

"Blessed Are The Peacemakers" Matthew 5:9

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 September 2022

Preacher: Nate Taylor

[0 : 00] And we are going to be in Matthew chapter 5, in the Beatitudes, Matthew 5 verse 9. So we're ending this series in the Beatitude. As you can tell, this is the penultimate Beatitude.

Tonight we'll finish up this little series. But I do want to point back to the very beginning before we look at this Beatitude. In verse 2 it says, And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, and then the Beatitudes come.

And I don't know about you, but if you read that, it's easy just to skip over, or we can kind of ask, like, well, of course he opened his mouth teaching them. Like, that's how human beings speak, right?

Is Matthew just trying to tell us Jesus wasn't practicing ventriloquism or something like that? And the answer is, the reason why it mentions that is because it's a Jewish idiom.

It's this little phrase that is meant to be used to say that what is about to come carries weight and authority, and you ought to listen to it.

[1 : 05] He opened his mouth, saying. And that's actually what comes at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount. The crowds are astonished, because Jesus is one who teaches with authority.

The reason I mention that, too, is because when we come to these Beatitudes, what I want us to hear is, is Jesus really means it. He really is saying that this, every single Christian, every citizen of the kingdom, should be pressing in and desiring this way of life, trusting him in this.

This is an optional thing. There's not like a super Christian category of you get the Beatitude prize later in life once you reach a certain point in your sanctification. And these descriptions of the good life, of this upside-down life, actually require, then, us to come to the king.

Right? We need the king in the midst of all this. Be meek. Be poor in spirit. Hunger and thirst for righteousness. Be pure in heart. We need the king in order to do this. We can't do it in our own strength.

And so even then, at the beginning, too, what happens in verse 1? Jesus sat down and his disciples came to him. That's what we're doing right now. We're coming to him for wisdom and direction.

[2 : 20] We're coming with open hands and open minds and open hearts to come and to learn his ways. Because he's gentle and lowly. And as we do this, you see, we start to, this desire starts to grow in us for the kingdom.

And we start to see that it's different. It's like a mustard seed. It's like the leaven working its way through the dough. It's like a treasure that you find buried in a field and you sell everything that you have in order to go by that field.

That's how good that is. So he opened his mouth saying these things. Before we look at today's beatitude, let me pray for the preaching of God's word. Pray with me.

Father, we ask that you would help us to see the way you want us to see. To hear your voice calling us where you want us to go. And what you want us to do with our lives.

That we'd also experience the joy of being citizens of your kingdom. And not just citizens, but sons. Would you expose the idols of our heart and replace them, Lord, with your reign of goodness and life and love.

[3 : 31] We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. So again, this morning's beatitude is this. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Who on earth would be against this? Right? Like, you know, all the other beatitudes are saying it's kind of upside down. Who really wants to be meek? Who really wants to be hungry?

Who really wants to be pure in heart? We struggle with those things. But surely of all the beatitudes, this is the one that everyone in the world would agree. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Right? You ask, you ask, you know, any person. You ask a politician. You ask a hippie. You ask a beauty pageant contestant. And what do they all want?

World peace, man. That's great. We give out Nobel Prizes in this area. Of all the beatitudes, everyone should agree on this. Right? Well, hold on. Let's look a little bit more closely.

[4 : 29] Two questions as we've asked for every single one of the beatitudes. The first question is, what does it mean to be a peacemaker? And then second question, what's the promise attached to it?

What does it mean to be a peacemaker? And what's the promise attached to it? And so first off, what does it mean to be a peacemaker? We like to answer that first by saying, what does it not mean? Before we say what it does mean.

So let me list a few things. First off, when it says to be a peacemaker, it's not talking about some sort of inner tranquility. You know, we can often think about the term peace in kind of like inept terms.

Like it's a peaceful, easy feeling. Being a peacemaker, it can't be boiled down to being placid and quiet. You know, being a peacemaker actually requires us to enter in the conflict and tension, not run away from it.

So it's not, blessed are those who keep their nose out of trouble. Shouldn't actively go looking for trouble, trying to stir the pot everywhere you go. But also, we shouldn't shy away from it. Second, and then it also means, it's not saying blessed are those who mind their own business.

[5 : 35] It's not saying, again, that we should be busybodies. But there's this view, I think, that with peace, and sometimes we trick ourselves to think we have true peace with others by just avoiding other people.

You know, we just separate. Kind of like the history of the world, right? Just kind of, oh, can't get along, let's just go separate. We're going to find people like us and create our own tribe. And again, there are times when separating is okay.

