st century America. *Peace* is not the word that describes culture. The inescapable single-word descriptive of our culture is **division**. All of us want *Peace* with a capital **P**. In fact — all of us want **PEACE** in ALL UPPER CASE — **bold** font and *italics*. The problem is that for a whole lot of people *Peace* is still thought about *as the absence of conflict*.

HERE'S THE PROBLEM — If you don't have a vision of peace that is bigger than, broader than and richer than just removing conflict — you can get to the point where any conflict or conflicting opinion is viewed as a serious threat — and we end up with one of the most toxic things happening in culture at large and tragically within church culture — which is “cancel culture”.

Cambridge Dictionary — *a way of behaving in a society or group, especially on social media, in which it is common to completely reject and stop supporting someone because they have said or done something that offends you:*

When “peace = the absence of conflict” any hint of perceived conflict — real conflict — or theoretical conflict has to be cancelled. The “absence of conflict” version of peace is achieved by identifying an enemy and cancelling them.

THAT is so incredibly anti-Gospel! Imagine if God did that with His enemies (you and me)!

Real peace is not rooted in the absence of conflict. The Bible makes the claim that *shalom* doesn't happen through politics. I'll get ahead of myself here — It happens through a person. It's the person of Jesus. Ephesians 2 says this. "He himself is our peace." Christ himself is our peace.

Like I said — I got a little bit ahead of myself. So — let's roll back and dive into the idea of *peace*.

WHAT PEACE IS — But as we've learned throughout our study of the Bible — and in particular through our study of the Beatitudes — understanding life always begin with who God is. We always start with Him.

The Bible describes God as "**the God of Peace**" (Romans 15:33; 16:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20).

In the Old Testament a guy named Gideon referred to God by this title

Judges 6:23-24 NKJV Then the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die." ²⁴So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace (YHWH Shalom).

The Hebrew word for *peace* is *shalom*. It is to this very day the common greeting and good-bye in Israel. In the Old Testament *shalom* is more a reference to the absence of strife. It speaks of everything that makes for a complete, whole life. *Shalom* refers to all things flourishing as God designed them to be.

Cornelius Plantinga — *"In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be."*¹

¹ Cornelius Plantinga. Not the Way It's Supposed to Be.

THAT is the kind of peace that Jesus is getting at in this seventh Beatitude.

Because **peace** is central to who He **IS** — we would expect Him spend a lot of time talking about peace in His Word. There are over 400 references in the Bible to the peace of God, or God caring about peace.

Because **peace** is central to who He **IS** — we would expect that He would be the ultimate and perfect peacemaker. THAT is in fact the story line of the Bible.

The theme of **peace** is introduced in the very first book of the Bible — *Genesis*. In the very FIRST book of the Bible — “*The Book of Beginnings*” we find man living in perfect peace in the Garden of Eden. The theme of **peace** is carried on through the whole Bible right out to the LAST book of the Bible — *Revelation*. In the last book of the Bible, we find God restoring shalom, restoring everything to the way it’s supposed to be — PERFECT SHALOM!

Between the Book of Beginnings and the last verse of the last chapter of the last book of the Bible (Revelation 22:21) we find God Himself breaking into human history — joining us in our humanity to restore the **peace** that had been wrecked by sin. We celebrate that every year at Christmas. Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus the prophet Isaiah said this about Him.

Isaiah 9:6 (ESV) ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. ⁷Of the increase of **his government and of peace there will be no end**, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Jesus came to into our world to MAKE PEACE — by His death on the cross!

Colossians 1:20 (CSB) ²⁰and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, **by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross**.

and what it cost Him gives a tremendous insight as to what it looks like to be a peacemaker!

Peace is central to who He **IS**. Because **peace** is central to who He **IS** — **peace** is central to His Kingdom. That's why Paul would write

Romans 14:17 (NET) ¹⁷*For the kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, but righteousness, **peace**, and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Because **peace** is central to who He **IS** — it is central to His vision for His Kingdom. The Kingdom is the expression of the King.

