

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS I

Message 13

Scripture: Galatians 2:11-21

INTRO: We have come to the seventh beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." The central subject here is peace. And oh, how the world longs for peace and what a big subject it is.

The Jews expected the Messiah to come and bring about peace. The Muslims are waiting for the 12th Immam. When Ahmadinjajad was the president of Iran, he prayed like this: "O Mighty Lord, I pray to you to hasten the emergence of your last repository, the promised one, that perfect human being, the one that will fill this world with justice and peace."

The wild west had their hopes on Samuel Colt's new pistol called the Peacemaker. Today many have their hopes on the teaching of tolerance. Still others, like Kailash Satyarthi, who was the co-winner of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize, have their hopes on education. Many Christians have their hopes now in getting Christians into places of leadership while others pin their hopes on Rick Warren's peace plan. The NAM has hopes that all will learn that they are god, and that will bring true and lasting peace.

And I ask you, did Jesus come to bring peace? No! He knew better! Listen to what He said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). He said in Matthew 24:6-7, "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars (that means no peace). See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." And then He said in verse 8, "All these are the beginning of sorrows." Now the word 'sorrows' is the word for birth pangs. And you will know from that, that if the beginning of birth pangs is wars and rumors of wars, the real birth pangs will be worse war and worse sorrows. There then is Jesus' view of man achieving world peace. As a matter of fact He said in the same chapter, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days

will be shortened." Do you know what He is saying? If man was left to his own devices, man would annihilate himself off of this planet! So much for world peace!

But are we left without any hope? No! There is hope! But, the only hope there is, is all tied up in our present beatitude. This beatitude is the hope of the world. It is the hope of mankind. "Blessed are the peacemakers!" There is our hope! Now, the Bible spells out in prophecy how that will take place.

Now I want to show you in whom the hope of this world lies. Listen very carefully now, here it is: Blessed are the poor in spirit! There it is. Those who become poor in spirit, mourn their sin and become meek and hunger and thirst for righteousness and become merciful and pure in heart, there is the hope of the world!

So, I want you to notice something very important in this seventh beatitude. We have a change from the other six. The other six beatitudes had to do with the inner character of the blessed person himself. It was internal to the blessed person. But now we have the peacemaker. Here we have the blessed man in relation to the world of mankind around him. He is a peacemaker between himself and others or between others and others. So, we have this change taking place. Rather than dwelling on character now, we have switched to dwelling on the relationship of the blessed man to the world around him. And here, in this man, is the hope of the world.

You see, before anyone can become involved in making peace here on earth, something huge has to happen on the inside of him. That is what is described for us in the first six beatitudes. But when those six characteristics have been achieved, now this blessed man has become the hope of the world! This world has no other hope.

So far, when we looked at each beatitude we always began by looking at the character of the blessed man, because that is what the blessedness was about in each one so far. For example, "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." Being poor in spirit describes the inner character of this blessed man. But when it says, "Blessed are the peacemakers", peacemakers does not speak of the blessed person's character as much as his actions towards

mankind. Actually, peacemaking is the result of the six characteristics that have gone on before. So now, rather than considering the character of the blessed man here, we will look at his task; peacemaking! And I ask you, when you think about a peacemaker, what kind of a person do you see? What picture comes to your mind?

But, let me ask you further, why is peacemaking necessary? Why is there strife? Why is there enmity? Why are their wars? Why are there family squabbles? What is the problem? And the answer to that is all very simple. It is summed up in one little word: Sin! So, let me now ask, if one will be a peacemaker, what will one have to deal with? Sin! And I know of no more dangerous, no more demanding, no greater potential for disaster than that of dealing with sin as it relates to others.

VII. BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKER

A. The Task Of The Peacemaker

1. As contrasted with the peacekeeper

So, with that long introduction, we want to look at a most common misunderstanding, and that is that peacemaking is not the same as peacekeeping. This must be dealt with before we can proceed. As I pondered this over the last while, I came to this conclusion: the difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking is how important these two methods view truth. There is no real peace without real truth. Here is how I see it. The peacemaker is willing to expose, to reveal that which is the problem; namely sin. Sin is why there is a need for peace. If that is correct, you know right from the start, the peacemaker's life will stand in jeopardy.