It's better. If it's not that big of a deal, just go separate ways. Some things aren't that worth making that big of a deal over. But the problem is, as people go and they separate, they form tribes, and tribalism happens.

And then one tribe is always trying to take over the other one or speaking against the other. That's not really peace, right? We don't want a phony peace where people pretend like everything is fine by just avoiding one another.

You end up kind of being like the false prophets that God describes in Jeremiah. The false prophets, you know, what do they say? Peace, peace, when there is no peace. They're basically like a doctor who's like, you're perfectly healthy and you've got cancer, right?

[6 : 42] It's not what we want. Third, it's also not a forced toleration that ignores truth claims. I don't think it's very popular here from talking to one person.

Has anybody ever seen the bumper stickers on cars? This might just be a purely American thing that say coexist. It says coexist. And basically every letter in coexist is a symbol from a different religion.

Probably just American hippie thing, right? Yeah, I see the American nodding, right? And so the C is like the Muslim crescent moon. The O is a peace sign. I think the X is a star of David.

I can't remember what all the other ones are. The T is a cross. And basically it's saying is, hey, can't we all just get along? And again, Christians should be able to live peacefully with people of different faiths.

But kind of what gets snuck in with that is saying this notion that everything's basically the same, right? You're just religious. Can't you just all agree on that stuff and get along?

[7 : 45] Again, we should live peacefully. But the problem is that each one of those letters represented in the different religions within the coexist symbol. In order to just say it's all the same, they would have to reject core beliefs that they hold, right?

As Christians, we believe that we can live peacefully with our neighbors while also disagreeing about very important things, right? So you can disagree about things.

You know, and it matters to the degree of the importance, the things that we disagree on. There's a Christian writer, a British writer named Rebecca McLaughlin. She writes an apologetics book.

And she says, you know, if Christianity is true and Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism are not, here's the question. Is that like saying, please stop smoking, you're going to die from it?

Or is it saying my grandmother's cooking is better than yours, right? One's a little bit more serious and matters more, and the other one we can disagree on in a different way.

[8 : 46] Again, we can live peacefully, but we can say that there's disagreements and still hold to these things and say they actually matter. Lastly, also, and I think maybe this is most important, it doesn't say, blessed are those who want peace.

Is it good to want peace? Absolutely, but it's not what it says. It doesn't say, blessed are those who want peace. It says, blessed are those who make peace. It's not just this internal desire.

It's actually an action that happens in our lives. You can want peace and do absolutely nothing about it, and that's not the flourishing life. So being a peacemaker, you know, it's not just getting an inner tranquility or separating and pretending like things are fine or ignoring differences or simply even wanting peace.

Next question then. Okay, what does it mean to be a peacemaker? Well, in order to answer that, to be a peacemaker, to make peace, we need to understand what the word peace means in the Bible.

Now, the word peace in the Old Testament is this word shalom. And again, it's not this peaceful, easy feeling. What shalom means, what peace means, is things as they are ought to be.

[10 : 01] That there's wholeness, that there's goodness, that there's beauty, that there's right relationship. That's how God has created everything. He's created us to live in shalom with him, with others, with the world.

And when sin enters the picture, sin is a breaking of God's peace. It's a rupturing of God's shalom. And so what happens when Adam and Eve sin?

They run away from God. Because they've been created for fellowship with God and live in peace and harmony and wholeness with him. They run and they hide because of sin.

Sin fractures the peace that we have with God. Not only that, what happens right after they sin, they start blaming other people. Adam's like, it was Eve. Eve's like, it's a serpent, right? Not our faults.

We're created to live in harmony and unity and love and self-giving service towards one another. Sin enters and it fractures that. It rips it apart.

[10 : 57] Not only that, even if you see the earth is also now at odds with humanity. It is fighting back because sin has entered the picture. In the next chapter, Cain raises up and kills Abel.

And so what it means to be a peacemaker then is to put back together what sin separates. To seek the goodness and wholeness and right relationship for which we are created.

Okay, let me get a little more specific with that then. Three points of application of what it means to be a peacemaker. First, it means that we must seek peace with God ourselves.

There's like this implicit statement underneath this beatitude. And it's this, that there is actually a war going on between you and God apart from Christ.

You can't bring peace if you don't have it. So we have to humbly admit that sin makes us at war with God. That's what in the very first sin, it's this breaking of shalom.

[11 : 57] It's saying we don't want you as king. We're going to set up our own kingdom. It's an act of treason. It's an act of aggression and of war to sin against the holy God.

So we have to admit that ourselves. That we declare war on God and set up a rival kingdom when we want our will to be done. Tim Keller says this. He says, you know, a lot of people, we don't think we're at war with God.

