

PM Jeremiah 29:1-11 & Matthew 5:1-12 Are You a Peacemaker?

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[0:00] Chapter 29, reading from verse 1 to verse 11.

These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders of the exiles!

And to the priests, prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

This was after King Jeconiah and the Queen Mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the metal workers had departed from Jerusalem.

The letter was sent by the hand of Elasa, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

[1:05] And this is what the letter said. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Listen to this because it's quite surprising in a way what the verse says the Lord is saying here to the exiles that are in Babylon. Build houses and live in them.

Plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage that they may bear sons and daughters.

Multiply there and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Ultimately, they don't believe it was Nebuchadnezzar that took them into exile. It was God. And pray to the Lord on its behalf, the behalf of Babylon.

[2:09] For in its welfare, you will find your welfare. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you.

And do not listen to the dreams that they dream. For it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name. I did not send them, declares the Lord.

For thus saith the Lord, when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans for welfare and not for evil. To give you a future and a hope.

Amen. And we are now going to read from Matthew in the New Testament chapter 5. Matthew chapter 5.

[3:18] And we will read from verse 1. We are going to read from verse 1 to verse 12 of Matthew 5.

! For they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are the people who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

[4:46] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Amen. May the Lord add his blessing to the public reading of his word. We're now going to sing again, this time in Psalm.

If you could turn with me then back to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5. We'll just have another short word of prayer before we look at this passage.

Lord, we pray that you will guide us Lord. And that you will guide us in seeking to unpack and unfold the truth that you have for us here.

And that it will be for your glory and for our good. We ask in Jesus name, Amen. Amen. So we're going to be looking this evening at one of the Beatitudes.

[6:01] And it's the one found in verse 9 of Matthew Chapter 5. Where Jesus says, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

I came across a quote. I can't remember even where I came across it. But I remember coming across it. And it said, The followers of Christ have been called to peace.

Now they are told to be peacemakers. We live in a world, I'm sure you'll agree. Where there is a great lack of peace among nations.

Ethnic groups. And even in our own society just now, We're seeing repeated violence on our streets. The words of Jesus here in this Beatitude are surely relevant.

And just as relevant today as they were on his own day. It's interesting because, as you perhaps know, The religious aspect of the nation around the time of Jesus Had in mind that the Saviour or the Messiah That would be born and would come around that time Would be a military person.

[7:44] A person that would restore Israel And free Israel from the occupation of the Roman Empire And all that governmental apparatus.

And far from expecting to hear from the mouth of Jesus Blessed are the peacemakers They would have thought they should be hearing Blessed be this person that comes ready to topple the Roman occupation.

And this is of course the same with all of the Beatitudes. They are a transvaluation of all the ideas That normally people would have.

Before launching into the sermon Let me say something briefly about the Beatitudes And quite briefly Our English word, Beatitude That we find in our English translations Comes from a Latin word And that Latin word is Beatus So that word really It points to If you research the root understanding of that word It points to The people who are happiest And satisfied And satisfied Most of all In the entire world So That's what this Beatitude Is pointing to In other words In the Beatitudes Jesus is declaring

Who are the most blessed people In the world And of course It's counter-cultural It is against Against all the Ideas That people would bring To say that the most blessed people in the world Are persecuted To say that the most blessed people in the world Are poor in spirit To say that the most blessed people in the world are meek All of these things Are way, way In another planet From what people would normally Think And count As being blessed Are they not?

[10:25] The second thing I want to say about the Beatitudes Is they are not an unrelated list of things That each Beatitude Is unrelated to any of the other Beatitudes They're all interrelated and interconnected And that's all really I want to say along that They are descriptions Of qualities Which should characterise Every single Christian Or let me put this another way They are qualities That at least every single Christian Should be aiming To model if you like Some people who have looked at the Beatitudes

And wondered What are they? Some people have said They are declarations Jesus is declaring authoritatively Who it is in this world That is supremely blessed He's declaring it He's saying Blessed are the poor in spirit They shall have the kingdom of God Astonishing Some people see them Not so much as Authoritative declarations From Jesus But they see them as descriptions Of the qualities and characteristics Of those who are belonging to the kingdom Or those who are disciples of Jesus Remember in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus once said Interestingly Except your righteousness Exceeds that of the Pharisees

Who shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven By the way Nobody can live up to these Beatitudes Just as nobody can live up to the Ten Commandments But Jesus is saying Ultimately these Beatitudes are a mirror of Christ A reflection of Christ All the qualities are supremely modelled in him So some see them as declarations Some see them as descriptions And others see them as demands If you want to be in the kingdom of heaven You need to be Have a poverty of spirit You need to be meek You need to be mourning your sin Etc, etc, etc Finally Just in general about the Beatitudes Before we go into this particular Beatitude What does the word peace mean?