The peacekeeper, on the other hand, is not so concerned about truth. He is concerned about keeping things on an even keel. He wants to calm the troubled waters. Just keep it that way. Don't reveal problems, don't expose sin; that will surely only cause more trouble. Now I grant that there may be times in minor things where peacekeeping may be in order. We are to

forbear one another. But peacekeeping wants to go beyond that and fail to deal with things that need to be exposed.

A number of years ago I heard a message by Joseph Webb and I have listened to parts of it several times. As I began to prepare for this, I listened again, and then thought I ought to just write down the main parts of what he said.

And so for the rest of this message I will mostly quote him. As he began he read James 3:17. Let me begin by reading James 3:13-18. James writes, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.* Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Notice that the wisdom that comes from above is first pure, then peaceable. We have just completed beatitude 6, "Blessed are the pure in heart." And now we have, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Purity precedes peace. So I will quote now from Joseph Webb on peacekeeping and peacemaking. He says and I quote now:

"What is a peacemaker? What does he do to bring about peace? This is where most people totally miss it and I hope you will listen closely. This is where there are many religious distortions. Many think the peacemaker is responsible to keep the peace among the members of the family or the church or among friends or at work. I am making a distinction now, a peacekeeper not a peacemaker, a peacekeeper always guides the conversation away from the subjects that might cause strife. If you've been around them, 'Let's not talk

about that now. Let's not go there. No, no, let's not go there. Let's talk about something else, things we agree on. Saying that will cause the people discomfort."

Then Webb says, "Peacekeepers are compromisers. They avoid confrontation at all costs. They want everybody to be happy, happy, happy, happy. They are the inventors of what's called the 'no talk rule'. They are change-the-subject people. They keep the peace on the outside... Peacekeeper's peace is pretend peace."

Let me just insert here, there are times when some things should not be talked about. Someone just recently told us a saying their mother had and I think it went like this, "We should always tell the truth, but not all the truth needs to be told." But take things like when there is abuse in the family, but nobody dares to say anything because there is a no talk rule. Or there is sin in the church and nobody wants to mention it.

So Webb goes on like this: "But what do you think happens inside when they avoid conflicts continuously? Outwardly things may be calm, but not inward. "In John 14:27 Jesus describes a different kind of peace. He said, 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' Worldly peace is momentary, it's external, it is outward, it's incapable of changing anyone's heart. Jesus said My peace is internal. You may face trials and difficulties, you may be stretched, you may be tested, but my peace I give unto you. That's internal peace... Now external peace, don't misunderstand me, external peace keeps people from fighting and shouting and abusing one another, but it doesn't deal with the inner depravity. It bottles it up like a pressure cooker. (Example of Ireland and Israel and places with racial issues.) There are peace keepers there, but all they're doing is bottling it up like a pressure cooker and its going to explode. You watch.

"Wherever peacekeepers operate, people stop confronting, they start avoiding and pretending and ignore real issues and bury them and eventually it will explode. The no-talk rule allows wickedness to continue. People stop telling the truth in homes and churches. It helps to promote physical abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse. The result of the no-talk rule actually allows wickedness to continue. It keeps dysfunctional families in abusive cycles. It causes churches to avoid questioning sinful conduct. We don't talk about that. No, you don't tell on dad. Don't expose what dad's doing in the house. The only cure we can have in our churches and in our homes is the peacemaker. It will be the peacemaker who will say there's a problem here and we need to deal with it. The conflict is the moment you say that, the peacekeeper will say, you're a trouble maker. This could start a war. This could cause a church split. We surely don't want that. You are being very unloving and judgmental, you're a villain. We're trying to maintain peace and you are stirring up trouble.