But the only time that God ever became human and vulnerable, we killed him. So we have to admit the part that we've played. That we have stirred up enmity and strife and that we break God's shalom.

And there's no flourishing, there is no good life apart from peace with God. And so rather than fighting against God, what we believe is when we come to him in faith. When we bend the knee to him and we reconcile with God, rather than fighting against him, what do we fight against?

We fight against sin in our own lives and in the world. Okay? So we have to seek peace with God. Second thing, though, second point of application to be a peacemaker, it means that we must extend the peace of Christ to those who do not have it.

[13 : 07] What do we call this a lot of times? Evangelism. Right? So Prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 52, 7. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.

That's what the gospel means. It's evangelism bringing good news. Who proclaim peace. Who bring good tidings. Who proclaim salvation. Who say to Zion, your God reigns.

To share your faith is an act of peacemaking. Because we believe that every human being has a ruptured relationship with God that needs to be healed. So to bring peace is to offer them peace with God.

To share how you have experienced that also. There is way more to peacemaking than evangelism. But it's not less than this. You know, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5 about how we have the ministry of reconciliation.

He basically says, listen, listen. God, in Christ, he has reconciled you to himself. So now, you are now sent out as his ambassadors.

[14 : 10] You get to be ministers of reconciliation. By inviting people to experience the same peace that you have with God. Right? And then it plays out in our life together.

So we implore others to be reconciled to God like we are. God's entrusted us with this ministry of reconciliation. And the basic message is this. There's bad news, people.

Your sin alienates you from God. But there's also good news. In Christ, you who are far off can actually be brought near.

You can experience peace. And Jesus is our peace. His body broken makes us whole. You know, he is the one who is cut off from the land of the living.

As Isaiah 53 says. So that those who are outside can be brought in. You know, blessed are those who invite others to experience the peace that they too have found in Christ.

[15 : 08] So, peacemakers, we seek peace with God ourselves. We extend the peace of Christ to other people. And then also, lastly, peacemaking calls us to wholeness of relationship with others in Christ.

You know, what Christ has done for us is supposed to radically change how we relate to other people. It's supposed to change everything. Not just this little spiritual part of us.

It's supposed to change everything. And this motivation underneath all of our peacemaking is there because of what Christ has done. Because, you see, when others reject us, when they despise us, when they speak ill of us, we can still love them.

We can still pursue them in peace. Why? Because while we were still enemies, Christ died for us to make peace between us and God. Right? There's this motivation underneath all of it.

We want every man, woman, and child to be reconciled to God and to themselves become ambassadors of peace and reconciliation. But if they don't, we still love them.

[16 : 10] We still love them and we seek their peace. And you've got to admit then, listen, listen. This isn't pie in the sky thinking. This is gritty, hard work every day of your life.

But such is the great peace that you have with God that it motivates us to love one another in the same way. It's hard work. But listen.

If Jesus, here's the motivation. If Jesus would leave the glories of heaven and take on flesh and be born in a manger with the cows and the sheep.

And he would suffer and he would die in our place to bring us to peace with God. Can't you call somebody on the phone and say let's meet for coffee and reconcile if you're at odds with them?

Human history tells us, you know, people divide into tribes over lots of different things. Over ethnicity, over socioeconomic status, over politics, gender, cultural preferences, hobbies.

[17 : 17] We're really good at dividing. We're really good at trying to create our own tribe. And so what you need then is some sort of transcendent identity that goes above all these other identities that group us up.

You know, something like being called a son of God. You see, the vision that the Bible holds out in Revelation is that every tongue, tribe, and nation come and they say worthy is the lamb.

Meaning, he is greater than our tongue and our tribe and our nation. That's what we admit. And yet, in that, they don't lose their tongue and their tribe and their nation.

They're just saying Jesus is better than all of those things. And that is what actually brings us together and can create a peace that transcends all others. Because there is an identity that transcends all those things.

And so we count as rubbish, as Paul would say in Philippians 3. All the stuff, whether it's good, whether it's neutral, whether it's sinful, that we used to look to to define ourselves. Because we know the surpassing worth of knowing God through Christ Jesus.

[18 : 25] There's Romans 12, 18 says, if possible, so much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. With all. That's what we're called to be.

We're called to be peacemakers. Right? Not stirring up strife. Doesn't mean neglecting what we believe. Doesn't mean not saying hard things. And peacemaking involves going and saying there is a problem and we need to make peace.