Blessed are the peacemakers But what does the word peace mean? Well, you just need to take my word for it The word in the original language in the New Testament Means just about the same As the word in the Old Testament But I'm going to give you the Old Testament word in the original language It's an easy word Shalom Shalom It's a lovely word You can hear its musicality Shalom And I'm probably not saying it how it truly should be said And the thing about shalom It's a rich word It's a word that has what people call A long range of meanings And some of its meanings are Wholeness Healing Well-being Safety Prosperity Salvation And this is the richness

Of what this word means Blessed are the peacemakers Those that can bring that wholeness Those that can bring that well-being Those that can bring that safety To people But they can't do it themselves It's the gospel that they're bringing that brings it And so This peace This idea of peacemaking and peace It's not just talking about the absence of war or trouble It's very much a positive concept And a positive idea With those thoughts in mind I want to ask four questions Of our text then This evening Who are the peacemakers That Jesus is on about When he says Blessed are the peacemakers Who does he have in mind?

[15 : 30] Jesus is addressing Those who are following him As disciples Or who would wish to follow him That's who he's addressing Because if you read the opening Of chapter 5 In Matthew's gospel Here is what you read Seeing the crowds Jesus went up On the mountain And when he sat down You hardly ever hear When you come across Teaching material In the gospels Of Jesus sitting down But you have this here That he's sitting down Here And notice His disciples Came to him Notice that His disciples Came to him And notice in verse 2 He taught them Taught them

Taught them The disciples And notice the phrase He opened his mouth Two things I want you to bear in mind When a rabbi Was going to teach Something very important A Jewish rabbi That rabbi sat down And when somebody Was wanting to write About something important That a rabbi Said They would use the phrase He opened his mouth Or quoting him So What Matthew is saying here This here Is profoundly Important For the disciples Now of course There was crowds Seeing the crowds The crowds didn't go away We find at the end Of the Sermon on the Mount The crowds are still there And therefore That's why I say That

He is Who are the Peacemakers? It's those that Endeavour to follow Jesus Christ But It's also those That would like To follow him As the crowd Was there And Jesus Is teaching them The values And the qualities That ought to Characterise The disciples Of Christ Because What we want To be As disciples Of Christ Ultimately Is Reflects Something Of Christ Likeness Of Our Redeemer Of our Saviour Someone has Described Jesus' Teaching of the Sermon on the Mount As an Ordination Address To his Disciples Before he Sends them Out on Mission Here if

You like If there's Any truth In that Is there Practical Theology But we're Asking the Question Who are The Peacemakers I've said To you They are Those who Are desiring To follow Jesus So the First thing Is if Any of us Are going To be A peacemaker In the Sense of Which Christ Has in Mind We must Be Following Him We must Have Received From him That peace Of God Through the Work on the Cross that He has Done for Us And it's Only with That peace From God Through the Cross of Christ That we are Capable of Being his Peacemakers And that Begs the Question Are you A disciple Of Christ Have you Accepted him As your Saviour Have you Accepted him As the One Alone Who is Able To give Us Peace

Let me Read to You From John's Gospel In Chapter 14 Chapter 14 And Verse 27 This is Jesus Speaking Peace Peace I leave With you My Peace I give To you Not as The world Gives Do I Give To you Is that Not Lovely And let's Be honest Surely All of us At least At times Yearn For peace We Yearn That Things Would be Calm And Quiet That we Wouldn't Be Troubled That we Wouldn't Be Agitated That we Want to Get away From the Noise Of the City We Want to Get away From the Rad race We Want to Get away

[20 : 33] From the Negativity Of all The wars And the News That we Hear all The time Well Are not These Wonderful Words Of Jesus Peace I leave With you My Peace I give To you Not As the World Gives So it's Those who Have accepted Him And it's Those who Have accepted That The true Peace For any Of us Is only Found in Jesus Christ In the Same Gospel In chapter 16 Verse 33 We read These Words I have Said These Things Said Jesus That In Me You May Have Peace Listen To that Now I have Said These Things That's About The Gospel That In Me You May Have Peace In The World You

Will Have Tribulation But Take Heart I Have Overcome The World The Secret Of True Peace Of Genuine Peace Of Spiritual Peace Is Not To Be Found In Any Of The Manuals Or The Books That

You See In Book Shops I'm Not Belittling Them They Are Human Specimens!
Of Peace And They May Have Some Benefit For People But The Fundamental Necessary Peace
That Every Person Needs Every Man Woman Boy Girl Is The Peace From God Whom Our Sin And
Guilt Has Offended Second Question Is Why Is Being Christ's Peacemaker So Important Why Is It
So Important And I'm Going To Read Again From James' Letter James Was A Brother Of Jesus
And He Wrote One Letter In The New Testament And We're Going To Look At Something That He
Says In That Letter In Chapter 4

