

Sermon: Give Peace a Chance

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Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

[0 : 00] Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, 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 those 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.

Blessed are the people of God. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

[1 : 06] What a wonderful passage of Scripture the Lord has given us to study. Would you pray with me and pray for me as we ask God to talk to us tonight? God, we thank You so much for the opportunity to be in this place.

Because we're already overflowing with the time of worship that we've had. And we are grateful for that. Would You just continue to speak to us and meet us here now as we turn our attention to Your Word.

We want to hear from You. We want to understand what the Scripture says. We want to know what it means for our life. And so, Holy Spirit, come and guide us now to the glory of Jesus.

He's the only one we want to have glory tonight. And we pray it in His name. And God's people said, Amen. Amen. What should we drink to?

I like to say a prayer and drink to world peace. To world peace? World peace. Heaven discloses it.

[2 : 28] Heaven proposes it. And no one ever opposes it. Everybody wants a little peace. Poe, the day you were chosen as Dragon Warrior was the worst day of my life.

By far, nothing else came close. It was the worst, most painful, mind-destroying, horrible moment. Okay. I have ever experienced. But once I realized the problem was not you, but within me, I found inner peace.

It was able to harness the flow of the universe. So that's it? I just need inner peace? My innards are already super, super peaceful. So all I need to do is just get this thing going.

Inner peace? You're going down. The most important topic on earth, peace. What kind of a peace do I mean and what kind of a peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war.

Not the peace of the grave. Or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace. The kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living.

- [3 : 46] The kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and build a better life for their children. Not merely peace for Americans, but peace for all men and women.
- Not merely peace in our time, but peace in all time. I would have to say world peace.
- Definitely world peace. That's easy. World peace. World peace. What is the one most important thing our society needs?
- That would be harsher punishment for a parole violator, Stan. And world peace.
- Peace. Everybody wants it. Miss America wants it. Musicians sing about it. Presidents promise it.
- [5 : 02] Protesters march for it. Athletes change their name to it only to elbow other people in the face. And we all drink to it. Everybody wants a little peace.
- The late John Denver wrote, If peace is what we pray for. Peace is what we pray for. Peace is what we give. Peace will be the way we are and peace the way we live. There is still time to turn around and make all hatred cease to give another name to living.
- And we can call it peace. Now, faith family, let's be honest. There is a real sense in which that resonates with each and every one of us.
- I mean, don't you want peace? Aren't you tired of seeing nations at war? Aren't you tired of seeing families argue with one another?
- Aren't you tired of seeing people devour one another? Aren't you sick of politicians who can't agree on a single thing?
- [6 : 08] Aren't you tired of violence filling the streets? Don't you want to just stop sometimes and scream at the top of your lungs?
- All we're saying is give peace a chance. That's why the most popular beatitude of all the beatitudes is the seventh beatitude.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. So popular is this beatitude that even non-Christians will quote it frequently.
- I mean, you will find blessed are the peacemaker bumper stickers on the back of hippies' cars protesting war, on the back of an NRA advocate who's arguing for gun rights, or a universalist that's arguing for religious unity, because everybody wants a little peace.
- So we might assume that we have finally come to a beatitude we can all agree on. I mean, blessed are the beggars. Blessed are the meek.
- [7 : 29] Blessed are the starving. No, thank you. But peace? Heck yeah, peace. That's something we all agree on and everybody values, but not so fast.
- It shouldn't surprise you here that Jesus has something very different in mind when he talks about peace. Because the beatitude is not an anti-war protest. Nor can what Jesus is talking about with peace be narrowed down to a bumper sticker or a beauty pageant.
- Jesus is the prince of peace. He came to make peace, but it's not the kind of peace that we tend to think about. After all, the beatitudes is describing the true disciple.
- Someone that belongs to God's kingdom. Someone who's been transformed by God's grace. So just what does Jesus mean by blessed are the peacemakers?
- First, notice the meaning of peacemaking. What does the word mean? Let's first break down the word peace. The Hebrew equivalent for the word peace is, anybody know it?
- [8 : 38] Shalom. That's exactly right. And when a Jew would mention shalom, it was more than the absence of trouble or hardship or war.
- It was really a complete flourishing life. It was full fulfillment, total well-being, soul rest. In fact, if you were at our Christmas Eve service, we unpacked the name Prince of Peace.

And we talked about what shalom means. I gave this quote, which really summarizes the shalom, the peace that the Old Testament was longing for.

Alvin Plantinga writes this. He says, They dreamed of a new age in which human crookedness would be straightened out. The foolish made wise and the wise humble.

They dreamed of a time when the deserts would flower and the mountains would run with wine. Weeping would cease and people could go to sleep without weapons on their laps. People would work in peace and work would be fruitful.

