**The King’s Sermon: Blessed are the Peacemakers**

Matthew 5:9

4/30/17

Main Idea: Because God has made peace with man, we as His children are blessed when we actively pursue peace with God, others and ourselves.

INTRODUCTION

During the past couple of weeks, there has been escalating conflict between North Korea and the United States. Just the last couple of days, there were several ballistic missiles tests that were fired by North Korea. Fortunately, these launches deeded failure. However, they are working hard to develop nuclear tipped missiles that can reach the United States. If this conflict is not handled well, it can turn into WW III.

As we look around us, we see political wars and cultural wars. But closer to home, we see interpersonal war between individuals. Discord, strife, and hatred surround us. There is a great need for peace. What does Jesus have to say about peace and His followers? How are we to make a difference in this world?

We have been preaching through the Sermon on the Mount, which is the King’s Sermon instructing his followers to join Him in a new kingdom with new standard of living. Today, we will cover the 7th Beatitude, which is recorded in Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers. For they will be called the sons of God.” Back in Jesus’ days, the people were also seeking peace just like we are seeking peace. The residents in Israel were living in turbulent days under the Roman rule. Jews desperately desired peace. Jesus is saying in this Beatitude that being peacemakers is a description of sons of God or children of God. What does it mean to be a peacemaker?

1. Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Let us break down the word peacemakers into two words. First, the word “peace”: It is much more than the absence of conflict. The word peace means wholeness, harmony, restored relationship in contrast to strife and discord. The second half of the word is “makers,” which is an active and dynamic word. A peacemaker is not a passive person; but one who gets involved to bring peace. He is one who pursues peace. He pursues wholeness and restored relationships in his own life and in the life of others.

Most people want to avoid being in the position to make peace because it is risky and uncomfortable. It could strain the relationship; it might even lead to a broken relationship. The natural response is to leave it alone. We respond passively because we are afraid of the trouble it might cause. However, Christ said, “Blessed are the peacemakers. For they will be called the sons of God.” A peacemaker does not avoid problems, but faces up to them, and pursues restoring the relationship. May we pursue peace. (Rom. 12:18) “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” When we are recognized as peacemakers, we will be blessed. Not only that, but others will recognize us as sons of God. This is what God expects from His children: to be peacemakers. Who then do we need to make peace with? There are three categories: We need to pursue peace with God, peace with others, and peace with ourselves.

1. We are to Pursue Peace with God

No one can become a peacemaker until he has found peace himself. First of all, we need to be at peace with God, who is the source of peace. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace. Without God’s grace, we are enemies of God and of one another. Our hearts must change first.

God is the ultimate peacemaker. Because of our sinfulness and our rebellion against God, we are condemned and eternally separated from God. However, because of God’s great love for us, He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to come to die on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin on our behalf. He died so that we do not need to die. Three days after Jesus’ death, He rose again indicating that God’s wrath hads been appeased. God had accepted Christ’s payment for our sin. As a result, we can have peace with God when we place our faith in Jesus Christ. If you have never placed your trust in Christ, I extend an invitation for you to do so today.

Not only are we to pursue peace with God personally, we are also to help others to pursue peace with God. It is not coincidence that God has brought various people into our private world. There are many that need this peace from God. It might be our family members, our roommates, our classmates, our coworkers, our next door neighbors, our hair dresser, our postman, our dentist. These are people that we see regularly. Someday, we will stand before God and God will ask us, “You have been living in your neighborhood for 5 years, why haven’t you told your neighbors the Good News of Jesus Christ? Why haven’t you shared how they can find peace with God?

ILLUSTRATION: I have been praying for our neighbors asking God how we can connect with them. Ellie last year learn to make Fa Gao, which is Chinese cake baked during Chinese New Year, from my mom. The Lord gave me a good idea to have Ellie make Fa Gao and bring it over to our neighbors to wish them a happy Chinese New Year. That is exactly what we did. During our conversation, we ask if there were anything that we could pray for them. New deeper relationships were established. I plan to revisit our neighbors to see how God has answered our prayer for them in the coming months. I am also planning to have a block party inviting our neighbors over to get to know each other. Lord willing, He will give us more opportunities to talk to them about spiritual things. I now try taking walks with Ellie so that we can meet our neighbors. When I see my neighbors outside, I go outside right away to have a conversation with them.

APPLICATION: I want to challenge you to be peacemakers with those that do not know Christ. I challenge you to build relationship with your neighbors. May we reach out to them by praying for them and asking God to create opportunity for you to connect with them. One of the finest peacemaking activities is introducing people to the Prince of Peace. May we be motivated to show others how they can have the inward peace with God.

[ Not only are we to pursue peace with God, we are to pursue peace with others.]

1. We are to Pursue Peace with Others

Because we live in a deprived world, it is common to witness conflicts and strife. Blessed are the peacemakers. May we be active in pursuing peace. This is not natural, it must come from the Lord. When we see discord, may we seek to make peace. Before we help others, let us deal with conflicts that we have. When we have offended someone, may we pursue peace by asking for forgiveness.

1. Ask for Forgiveness

It is hard for us to admit our fault. It is common to blame someone else. Instead, we need to swallow pride and confess our shortcomings. Many times, we know we have offended someone and they do also, but our pride hinders us from asking for forgiveness. Being a peacemaker means humbling ourselves and taking initiative to approach the one that we offended with an apology.