"The peacekeeper is convinced that the best way to keep the peace is not to talk about it. To blow the whistle on improper behavior or confront a wrong, so that a loved one in the family may go to jail, (and) when we expose the wrong and the perpetrator is caught, who do you think is blamed? The peacemaker. And sometimes we feel intimidated when we shouldn't. Peacekeepers want you to stuff inside all the sin and the junk and the heresy and the immorality and sexual impurity and the compromise, and just say everything's all fine; everything's OK. The truth is they're boiling up inside because of the problem."

Let me just note here that Webb then gives the illustration of a charismatic church leader and a family member, who after years of abuse, exposed him for abusing a member of the family and he said, 'It's got to stop now.' Now I'll quote Webb again: "And what was the result? Mom went ballistic. She said, 'How could you talk about dad like that? How could you do

this to us?' Guess who was the villain? Mom was living peacefully, outwardly, but not inwardly, and she was willing to live in that misery if she didn't have to expose the truth. But all true peace is rooted in truth.

"Today, carnality, immorality, ungodly relationships are tolerated in churches and homes in the name of grace and compassion and tolerance. And if you try to say something about it, you are unloving, in bondage, legalistic; you're trying to bring people under the law. Will you note that in Mathew 5 the blessed ones are not the ones that keep their mouths closed when they see improper conduct. Instead, they are the ones willing to expose wrong conduct. James 3:17, *'But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.'*" To say in the church that stealing is sin, that prostitution is sin, that lying is sin, that fornication is sin, and it must stop (that is troublemaking) but to say that adultery is not sin that sodomy is not sin, that's peacekeeping. But it's partiality and its hypocrisy and God hates it.

"In John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. But then in Matthew 5:14-16 He said you are the light of the world. He said, 'Don't hide it. Set it on a hill. Take it out from under the basket. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' What is so unique about light? I think it's the fact that it won't tolerate darkness. Darkness and light absolutely cannot dwell together. And do you know something? Light couldn't care less what darkness thinks about it. Its attitude is what you see is what you get. When Jesus came He said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' And, 'If you love Me keep My commandments.' And He didn't care what people said about it. Today when you say that you are being intolerant. That's all right, Jesus was intolerant. True believers today say that Jesus is the way, and

that we are to obey His word without exception. That's what Christ said we are to be. He was the light, now we are the light.

"Then He said in Matthew 5, you are to be the salt of the earth. And He said, 'Salt's good.' May I ask you, what's so unique about salt? Salt retards spoilage. It frustrates bacteria that wants to spread and do its own thing. And by the way, salt doesn't care what bacteria thinks about it. It is what it is. And let me just tell you this. Jesus said if salt ever quits doing what it is supposed to do, it's good for nothing. And may I tell you something? Whenever we quit doing what Jesus tells us to do, we're good for nothing too. Light and salt are unashamedly and unapologetically confrontational with its environment. And peacemakers are confrontational in a loving way. They know why Paul said they need to put on armor. I don't know why many Christians today need armor. All they're doing is just going around loving the daylights out of everybody and absolutely refusing to declare sin is sin. They just want everybody to love them and be at peace with them. Anyone who doesn't do that is a trouble maker.

"Jesus, by the way, was a peacemaker, and they crucified Him. The apostles were peacemakers and most of them were martyred for the Gospel. The reformation people were peacemakers. They didn't care what the church said to them. They knew they had the truth and they declared it and many of them were martyred. The called out ones today, they will pay a price too. If they are a peacemaker, they are going to pay a price. In 2 Corinthians 11:26, Paul, who was a peacemaker, said he was in perils, he was in perils by the heathen, which we understand because they didn't want the Gospel. And then he was in peril by his countrymen, the Jews. You know the Jews were constantly against him and tried to kill him several times. But then he said he was in peril, 'Among false brethren.' I like what one commentator said. He said, 'That's the Judas's.' Those who want to kiss Christ,

and then betray Him. Then attack those who are faithful to Him..