[9 : 38] Lambs would lie down with lions. Nature filled with wonder. All humans knit together in brotherhood and sisterhood. All nature and all humans would look to God, walk with God, lean toward God and delight in God.

Shouts of joy would well up from the valleys and seas. And the webbing together of God, humans and all creation in justice, fulfillment and delight is what the Hebrew prophets called shalom.

So right away we can see that what Jesus means by peace isn't what you hear in the culture. It's not what most people mean when they talk about peace.

Most people mean calm waters or no weapons or war. But Jesus is driving to something deeper than that.

So that's the word peace. The second part of that is maker. This one's easy. It's someone who is active. It's not a passive person.

[10 : 38] Someone that is building, seeking, doing the work of peace. Somebody that is putting forth the effort. Let me give you a few examples biblically.

For instance, Ephesians chapter 4 verse 2. With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of what?

Peace. Or Romans chapter 14 verse 19. So let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual building.

So these verses you see action. You're doing something. You're putting forth an effort to make peace. So, a peacemaker, according to the Bible, is this.

Notice it on the screen. It's someone who actively pursues making the full well-being of another. Peace. Shalom.

[11 : 41] So now we're starting to see why so many people, listen, want peace. But there aren't very many peacemakers. In fact, if peace is so popular as all the examples that I just gave you at the beginning of the message, then here's my question.

Why isn't there more peace? If everybody wants it, where is it? In the book, Lessons of History, Will Durant writes, quote, War is one of the constants of history and has not diminished with civilization and democracy.

In the last almost 3,500 years of recorded history, listen, only 268 have seen no war. Now you think about that.

I thought everybody wanted peace. I thought this is something we all desire. So why is it that we experience such little peace? Number one, let's be honest.

We don't want peace. We don't want peace. What I mean here is we want peace in theory, but not in reality. Why? Because to get peace, are you listening, faith family?

[12 : 55] You have to put your weapons down. Think of it in Jesus' context. The Jews, the primary audience that was listening to Jesus as he taught the Beatitudes, were an oppressed people.

Egypt, the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and now in the context of Matthew 5, the Romans. Their hope was for a king that would come and make war.

So put yourself in their situation when Jesus says, Blessed are those who actively pursue the full well-being of Rome.

Their response would have been something like this. What you talking about, Rome? What you talking about, Jesus? You must be out of your mind.

Peacemakers is the last thing we want to hear. And be honest, it's the last thing you want to hear also. Think about the person in your mind right now that has hurt you the most in life.

[14:02] Think about the person that has offended you the most in life. And now hear Jesus say this to you. Blessed are those who actively pursue the full well-being of fill-in-the-blank.

And your response would be this. What you talking about, Rome? What are you talking about, Jesus? You're telling me the good life is the one who actively pursues the full well-being of the person who's hurt me the most.

You see, peace often means not getting what you want. The revenge. The vindication. Notice it on the screen. We all want peace as long as we don't have to put our weapons down.

Somebody say amen. We want peace, kinda. Because we are all advocates of the spiritual second amendment.

Giving us the dadgum rights to have our weapons. And we're not putting our weapons down. Don't you understand the peacemaker doesn't look at a situation according to his or her own benefit.

[15:12] The peacemaker is one who in meekness is actively pursuing the full well-being of another. That's why you don't have a lot of peace. Secondly, I'm already getting under some of your skin.

That's good. I ain't even close to done. Not only do we not want peace, we don't want to make peace. We don't want to make peace. It's one thing to want peace.

It's another thing to get involved in peacemaking. Why? Because you usually end up taking it on the chin. Have you ever gotten involved in somebody else's fight?

Have you ever gotten involved when two parties are at odds? Have you ever gotten in the way of two people going for the last sale item on Black Friday? Have you tried to negotiate the land boundaries of a Jew and Palestinian?

Have you tried to reconcile a marriage or family at war? If you have or if you haven't, try that and then you come back and tell me how blessed the peacemakers are.

[16:17] Because oftentimes when you get involved in making peace, you take it on the chin. The reason why there's not a lot of peace is because there's not a lot of peacemakers. Peacemaking is hard work and you end up getting dirty.

That's why most people just sit back and write songs. We talk about peace and we say we want peace, but do we really?

Let me give you one other reason why I think there's so little peace. And if the other ones haven't stung enough, this one will probably sting the most. There are very few peacemakers.

There are very few peacemakers. Here's what I mean. It's not that we just don't want peace. That is, we don't want to give up our weapons. It's not just that we don't want to make peace because it's hard work to do the work of reconciliation.

But are you listening? Are you listening? This is going to sting. Most of us do very little evangelism. Most of us do very little evangelism.