Live peaceably with all. But there's an even deeper imperative than not just with all, not just everybody out there, but especially within the household of God. As Paul says, he says to maintain the unity of peace.

You know, it's the cord that binds us together. It's the peace of Christ. If you're holding a grudge against someone else in the church family, you know what we're not supposed to do?

We're not supposed to take the Lord's Supper. What's we're going to do next week? The Lord's Supper is going to be, or two weeks from now, right? The 18th of September. Because you see, the meal that we take, it is this expression, this deep symbol, this deep participation in the peace of Christ.

[19 : 39] That says that we are at one with God. We are united to Christ. 1 Corinthians 10, is this meal, is the bread not a participation in Christ's body? That's how much peace we have, that we are with him.

But also, it's a symbol then that he has brought down the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile. He's reconciled all different sorts of people in his life.

And so we mock this beatitude, and we mock the supper of our Lord. If we partake of it and say, it doesn't matter that I'm angry and I'm holding grudges against other people in the church family.

It doesn't make sense. We cannot do that. If we do that, it's like we're the false prophets in Jeremiah who utter peace, peace, when there is no peace.

So when we take the Lord's Supper, when we know that it's coming, it should be this deep motivation to examine our lives and our relationships and to say, is there somebody that I am holding a grudge against?

[20 : 41] And I need to go to them. I need to say the hard thing. I need to go through the awkwardness if I need to. They might not even know about it, but I need to go because I desire peace with them because that's the sort of peace that I have with Christ.

So, to be a peacemaker. It's not about getting an inner tranquility or separating and pretending like things are fine or ignoring differences or simply wanting peace.

You know, being a peacemaker means repentance for us, right? And to be ministers then of reconciliation by sharing our faith and then to seek to live in right relationships with others, especially in here.

If we can't do it in here, how on earth are we going to be peacemakers out there? Second question, though, what's the promise attached to this beatitude? What's the promise?

This is the second part, and it's this. For the peacemakers, they will be called sons of God. Now, it's kind of like the last one. I think in some ways when it says the pure in heart, they will see God.

[21 : 42] It might not immediately be like, what's the connection then? Why are the peacemakers being called sons of God? So, let me try to explain it a little bit. You know, maybe you heard it too and you're a woman thinking like, great, cool.

I don't want to be called sons of God. What about daughters of God? Why couldn't we have used some gender neutral thing like children of God? The New Testament does. Right? First John chapter 3.

Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God. Right? Okay? So, it can do that. Also, just to the men then too, we need to reckon with, you know, the church is called the bride of Christ.

Okay? So, there's that. Right? Got it on both sides. But there's a specific reason. Actually, some translations will say we should be called children of God. That's not what it says. It says sons of God.

And it's because Jesus is making a specific point by saying sons of God. Because the Greek there, what it's getting across is this idea of status, of inheritance, and the role of the firstborn son.

[22 : 44] Okay? So, to understand why be called sons of God, you have to understand what it means to be the firstborn son in the Bible. Again, go back to the Old Testament if you know some stories in the Old Testament.

What's always going on? It's like the firstborn and the secondborn, they're always like jockeying for position. Or they're trying to think of like Jacob and Esau. Trying to get the blessing. Trying to snatch it away.

Right? And if you know the Beatitudes, which kind of flip things upside down, wouldn't it be so like God to choose the younger and to give him the blessing over the older one? That's what happens with Jacob and Esau.

Right? He flips things upside down because he's a God of mercy and grace. You might wonder like, okay, who cares? Right? Why does that matter? Well, because the status of the firstborn son mattered.

Right? Back then, the firstborn son got the lion's share of the inheritance. They didn't split up the inheritance evenly like we did. You got four kids. We're going to split it four ways.

[23 : 40] A quarter for you. A quarter for you. No. The way that it worked was in their family. Their family business wouldn't survive if they divided like that. They wouldn't be strong enough to survive. And so what ended up happening, it would be the role of the firstborn to get the vast majority of the inheritance to carry on the family business.

And then out of that, take care of the rest of the family. You might not like it. That's the way it was. Okay? So the firstborn, they would get the inheritance and they would take over the family business.

So, when it says that we have peace with God, what it's saying is if you're a peacemaker, you have received. The reason you're called a son of God is because you have received a rich inheritance.

Massive. More than you can count. That's what we read in Romans 8, right? If we're adopted sons of God, we are co-heirs with Christ.

The inheritance of the firstborn of all creation, Jesus Christ, comes to us when we get adopted into God's family by making peace with God.

[24 : 47] And your inheritance is innumerable. But it's not just that. The firstborn son, they would receive the inheritance, but they also had a unique task.

