

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:1-10 (5:9 key verse)

Today we are going to continue with part 2 of the message from last week on Unity in the Church. Unity is often challenged by conflict and conflict can either lead to making us a better or bitter people. I want to choose to be better not bitter when conflict comes. But conflict comes not only in the church but it comes in many avenues of life.... Marriage, employment, family relationships, check-out at the grocery store...etc. In this message we are going to examine conflict in light of God's Word and discover how to resolve conflict in the relationships that are the most important to us. This conflict resolution solution can be applied to relationships in the context of church, marriage, family, or any relationship that demands our full involvement.

Notice Verse 9 as Key Verse – The Peace Maker

The idea of peace dominates the Bible. The Bible opens with peace in the garden; the Bible closes with peace in eternity. In fact, you could chart the course of history based on the theme of peace. There was peace on earth in the garden. Man sinned, peace was interrupted. At the cross, peace became a reality again as He who died on the cross became our peace. And since the Lord Jesus Christ has provided peace, there can be peace in the heart of a man or a woman who comes to know Him. Someday in the future, He will come again. His title will be the Prince of Peace. He will establish a kingdom of peace, which will finally go into an eternal age of peace.

So peace is a great way to see the theme of the Bible. Peace in the garden, peace interrupted, peace returns in the hearts of men because of the cross. The Prince of Peace comes again to bring a kingdom of peace that finally becomes an eternal peace. There are 400 references in the Bible to peace. God is tremendously concerned with peace. It is one of His great themes. In fact, He Himself calls Himself the God of Peace. Jesus takes on the name for His future rule in the Kingdom as Prince of Peace. So why does man have conflict and how can conflict be resolved? Great questions. We are going to answer these question by exploring Jesus' sermon on the Mount.

The Setting: Matt: 4:23-25

Jesus in **Matthew chapter 4:23-25** has just preached on the Kingdom values. Kingdom values are priorities (non-negotiable) which God considers ruling values – everyone has ruling values in their life. You do what you do and behave the way you behave because of ruling values. Jesus values the gospel – the good news – that salvation has come and salvation of the soul brings peace between man and God. A Kingdom value or ruling value according to Jesus was the gospel. He now has received fame and following because of his preaching and He has verified the authenticity of His claim as the Messiah by healing the sick and other miraculous deeds. The Jews always required a sign as evidence of their religious actions and Jesus abided them by performing miracles as proof of His Lordship. But just in case they the Jews would begin to think that evidence of this salvation was wrought in their own hearts by being able to imitate Jesus' miracles... Jesus gives to them a sermon on the evidence of salvation.

Matt: 5:1-10 The Beatitudes (the Beautiful Attitudes of the Heart)

So now He walks up the Mount of Olives with followers all around Him... is he about to perform another great miracle? Is He going to demonstrate His power by casting out some demon? Or make an astonishing announcement with shock and awe? Is he going to appoint some of His followers with important positions in His Kingdom that He has promised? I suppose there was a sense of disappointment as Jesus sits down in the traditional Jewish teaching position inviting His followers to listen to one more sermon.... They were ready for action! They were ready to charge into the Kingdom, But was their heart ready? What proceeds out of Jesus' mouth is a challenge or test to the followers to see if they shared the same Kingdom values as

was required by God. This is not a checklist of how to gain salvation but rather a test of the heart to see if salvation of the soul is present. With this I want us to focus on the one Kingdom Value of verse 9... Blessed are the Peacemakers. People who value peace over selfishness... people who value a heart that succumbs to peaceful intervention rather than conflict which destroys. So we start with a question of where does conflict come from?

Jesus answers this question in the following verses 21 – 48.

Here He gives examples of where conflict starts – the heart.

- v.21-22 He gives and the example of Murder originates in the heart of anger
- v.27-30 He gives the example of Adultery and Lust as originating in the heart
- v. 31-32 He demonstrates how divorce equates to adultery by the measure of the heart
- v. 33-37 He demonstrates how an oath of wrong intention originates in the heart

All the examples he gives as a starting place in the heart and a progression that breaks the peace.

The origins of conflict starts in the heart and progresses with these characteristics.

I Desire. The desire of the human heart can be a dangerous thing. (Guard your heart) Prov.4:23

I Demand. My desire progresses to a demand. I must get it no matter what the cost.

I Judge. If I don't get what I want I pass a judgement upon whatever is blocking my want.

I Punish And even further if I don't get it I will punish.

How do we then resolve conflict?: These concepts are totally overlooked in most conflicts because people naturally focus on escaping from the situation or overcoming their opponent. Therefore, it is wise to periodically step back from a conflict and ask yourself whether you are doing all that you can to take advantage of these special opportunities.

4 Characteristics of a Peacemaker

1st: Glorify God

When the Jesus urged the followers to be Peacemakers he was not talking about one hour on Sunday morning. He wanted them to show God honor and bring him praise in day-to-day life, especially by the way that they resolved personal conflicts (see 1 Cor. 10:31). Do all to the Glory of God.

As mentioned above, you can glorify God in the midst of conflict by trusting him, obeying him, and imitating him (see Prov. 3:4-6; John 14:15; Eph. 5:1). One of the best ways to keep these concerns uppermost in your mind is to regularly ask yourself this focusing question: "How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?" Can I trust God's outcome by seeking peace?

2nd: Get the log out of your own eye

One of the most challenging principles of peacemaking is set forth in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus says, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

There are generally two kinds of "logs" you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you are

often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or advisor who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict.

When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly.

The most important aspect of getting the log out of your own eye is to go beyond the confession of wrong behavior and face up to the root cause of that behaviour through repentance. The Bible teaches that conflict comes from the desires that battle in your heart (James 4:1-3; Matt. 15:18-19). Some of these desires are obviously sinful, such as wanting to conceal the truth, bend others to your will, or have revenge. In many situations, however, conflict is fueled by good desires that you have elevated to sinful demands, such as a craving to be understood, loved, respected, or vindicated.

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something, even a good thing, and seek to find happiness, security or fulfillment in it rather than in God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God ("You shall have no other gods before me"). It also causes conflict with other people. As James writes, when we want something but don't get it, we kill and covet, quarrel and fight (James 4:1-4). There are three basic steps you can take to overcome the idolatry that fuels conflict. First, you should ask God to help you see where you have been guilty of wrong worship, that is, where you are focusing your love, attention, and energy on something other than God. Second, you should specifically identify and renounce each of the desires contributing to the conflict. Third, you should deliberately pursue right worship, that is, to fix your heart and mind on God and to seek joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in him alone.

As God guides and empowers these efforts, you can find freedom from the idols that fuel conflict and be motivated to make choices that will please and honor Christ. This change in heart will usually speed a resolution to a present problem, and at the same time improve your ability to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

3rd: Gently Restore

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. When Christians think about talking to someone else about a conflict, one of the first verses that comes to mind is Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you." If this verse is read in isolation, it seems to teach that we must always use direct confrontation to force others to admit they have sinned. If the verse is read in context, however, we see that Jesus had something much more flexible and beneficial in mind than simply standing toe to toe with others and describing their sins.

Read Matt: 5:38-42. The absurdity of Restoration. Go further than expected. The Heart is the target it is not a command to get slapped on the other side of the cheek but rather to be willing to go further than expected for the sake of Peace.

4th: Go and be reconciled

He forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you". Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Therefore, as you seek to forgive others, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate his wonderful forgiveness toward you.

Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the Peacemakers”

The Progression of Conflict:

- 1) | _____
- 2) | _____
- 3) | _____
- 4) | _____

The Four Characteristics of a Peacemaker

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____