[17 : 25] Evangelism? What are you talking about? Where do you get evangelism from? Well, let me ask you this. What is a real peacemaker? Or, let me ask you this.

Where does this term in Matthew 5 come from? Answer? Isaiah 52, verse 7.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him who brings the good news. Who publishes what, faith family? Peace.

Who brings good news of happiness. Who publishes salvation. Sorry, hippies. True peace is not found in the absence of guns.

Sorry, NRA. True peace is not found in the presence of more guns. Sorry, Democrats. Sorry, Republicans. True peace isn't having the right president.

[18 : 22] It's not ending all wars. It's not getting a better job. It's not having more behaved children. It's not getting more money in the bank. True peace is gospel peace. It's peace with God.

It's the peace that comes when you are right with God by faith in Jesus Christ. Peace. A peace that passes all understanding.

And what this means, faith family, is the only way that people will put their faith in Christ and experience this gospel peace, is if you and I do the work of peacemaking.

Namely, sharing the gospel. And if you're not convinced yet that this is what Jesus is talking about in this beatitude, just wait until next week when we look at the final beatitude that says, blessed are those who are persecuted for my name's sake.

Blessed are those when you go out and do evangelism and take it on the chin for Jesus. You see, the reality is the greatest war is not war with another country.

[19 : 31] The greatest war is not war with another person. It's war with God. And that is the status of every single one of us apart from Christ.

Look at Romans chapter 5 verse 10. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled shall be saved by His life.

Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 13. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, for He Himself is our what?

Peace. Who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of the commandments expressed in the ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And He came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near. The good news of the gospel faith family is that even though we were hostile to God, even though we were enemies of God, Jesus made peace with God through the cross.

[20 : 58] That's the ultimate peace. That's the ultimate form of peace. And you might say, Jesus made peace through the cross? That sounds like a contradiction. It reminds me, I'm a child of the 80s, mostly.

Okay? Best time in the world to grow up. Anybody say amen? Okay, some of you are too old or too young, whatever. But I remember the Cold War and the Soviet Union and images that went along with that.

Some of you will remember that during that time, the U.S. developed a missile known as the LGM-118. Its name was the Peacekeeper. And it drove peace advocates furious.

Because they said, how in the world can an instrument of death be used as a means of making peace? Well, my dear friends, the cross, an instrument of death, is what offers us the greatest peace known to man.

Do you know that peace? Do you have that peace? Notice it on the screen. You won't have peace with others until you have peace with God.

[22 : 15] You won't have peace with others until you have peace with God. Shalom is found in a Savior. The shalom of God is found in the Son of God.

But here's the point. Once peace has been made between you and God, guess what? You automatically and naturally become a peacemaker. A.W. Tozer says it this way, We may be certain that the peacemaking of our text refers primarily to our being instruments in God's hand for the purpose of reconciling Him to those who are actively engaged in warfare against Him.

You, Christian, have been called to be a peacemaker. Every one of us. Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 17.

If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

[23 : 37] Now notice verse 20. This is big. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God, making His appeal through us, we implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. We are ambassadors for Christ, and God is making His appeal for reconciliation through us.

In other words, peacemakers are those sent, listen to me, faith family, peacemakers are those sent by their king with the authority of their king into another kingdom, are you listening?

for the purpose of making peace. That's your ministry, Christian. You are to be a peacemaker.

And you say, well, what would our motivation be to be a peacemaker? Why would we do this? Guilt, right? Pastors are just going to twist our arm and say, think about all those people who are going to burn in hell because you won't tell them about Jesus or something like that.

[25 : 00] No, no, no, no. Look at the verse again. Matthew chapter 5 verse 9. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

What have we come back to every single week? As the thing that makes us into what Jesus is talking about, whether that is meek, whether that is our spiritual poverty, or whether that is a peacemaker, it is the word blessed, the grace of God.

In other words, the more you know what God has done for you, the more you'll want to tell others what God can do for them. Say amen. I'm going to read that again because it went over some of your head.

All right, listen. The more you know what God has done for you, the more you'll want others to know what God can do for them. There is no greater motivation for evangelism than the grace of God.

And when you've experienced His radical, transforming blessedness in your life, how can you be anything but a peacemaker? Look at the verse again in verse 9.

[26 : 15] The last part of the verse says, for they shall be called sons of God. In other words, the gospel is that Jesus Christ, in Him, we have gone from enemies to sons.

Are you kidding me? Anybody blown away by that tonight? That you were a hostile little brat living in your own sin, and God looked upon you in love and adopted you in.

I was a spoiled little sinful brat living my own way, and God in His love and radical grace looked at me and brought me into His family, and I am called son.