And It's Just The First Couple Of Verses Listen To What He Says What Causes Quarrels And What
Causes Fights Among You Is It Not This That Your Passions Your Emotions Your Feelings Your
Inner Life Your Inner Self If You Like Are At War Within You We'll Just Leave It At That They're At
War Within You And Then If You Go To Romans Paul's Letter To The Romans In Chapter 7 And If I
Can Find Just Something Here Now Here's Paul Speaking And He's Speaking Very Pointedly And
Very Personally Here's What He Says The Apostle Paul

The Great Apostle For We Know That The Law Is Spiritual But I Am Of The Flesh Sold Under Sin
For I Do Not Understand My Own Actions For I Do Not Do What I Want But I Do The Very Thing I
Hate So Paul Is Saying In A Sense The Same Thing As James They're Saying Internally In Me
There's A Civil War Taking Place And It's Going On All The Time Why Is Being Christ's
Peacemaker So Important Because Every Man Woman

[25 : 01] Boy And Girl Is At War Internally Within Themselves And That War Is Between Two Wills
It's Between Our Will And God's Will That's What That War Is About And What That Conflict Is
About Remember The Great Lord's Prayer Our Father Which Art In Heaven Hallowed Be Your
Name Your Kingdom Come Your Will Be Done And Remember What Jesus Says I Have Come Not
To Do My Own Will But To Do The Will Of Him That Sent Me And What Is The Problem Of
Humankind Why Can't We Live Together Why Do We Episodically Throughout Our Entire History
Go To War And Slaughter Each Other Because There's A War Going On Inside Us Because

We Want To Push Our Will So If We're A Dictator Or A Leader We Want To Push Our Will We Want
To Create Empires Like The Roman Empire The Babylonian Empire The Persian Empire The
Greek Empire The British Empire The Heart Of The Problem Is The Heart Of Human Beings That Is
Why It's So Important To Be Be A Peacemaker Every Single Person As I've Said Has To Some
Extent What We Might Call A Civil War Taking Place Within Them Christ Came To Remove Those
Barriers So We Read

For Example In A Letter Of Paul To The Ephesians In Chapter 2 In Verse 14 We Read This For He
Himself That's Speaking Of Jesus Is Our Peace That's Wonderful Isn't It I Love These Words Peace
Is Not Some Sort Of Entity Floating About Somewhere It's Jesus Christ Himself Who Is Our Peace
He's The Prince Of Peace For Unto Us A Child Is Born A Son Is Given And His Name Shall Be
Called Wonderful Counselor The Mighty God The Everlasting Father The Prince Of Peace He
Himself Is Our Peace Who Has Made Us Both One He's Talking About Jew And Gentile And Has
Broken!

The Dividing Wall Of Hostility The Work Of Christ On The Cross Is Multifaceted I Cannot Go Into
That Just Now It's Far Bigger Than Simply A Soul Being Saved It's Cosmic This Is The Source Of
All Conflict Whether Of Nations Going To War Of Conflicts At Home And Relationships And
Families In The Church The Reason That Christ Was The Greatest Peacemaker That Has Ever
Been Seen Is That His Life Was Governed 110% By The Will Of God And Not His Own Will Even In
The Garden Of Gethsemane Do Remember He Started Sweating And Great Drops Of Blood!
God These Are Evidences Of His Real Humanity By The Way It Had To Be Real His Humanity And
He Had To Trust God I Mean If He Was Just Getting Bolstered Up By The God Part Of His Being
All The Time He Was Walking Our Walk He Wasn't Walking Our Walk Perhaps Much Of Our
Restlessness As Individuals Anger Agitation Even Anxiety Are Echoes Of A Deeper Spiritual
Longing For That Inner Peace That Only God Can Give Us You Know It's Amazing In The New
Testament God Is Called The God Of All Peace He Is The Source And Fountain Of

[29 : 59] The Only Really True Peace So Peacemakers Are Truly Needed In Our World Are They
Not And We Have Received Christ's Peace Through Giving Our Lives Over To Him Must Seek To
Bring His Peace Wherever And Whenever We Can Is That Not Fair Third Question Is What Is This
Peacemaking We've Looked At Who Are The Peacemakers And Why Is Being A Peacemaker So
Important But Thirdly I'm Trying To Look At What Is This Peacemaking That Jesus Is Declared
Blessed And I've Partly Answered That Question Already But What I Want To Say This It's