Matthew 5:9 (ESV) ⁹**“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**

REMEMBER — Collectively — all of these Beatitudes fit into and shape the heart of each and every citizen in the Kingdom of God. Collectively these Beatitudes **are** a description of the character — the “*way of being*” — the life that **results from** genuine salvation and **leads to** flourishing!

Kent Hughes — *“Peacemakers are those through whom the entire Beatitudes course again and again—sometimes in order, sometimes out of order, sometimes singly, sometimes all together.”* ²

Richard France — *The absence of selfish ambition which has marked the earlier beatitudes provides the only basis for this quality, which is particularly pleasing to God (Ps. 34:14).* ³

They have the character of the King — they are peacemakers.”⁴

Matthew 5:9 ⁹**“Blessed are the peacemakers**

² R. Kent Hughes. The Sermon on the Mount

³ France, R. T. (1985). Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary (Vol. 1, p. 116). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes. The Sermon on the Mount

WHAT IS a peace MAKER?

1. A peacemaker is not the kind of person who is easygoing — doesn't care what anyone else does as long as it does not directly affect him. A peacemaker is not the kind of person who says — "You do your thing and I'll do mine." A peacemaker is not an appeaser — the kind who wants "peace at any price." Appeasement doesn't make for peace — it only delays conflict. The history of Europe during the 1930s is the classic example of this.

2. Jesus is not describing those who *live* in peace, He is describing those who actually — actively — bring about peace.

LOUW and NIDA (Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament) — *One who works for peace.* μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί 'happy are those who work for peace among people'⁵

There is no more God-like work to be done in this world than **peacemaking**.⁶

Follow me here.

Jesus himself is the ultimate peacemaker — He came to **make peace** between God and man

Romans 5:1 (NLT) *Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.*

Colossians 1:19–20 (NLT) ¹⁹*For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ,* ²⁰*and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.*

⁵ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 502). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁶ Carson, D. A. (2010). [Matthew](#). In T. Longman III & D. E. Garland (Eds.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew–Mark (Revised Edition)* (Vol. 9, p. 165). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Remember the definition of *shalom* — *Shalom is the way things ought to be.*⁷ God created man to live and flourish in fellowship with God. That is the way life was supposed to be, but sin ruined it. By His death on the cross Jesus made the way for us to be restored to that relationship with our creator. We were created for *shalom* — Jesus came to redeemed us back to *shalom*. *Shalom* begins on the vertical axis of our life.

We are actively at work to **make peace** when we tell others about everything God has done to make peace with the very ones who have rejected and offended Him. We call that *evangelism*. The most powerful peacemaking evangelism happens when that message is delivered by men and women who have real peace with God through Christ. The guilt is gone, the shame is gone, the numbing is gone, the hiding is gone, the blaming is gone. There's just peace with God through Jesus.

Isaiah 52:7 (NLT) ⁷*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!*

But working to make peace doesn't stop there.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones — *He desires peace, and he does all he can to produce peace and to maintain it. He is a man who actively sees that there should be peace between man and man, and group and group, and nation and nation.... he is a man who is finally and ultimately concerned about the fact that all men should be at peace with God.*⁸

Making peace should never be able to stop there. They see the world as a peace project because they share in the nature of the YHWH Shalom! Every man and woman who is in the Kingdom of Jesus is a new creation! They are born of God.

Matthew 5:9 ⁹**"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they (and they alone) shall be called sons of God.**

⁷ Cornelius Plantinga. Not the Way It's Supposed to Be.