"I want to tell you something. Jesus Christ has many Judas's in the Church today. They say they want to kiss Him, but they betray Him. Paul's response was I don't care what others think of me. I glory in trials and tribulations and distresses. For when I am weak, then am I strong. I glory not, save in the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus asked those of His day, 'Why do you call me the way, if you're not willing to walk in My way? Why do you call Me the Light if you won't live Me? Why do you call me Master if you're not willing to obey Me?' You see, these are peacekeepers who declare Him with their lips but their hearts are far from Him.

"They are more afraid of men and they have the fear of men in their hearts which is a snare, and they're afraid they won't be able to build a big church. And may I just say this, ...every time Jesus got a big crowd He thinned them out. But today we want to get bigger and bigger and bigger because that's the sign of success. Is it? Is it? Or is holiness and purity success, demanding that we obey God's Word? We must today believe and say the same thing, Jesus said 'Repent'. Paul the Apostle said, 'Don't be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, none any of these shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Are we saying the exact same thing Jesus Christ and Paul said? We have to say what God said. We have to say what Jesus said. We have to say what Paul said who got his revelation from Jesus Christ. He said the things that I teach, teach faithful men, to teach other faithful men; in other words, the message doesn't change" end quote.

Let me give you a few scenarios. You're good Christian friend of some years ago has invited you to his wedding. He professes to be a Christian, but you discover there will be alcohol at the reception, and a

dance to follow and you disapprove of both. What does a peacekeeper do? What does a peacemaker do?

At the outset we had Galatians 2:11-21 read for us. You may wish to reread that and ask, "What would a peacekeeper do, and what would a peacemaker do?" The answer is in the text.

You have a no smoking rule in your house. Your son starts to smoke, but you don't allow it in your home. And then he starts to smoke in his room. What does a peacekeeper do? What does a peacemaker do?

Let me give you another. You have a rule that drunkenness or alcohol is not allowed in your house. Your son starts to drink and eventually comes home drunk at night. What does a peacekeeper do? What does a peacemaker do?

You have a rule about certain kinds of clothing in your home. And then your daughter starts pushing the limits. What does a peacekeeper do? What does a peacemaker do?

Now you know as well as I do that we all frequently face similar kinds of situations. A relative to my wife had her cousin call her to see if his son could stay at her house as he and his live-in girlfriend were passing through. Would it be OK if they stayed the night there together? And I ask, what does a peacekeeper do? What does a peacemaker do?

But it gets worse. Let us say your church is starting to promote Rick Warren's, "Purpose Driven Life" or "Purpose Driven Church." And let us say you are concerned because you know it is a slippery path to liberalism. What does the peacekeeper do? What does the peacemaker do? And we could list any number of questionable writers such as Sarah Young. Or, let us say your pastor starts to use the paraphrase called, "The Message", and you are greatly concerned, what do you do? What does the peacekeeper do? What does the Peacemaker do?

Now I want to say that there are right and wrong ways of dealing with such and I highly encourage integrity. But even if you take a stand on any issues like this, it can hardly be done without being called a legalist or troublemaker or a divider of families and so on. It is amazing that Jesus could say, "Blessed are the peacemakers." But from a divine perspective, they are. As a matter of fact, they are the hope of the world.

May I ask you, are you at all interested in being a peacemaker? But let me go to an even thornier issue for us. In this church, we have a strong stand against divorce. Stronger than most other churches. In the church outside of our local situation, most have long laid down the battle regarding divorce and they are now battling homosexuality. But for us, the battle to allow for divorce is setting in more and more.

So let me ask, how did it enter the evangelical domain and take it by storm? It is namely for this very reason that many so called Christians were peacekeepers, not peacemakers. Once many Evangelical churches were almost as strong against divorce as we are. For example, numerous Pentecostal churches had a very strong stand. But today most would see us as totally out of touch with reality in our views. What happened to those other churches? There were more peacekeepers than peacemakers. Those who were uncomfortable with divorce did not want to cause a ruckus. They wanted to keep the peace. And they did. They sat back and said nothing, at least not where it counts. And, by saying nothing, we can easily become guilty of endorsing wrong.