Not Peace Talking I Think I Know A Certain Individual Who's A Leader Of A Certain Country Who's Been Doing An A Lot Of Talking All The Time It's Not Peace Talking It's Peace Baking It's Not Peace At Any Price When Jesus Said Here Am I Send Me He Knew In Order To Make Peace With God For You And I That Was A Phenomenal Cost Think Here Of Chamberlain At The Time Of The First World War Waving His Piece Of Paper Peace Another Time Really And The The Invasion Of Czechoslovakia Still Went On And Then It Went On From There This Peace Doesn't Come From People Like Putin Or Trump This Is Not A Human Formula For Peace It's Not A False Peace That Sacrifices Truth And Justice Its Attitude Isn't Peace At Any Price Thank God Jesus Was Willing To Embrace The Cost Cost Of Peace And You Know Something It's Not Even A Subjective Peace I'm

Not Saying It Doesn't Have A Subjective Dimension It Must Have But It's First And Foremost An Objective Peace God Has Reconciled Us To Himself By Sparing Not His Son Jesus Christ And Offering Him As The Sacrificial Lamb Remember John The Baptist Behold The Lamb Of God When He Saw Jesus That Takes Away The Sin Of The World It's An Objective Peace Remember That Phrase Jesus Used To Say To People As You Read It In The Gospels Go In Peace How Can We Go In Peace Any Human Being I'll

Tell You How We Can Go In Peace It's When We Hold A White Flag And Surrender To God's Gracious Invitation To Lay Down And Finish With Our Resistance And Rebellion And Self Idolatry And Receive His Eternal Shalom Have You Raised The White Flag Yet And You Know This Peace Is The Very Essence Of The Proclamation Of The Gospel It's Called In The New Testament The Gospel Of Peace In Ephesians Yeah I Think It's Chapter 2

[35:01] Verse 14 Where are We Well we read That already For he Himself Is Our Peace And Then In 17 And he Came Says In Ephesians 2 2 17 And Jesus Came And preached Peace To you Who were Far off And peace To those Who were Near Peace Sweet And Wonderful Peace My Conscience Quieted And I Know That He Has Taken Everything That Was Against Me And Taken It To That Cross And Rose Triumphantly The

Church Must Strive Where Possible To Bring The Message Of Peace And Therefore To Be God's Peacemakers We Must Strive To Be Peacemakers With One Another With Other Christian Communities And Society At Large Notice What I Said There Society At Large Paul Tells Us It's Late On In His Letter To The Romans If It Possible As Much As It Depends On You Says Paul Be At Peace With All People What Are The Kind Of Things That Enabled Jesus What Enables Any Of Us To Be Peacemakers James Says Something Else In His Letter That Is Relevant Here He Says The Tongue Is An Evil And A Deadly Thing

Full Of Poison If Only Many Of Us Including Myself Could Have Held Our Tongue In Certain Situations I Often Take The Words Of Scripture When I Am Praying Myself Where It Says Set A Watch Over My Mouth O Lord If We Follow Have This Mind Of Christ Says Paul In Philippians Chapter 2 And What Was This Mind It Said That He Didn't Bother Trying To Cling On To His Rights Of Divinity And

Not To Much His Rights Of Divinity But His Rights Of Being Able To Use That Divinity He Allowed People To Nail Him To The Cross He Allowed People To Spit On Him He Allowed People To Abuse Him Sacrifice His Own Rights How Can We Live As Peacemakers Cultivating Some Of The Characteristics By The Grace Of God Not Perfectly But Imperfectly Absolutely Nothing About Us Will Be Perfect Until We Get There But When We Get There We Will Be Perfect In

The Meantime Keeping Close To Christ Keeping Our Prayer Life Alive And Reading The Beatitudes I Close Then With A Quote From Hebrews Chapter 13 Hebrews Chapter 13 Which Is The Last Chapter In The Book Of The Hebrews!

[39:54] May May The God Of Peace Who Brought Again From The Dead Our Lord Jesus Christ That Great Shepherd Of The Sheep By The Blood Of The Eternal Covenant Equip You With Everything Good That You May Do His Will Working In Us That Which Is Well Pleasing In His Sight Through Jesus Christ To Whom Be Glory Forever And Ever We Cannot By Ourselves Keep Those Beatitudes They They Are Higher Even Than The Law And These Beatitudes Are Really Reflections Of Jesus Christ They Are Together They Are A Portrait I Would Suggest Of Jesus Christ And What We're To Say Is Oh Lord Give Me

Grace To Attempt Being Meek Being Merciful Being Pure In Heart At Least Sincere And Real And Being A Peacemaker And Give Me Grace It Sounds Ridiculous To Rejoice When I'm Persecuted Amen And May The Lord Bless These Things To Us For His Glory And For.