I am in the family of God, which compels me, listen, to go into the orphanage of the world with the good news of adopting grace.

Think of all the fatherless people in the world that need a home, and the wonderful grace of our Heavenly Father who brought us in.

[27 : 21] That's all the motivation you need for evangelism. It's to see the person in the cubicle, the person that cut you off in traffic, the person on the other political side of the aisle, or whatever it may be, as someone who is fatherless and needs the grace of a father that you have found.

They are hostile towards God because of their sin, and God has put you there to make peace. And that might mean putting your political weapons down for the sake of the gospel.

And that might mean putting your inheritance weapons down for the sake of the gospel. And that might mean getting over your spiritual second amendment that gives you the right to hold on to that thing you're holding on to for the sake of the gospel.

Because the good life is the one who makes peace. Because they know their family identity in the grace of their father.

Amen? Amen? Am I preaching at you? Am I preaching to you? Come on. This is peacemaking. And it fits the logic of the Beatitudes.

[28 : 48] Let's think about it quickly and then we're going to wrap it up. Here's the logic of the Beatitudes because remember they all go together. It is only by God's grace that you saw your spiritual bankruptcy. That you came to realize that you don't have a spiritual penny to your name.

You are bankrupt spiritually. There is absolutely nothing you can do to save yourself. Amen? And when you saw that reality by the grace of God you were broken over that.

You began to mourn that reality. It was the death of self. And that humbled you. It humbled you to a place of meekness before God and before others.

And you starved for acceptance for righteousness before God. A righteousness that now you're very aware that you do not have. and you found that hunger fulfilled in Jesus.

And you received mercy. Big buckets of mercy on your head. And that's been shown by the fact that you've been merciful to others. And because of this reality there is nothing more in life that you want than God.

[29 : 57] You are pure in heart. Your heart is not divided at all. There are no other ultimate gods before your heart than God alone.

So then how can you not help but tell others about Him? The One in Whom you found peace. Don't you see how all this flows out of God's radical grace?

blessed are the peacemakers who lay their weapons down and actively pursue the full well-being of the other person ultimately introducing them to the grace of Almighty God.

that's the good life. That's the blessed life. And so I ask you tonight do you have peace with God?

Are you a Christian? Have you found true peace? Because it's ultimately found in the person of Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace.

[31 : 18] Do you know Him? Do you believe in Him? Is He your Lord and Savior? Secondly has grace if you are a Christian has grace moved you and motivated you to actively seek the well-being of others?

Who is that in your life that God is revealing to you tonight? Are you actively pursuing the well-being of others in your life? And then thirdly with whom are you actively making peace?

And what I mean here specifically is who are you sharing Jesus with? who are you telling about Jesus? Not in some guilt way but in a grace way.

Look at all that God has done for you in Christ. Look at the peace that you have experienced though you are hostile in your sin. Who are you making peace with in introducing them to God?

Several years ago there was a former beauty queen from Virginia. her name was Tracy Lippard. Tracy wanted revenge on her former boyfriend and his fiance.

[32 : 28] So she got in her car drove 250 miles to her fiance's house with a pistol a hammer and lighter fluid.

I don't think her intent was very good. She arrived she rang the door bell her ex-boyfriend soon to be father-in-law answered the door. Tracy said that her car was broken down even though it wasn't and she needed to use the phone.

As she was walking around inside she looked at a bridal magazine and began to experience a fit of rage. She pulled out the hammer and went after the man not knowing that he was a former secret service agent who took her to the ground and held her there until the cops arrived.

When Tracy was interviewed later this beauty queen and advocate of world peace said quote I was just searching for peace because everybody wants a little peace.

Miss America does. Musicians, presidents, protesters, athletes, we all do but you hear me tonight the shalom of God can only be found in the Son of God.

[33 : 49] The one who in a single act of violence made the path of peace available. Do you know that peace?

If not, I guess all I'm saying is give true peace a chance. peace. Because blessed are the peacemakers.

They will be called sons of God. And God's people said Amen. Will you pray with me? Let's pray together. There is so much for you to speak to us about tonight God.

Some in this room that do not have true peace with you they've never put their faith in Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace. They think the right political agenda will give it to them.

They think enough money in the bank will give it to them. They look to all these different places of peace and yet true peace is gospel peace. And I just pray that if that person is here tonight that they would turn from their searching and they would put their faith in the Savior.

[35 : 00] Others in a grace filled way we need to wake up to the opportunities that you give us each and every day to bring peace to those who are hostile to God.

So God I pray that tonight you would open our eyes to those specific relationships and opportunities that you have given us to be peacemakers to do the work of evangelism.

Many other ways God I know that by your spirit you have spoken to us tonight and we thank you for that now give us by your grace and your strength