More than any of the other children, the firstborn son's role was to represent the father. They were supposed to learn from the father and they were to be about the business of the father because they would be taking over the role of the father.

So, Exodus 4, 22. This is when God says to Moses, go tell Pharaoh, let my people go. What does it say about Israel? What does God say about Israel? Thus says the Lord, Israel is what?

My firstborn son. And I say to you, let my son go that he may serve me. So, Israel, as God's firstborn son, represents God to the world.

It has this unique task, this unique vocation. And as God's son, Israel is supposed to be about the business of the father. So, okay, back to peacemakers, right?

[25 : 50] Why is it connecting? Those who are blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called sons of God. What's the business of the father? What's the family business?

What's one of the main things to represent in this world? His peacemaking. And his firstborn son is called the prince of peace. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

The business of the father is making peace where sin has divided things. And so, if we're supposed to be about the business of the father as sons, what better way than peacemaking?

When you're living into this, and the world looks and says, wow, that is actually the good life. What they're observing is your sonship.

You are acting all, you are all male and female, young and old, acting as sons. Peacemaking is the family business. It's the identity marker.

[26 : 50] It's the task we inherit. And the character of peacemaking should be normal among the sons of God. He is part and parcel with his kingdom. And it's not just an inheritance.

And it's not just this identity marker and role. It is this privileged position. That you have access to the father.

Illustrated this way. Three Taylor kids are all known to wake up in the middle of the night and to come. Usually they wake up their mom because they know she's nicer than me.

But they come into our room and shake us. I had a scary dream. I'm so thirsty. I need a glass of water. They kind of roll over in the sleep.

You know, like, here's your water. Oh, I'm so sorry. Fall back asleep, right? But you see, they walk into the room with confidence. Too much confidence if you ask me.

[27 : 49] You know, they're busting in. Hitting that door. Walking in. Tapping us on the shoulder. Why? Because they know we're their child. They're our child.

Flip it around. Now listen. I love you all. I love you so much. But if you come into my room at 2 a.m., I'm not giving you a glass of water.

I'm calling the police and getting a restraining order. Why? Because you're not my child. I love you. But I love them in a special way.

They have access. Because they're my kid. So when we say that we are sons of God, it means that we can come to him. We have access.

There's an access we have to God because we have peace with him. And that means that we can bring our worries and our troubles to him. And he will not turn us away. And the status gets placed on every person who has peace with God.

[28 : 53] And how does it come to us? How does this peace? You think of the word peace. You think of every calm and right. How does it come? It comes through the gory death of the firstborn.

The true Israel. The son of God who comes. Doesn't experience peace on the cross. Gets cast outside the camp so that we can be brought in.

Jesus is the true firstborn. And we get that title too. That means the father loves us like he loves the son. That you're treasured. That you're welcome. That you're crowned with glory.

Why does this matter? Let me close with this. There's this movie called Argo. It's based on a true story. Of how the CIA. They rescued six American diplomats.

From Tehran during the Iran hostage crisis. In 1979. And the way that they did this. The way they got in and got these Americans out.

[29 : 52] Was they pretended to be a science fiction film crew. Right? And so in order to do that. There was all this training and learning. True story. All this training and learning they had to do.

And in one of these scenes in the movie. What happens is somebody comes in. And they're grilling them on the questions. What's your name? What do you do? Why are you here? And they say this. They said.

If you are going to make it. You have to know who you are. If you're going to make it. Things are going to go awry. Things aren't always going to be peaceful.

You have to know who you are. If you get caught. You got to have your cover down pat. You know in the same way. But not you pretending.

Because it's actually real. To make it you have to know who you are. You have to know that you're a citizen of the kingdom. And not just a citizen. But a child.

[30 : 46] And not just a child. But a first born son. You're getting the inheritance. You won't be left out. He desires to share his life. And the riches of his kingdom with you.

That has to get down in your bones. And so you got to rehearse it. You got to come back to it. You have to know who you are. Blessed are the peacemakers.

You should be called sons of God. Thanks be to Christ. Let's pray. Heavenly Father. Would you make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred. May we so love. Where there is injury. Pardon. Where there is doubt. Faith. Where there is despair. Hope.

Where there is darkness. Light. And where there is sadness. Joy. Father. Would you help us to press into our status as sons. To see the inheritance that is ours.

[31 : 43] And to take up the mantle of living as your sons. May we behold your love daily. And wonder in worship at the fact that we have peace with you.

And we ask that this would fill our minds and our hearts. And that we would extend that peace. To one another and to this world. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Who is our peace.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.