I was given a book for Christmas written by E.S. Williams, called, "The Great Divorce Controversy." He is British and gives a graph of the divorce trend in his own country beginning in the 1860's until today. The graph is on the bottom in the 1860's. And so it is in 1875, and in 1890, and in 1905. But in 1920, just under 100 years ago, it slowly began to rise just ever so slightly off the bottom. I am talking about a

secular country, not the church. From there it crept up slowly until about 1940, and before 1950 it had spiked to 75,000. That was after the 2 world wars. It then settled back down to about 40,000. Then from about 1955, it spiked to the 1980s where it reached numbers like 150,000 per year, and from there it has only continued to increase.

I ask you, what happened? If it was down in the bottom of the graph in the world, it was way in the bottom in the Church. Today, we know that it is no different in the church than in the world. What happened? What happened? When divorce enters the family, peacekeepers are much more plentiful than peacemakers. That is what happened. If you question that, I challenge you to just look at your own family. Today, there is hardly a family where this does not play out in real life.

And I ask, how does the peacekeeper differ from the peacemaker? Well, the peacekeeper keeps the family intact, no matter what the price! He seeks to leave the subject out. The no-talk rule is in effect. Someone in our group called it get-along-ism. This get-along-ism is so powerful, that truth loses out. And although it does not necessarily condone divorce, it tolerates it and right there the battle is lost.

But Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers!" And I ask, is that so? How in the world could that be true? How can the peacemaker be considered blessed? The peacemakers are avoided, they are shunned, they are troublemakers; they are the problem; they are legalists, they are scum as far as others are concerned. And who wants to be those things? We want to be accepted by others, most especially when that other group is the majority.

But it gets worse. Several years ago my family from my dad's side had a reunion. My wife and I enjoyed those reunions and we went. We were a few days early and one of my cousins, to avoid later problems, I guess, informed us that his daughter had married a woman. As a matter of fact, he and his wife were both lay

pastors in a Mennonite church and they supported this wedding. And now he had paid their way to come to this reunion. One of the women had been through a Mennonite Bible College and the other wanted to be a pastor.

I ask you, what does a peacemaker do in a case like that? Well, I can tell you because I found out most of my relatives are peacemakers. Well, my wife and I thought about that and I called this cousin and thanked him for letting us know, and I said that I would appreciate if he would tell these women that we would not be able to associate with them. Well, I guess he thought once we were in the squeeze we would not have the courage to carry through, and so he didn't tell them. And lo and behold, for the first supper together as a family, who would be standing at the doors to greet all the relatives? Well, you guessed it. But we were shocked! And we refused to shake hands and we avoided them and they us. Almost all my relatives there would have professed to be Christians. And some of them went out of their way to show these women married to each other that all was OK.

How did divorce take the church by storm? Just like that. How will homosexuality overtake the church? Just like that! And I ask, where are the peacemakers? Well, they are a despised little group of judgmental, intolerant, problematic professing Christians somewhere off to the side and somewhere where they hardly matter to the whole. Did Jesus say, "Blessed are the peacemakers?"

Now I have said that peacemaking has to do with the truth. The peacekeeper says, "Don't talk about it. It's not so bad. It will only cause trouble. It is judgmental to say anything. We are all sinners, so who has the right to say anything?" But the peacemaker says, "What does the Bible say? What does God say? What did Jesus say? What did Paul say? We must find out what they said, and then we must do what the Bible says." That should not come as a surprise to us, and

maybe it doesn't in words, but it most certainly does when it is put into practice.

CONCL: So, we conclude. Peace, that illusive dream. Is it hopeless? Well, we will not achieve world peace before the Messiah sets up His kingdom. But we can find peace, and bring peace to others, and that is the task of the Christian. He is to be a peacemaker. I found this message very difficult to give. I am getting old and weak. But Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers", not blessed are the peacekeepers! Unless I am mistaken on what is meant by peacemaking, this is the most difficult, most dangerous task with the greatest potential for disaster that exists. But it is the only hope for the world. In the next message we want to look at what it involves.