(Mt. 5:23-24) “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gifts.” If we know we have offended someone, we need to take action to seek reconciliation. It is more important to get things right with our brother first before we worship the Lord. How can we worship God and accept God’s forgiveness for us and not seek forgiveness of others that we have hurt. We are to be peacemakers.

ILLUSTRATION: I called my mom every week. She usually unloads on me after a challenging week taking care of my dad, who has Alzheimers. Several weeks ago while talking to mom, she kept cutting me off when I wanted to share something with her. I was irritated when I got off the phone. Ellie then came up to me. I wanted to unload to her, but she was not up to listening. Out of frustration, I yelled at her. She got upset and went to her office. Afterward, I felt miserable. I wanted to ask for forgiveness, but I know that she needed time to cool off first.

After several hours, she came out of her room. I took the initiative to approach her to apologize. Initially, I wanted to justify my misbehavior by blaming her for provoking me to anger. But I knew that I did the wrong thing. I swallowed my pride and asked her for forgiveness. She was gracious to forgive me.

APPLICATION: Do you know of someone that you have offended and you have swept it under the carpet? The Lord might have brought it to your attention, but you just disregarded it. May we be peacemakers. May you go and seek reconciliation and be obedient to the Lord. As peacemakers, we are not only asking for forgiveness, but we also need to receive or extend forgiveness.

1. Extend Forgiveness

In (1 Cor. 13:5 NIV), it says, “Love keeps no record of wrongs.” No record means to not count or keep track of the wrongs of others. Just as God, our Savior, has not keep count of our wrongs, we also are not to keep count or keep track of the wrongs of others. In God’s sight, our sin no longer exists. (Ps. 103:12) “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” When we totally forgive someone, we too refuse to keep a record of their wrongs.

Unfortunately, many times when we are offended, we want to retaliate. May we remember what Scripture says in Romans 12:17-19, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.”

When we are hurt, most of the time it is caused by a misunderstanding. What one intends is not what we interpreted. We tend to get upset and assume the worst from the other person. As a result, we do not want to talk to the other person but instead, we talk badly behind his back. As peacemakers, may we approach the person that offended us to talk about the issue graciously. Many times because of misunderstanding, they are not even aware that they have offended you. May we give them a benefit of the doubt and communicate with them.

APPLICATION: Before we approach the person that offended us, may we first calm down and pray that God will give us a good attitude. Ask God to show us how we may have contributed to the problem. If we have, may we ask for forgiveness. May we ask God to help us be gracious, gentle, but honest as we share our feelings. Instead of blaming them, may we give them the benefit of the doubt and share how we feel hurt and how we interpreted what we hear or saw from them. I believe 8 or 9 out of 10 times, it is a misunderstanding.

We might want to say something like this as an example, “John, when you said that you do not want me to be on your team, it appeared that you distrust me and it really hurt me. I felt that’s not what you mean. Therefore, I wanted to talk to you and hear you out.” Instead of blaming the other person, let’s give them an opportunity to explain, we will realize that it is just a misunderstanding. They might respond by saying, “Oh, no. That is not what I meant. This is what I meant.” “Oh, I see.” Many conflicts can be resolved by talking about it calmly.

However, there are times that the other person that offended us really wants to hurt us. May we follow what James 1:19 say, “Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.” May we ask God to give us a humble heart that is willing to listen to what that person has to say. If the offender apologizes, may we be willing to extend forgiveness. Sometimes, we do not want to forgive the person. We deceive ourselves thinking that we can hurt them back by not forgiving. In reality, if we do not forgive, we will become bitter and resentful. May we follow what the Apostle Paul says in Eph. 4:32, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God has forgave you.” As peacemakers, we are to extend forgiveness. Do not allow Satan to take a foothold in our life and use our bitterness to destroy us. May we not keep record of wrong.

However, there are times where the offender wants to hurt us. We see that person as our enemy. May we remember God has called us to “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you” as recorded in Luke 6:27-28. May we ask God to help us to understand them better and show us how we can do good to them and to show mercy to them. In Romans 12:21, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” God said blessed are the peacemakers. That cannot be done by our own effort. It can only be accomplished by the Spirit of God working in our inner being.

Love is a choice. It is an act of the will. Keeping a record of wrongs is also an act of the will. May we ask God to help us to forgive as He has forgiven us.

[ We are to pursue peace with God, peace with others, and also peace with ourselves. ]

1. We are to Pursue Peace with Ourselves

When we have done something terrible, we feel guilty and refuse to forgive ourselves. Sometimes, it is easier to forgive others than to forgive ourselves. We tend to be more critical toward ourselves than others. May we remember that forgiveness is a choice. Forgiving oneself means to experience the love that keeps no record of our own wrongs. Not forgiving ourselves is a subtle way of competing with Christ’s atonement. Instead of accepting Jesus’ sacrifice, I want to punish myself for my failures. We are saying that what Jesus did on the cross was not enough. Once we have confessed our sin, may we claim God’s promise in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

APPLICATION: May we thank God for forgiving us. May we forgive ourselves. Not forgiving ourselves is wrong and dishonoring to God.

CONCLUSION: Just as God, our heavenly Father, is the peacemaker, we as God’s children are to be peacemakers also as we actively pursue peace with God, with others and with ourselves.