⁸ Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

Richard France — God is the supreme peacemaker (cf. Eph. 2:14–18; Col. 1:20) and this quality marks disciples out as his *sons*, for the son shares the characteristics of the father.⁹

When we are actively working for *shālôm* (wholeness and harmony rather than strife and discord in all aspects of life) reconciling others to God and to each other¹⁰ — we look like our heavenly Father who treats enemies well

Matthew 5:44–45 (ESV) ⁴⁴*But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ⁴⁵**so that you may be sons of your Father** who is in heaven. **For he** makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Ephesians 4:31–5:2 (NLT) ¹*Imitate God (YHWHY SHALOM), therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.* ²*Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ (The Prince of Peace). He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*

Peacemaker — one who is working for healed relationships. Instead of being okay with division, bitterness, strife — they want to work at making peace wherever possible.

Ephesians 4:1–3 (ESV) ¹*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,* ²*with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,* ³**eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

Hebrews 12:14 (ESV) ¹⁴*Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

James 3:18 (ESV) ¹⁸*And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

⁹ France, R. T. (1985). *Matthew: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 116). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

¹⁰ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 100). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE?

1. Instead of fighting back, dividing, or cancel culture — pray!

Matthew 5:44 (ESV) ⁴⁴*But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*

It's hard to be at war with someone when you are praying for them.

John Newton — the author of the famous hymn “Amazing Grace wrote a letter on how to deal with controversy.

As to your opponent. I wish that before you set pen to paper against him — and during the whole time you are preparing your answer — that you commend them by earnest prayer to the Lord's teaching and blessing — this practice will have a direct tendency to conciliate your own heart towards them.

2. Instead of fighting back, dividing, or cancel culture — be kind

Matthew 5:47 (NLT) ⁴⁷*If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.*

Kind = welcome kindly, greet, engaging in a hospitable recognition of another person.

In Israel the greeted someone by saying “*Shalom — May everything in your life flourish — be the way it should be.*”

The early Christians would say “*Peace be with you.*”

Jesus says, “*Do that with your enemies!*” Imagine how these words of Jesus sounded to those who (before he started teaching the Sermon on the Mount) imagined that He was the one who would declare war against the pagan Roman empire.

I going to preface what I'm about to say with this: I'm not saying this out of bitterness or to divide Metro into the Good Guys and the Bad guys. I am saying

this from the heart of a pastor to the flock entrusted to me by Jesus so that we can understand how desperately we need to hear THESE words of Jesus in light of what has happened in our country — in Metro — and in churches all over America and the world. **That is not** what it looks like to be a *peacemaker*. That is “since you will not agree with me — I will simply cancel you.”

Where was this learned? Not from scripture. Not from the God of Scripture. Check this out:

Cornelius Plantinga — *“In sum, shalom is God’s design for creation and redemption; sin is blamable human vandalism of these great realities and therefore an affront to their architect and builder.”*

Yet God actually stepped into the world that has been vandalizing shalom ever since Genesis 3. He never affirmed mankind’s rebellion — but he actually sat with them, ate with them, compassionately restored their broken bodies, had conversations with the very men who wanted to silence Him — all as He was on His way to make a way to make peace between Himself and sinners.

Colossians 1:20 (NLT) ²⁰*and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.*

Made peace is the exact same word Jesus used in this beatitude — *peacemaker*

We wonder why the world that is so desperately in need of peace; especially in need of peace with God, does not see us as the ambassadors of the God of Peace — sent by Him to greet them and invite them to consider our glorious King and His Kingdom of shalom.

Here’s an awesome prayer in light of *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

You are my peace, Jesus. You have reconciled me to God—by your life, death, and resurrection, once and for all. Hallelujah! By the Spirit, use me as a

*peacemaker in my relationships and community. **Forgive me when I care more about winning than loving***

3. Reconciling (Matt 5:23-24)

We are to take the responsibility of initiating reconciliation. Reconciliation does not mean that both parties “agree” on the point (or points) they are divided on. Reconciliation is not — “For us to get along you have to step across the line and hold my position — agree with my take on this.”

Peacemaking is a mode of response to hostility or other destabilising activity.

John Piper — *Jesus thinks of peacemaking as all the acts of love by which we try to overcome the enmity between us and other people.*

This was written in the 12th century

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.
Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.
O Master, let me not seek as much
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that one receives,
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,
it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.