

Blessed are the Peacemakers

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[0 : 00] All right. I was amused recently. I was recently reading David Powelson's book, Good and Angry, a book about anger and how to respond to anger in our own lives in response to the fact that we are covering the subject of murder as we've been preaching through the Ten Commandments.

And so I was impressed with Powelson's book. I really enjoyed the first 18 pages of chapter 1. Chapter 1 was entitled Angry People. So, yeah, that was what it was about.

And then I turned the page to chapter 2, and chapter 2 is even better. So let me read for you chapter 2 of Good and Angry in its entirety. Chapter 2. Do you have a serious problem with anger? Yes. That's it. You know, my favorite, the best books I ever read are the ones with the really short chapters.

And so I really appreciated that a lot. You know, you can plow through a one-word chapter in no time at all. There are discussion questions following that chapter, though.

[1 : 09] And so David Powelson follows up his short chapter by asking for an honest response from each one of us. He says, Turn this sentence over in your mind.

I do have a serious problem with anger. I do have a serious problem with anger. What comes to mind?

Do you agree or disagree? Are you not quite sure? How is that statement true? Partly true? Partly false? Do you think it's not true at all?

Partly false? Partly false? Now, the point that Powelson is making is that most of us don't realize this, that we are very angry people.

You are a very angry person. Now, we know that toddlers are very angry people, especially in public places.

[2 : 04] That seems to be the worst, right? You know, they let us, and I would say it's more accurate to say that toddlers, unlike adults, toddlers let us know that they are very angry people, right?

They're very authentic. When we grow into adults, when all the tantrums and the rage subside, and so parents of young children, it does subside, it gets better, we think that the problem with anger has disappeared.

What often happens, though, is the problem has not gone away. What happens is that we've just found more socially acceptable ways to express our anger, or better yet, to bury our anger, to hide it away.

And so you and I, we still do have a serious problem with anger. We've just hidden it well, and we've hidden it so well that probably the person we've hidden it the best from is ourselves.

It's ourselves. Last week, we looked at that sixth commandment, you shall not murder. We learned that unrighteous anger, it is the muscle tissue of a murderous heart.

[3 : 15] Unrighteous anger is the muscle tissue of a murderous heart. To kill off that heart of murder, you have to kill off unrighteous anger. And to do that, first you need to catch a vision of what life would be like if you were no longer angry.

What would life be like if you were no longer angry? What would life be like if you no longer lashed out at another person? What would life be like if you no longer vented towards a loved one? What would life be like if you no longer harbored bitterness deep inside?

What would life be like if you no longer nursed irritation? If you no longer voiced complaints? The truth is, I think that if you saw how good your life would be, if you were freed, totally freed, from unrighteous anger, I think you would weep in sorrow that you are missing out on the good life.

You're missing out on the resurrection life that belongs to the children of God. This life lived in the sunlight of God's favor, lived under his blessing. That's what Jesus talks about in Matthew chapter 5

verse 9.

If you're using one of the Blue Bibles, our usher's handout, that's page 810. Matthew chapter 5 verse 9. Here's what Jesus promises to you and to me.

[4 : 33] It's a very short verse. It simply says this, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Now Jesus is speaking about peacemakers, about people who make peace. Now in the Bible, peace, it means more than just the way we often use it.

We often use the word peace simply to describe the absence of conflict. We're not fighting, so obviously there's peace. That's not what it means. Peace in the biblical sense, it means wholeness, well-being, restoration.

It doesn't mean just the absence of active hostilities. It means there is no cold war going on. It means things are in their proper place.

Everything is as it should be in our relationships. So a peacemaker is a person who skillfully, who consistently acts to restore relationships to wholeness.

[5 : 39] To restore relationships to wholeness. Whether that's a relationship between one another, between two human beings, or whether that's a relationship between you and God.

Whether it's our horizontal relationships or our vertical relationship with God. A peacemaker works to restore relationships. And so Jesus says that people like this, people who are peacemakers, they are blessed.

They experience the goodness of God's favor. And how? How are they blessed? In what way? Jesus tells us, they shall be called sons of God.

Now has anyone ever told you something like this? You know, for guys out there, oh, you are your father's son. I don't know, I don't hear, does anyone ever say like, you are your mother's daughter? Is that a thing? Okay, it is a thing, good. Alright. You know, that expression, you are your father's son. I had something similar happen to me a number of years ago. This was when I was living in Indiana and our family had no connections to anybody else in Indiana.

[6 : 45] My family is all up here in BC. So we were living in Indiana. A salesman came to the office at the church I was working at. And the salesman met me and upon meeting me, he asked me, is your father John Nannery?

And I was startled. I was very startled because A, you know, my dad didn't even live in the same town. And I had no family connections. This seemed so random that he would ask that.

But the man told me that he recognized me because the way I talked and my mannerisms, they reminded him of my dad. That was an eye-opening moment for sure.

Oh, okay. So, I'm more like my dad than I ever thought possible. Right? Maybe something like that has happened to you. This man could tell that I was my father's son from the way that I acted.

And that's what Jesus is getting at later on in the Sermon on the Mount in verses 44 and 45. when Jesus says, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven.

[7 : 59] So that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven. For he makes his son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

So in other words, Jesus is saying that you are your father's son, your capital F, heavenly father's son when you behave like he does.

When your mannerisms match his. When the way you talk matches him. You're a chip off the old block. The apostle Paul says in Ephesians chapter 5, Be imitators of God as beloved children. Be imitators of God as beloved children. To be a son or a daughter of God is to imitate your father in heaven.

To absorb, to adopt his family values now that you've been welcomed into his family. It means to be remade, to be remolded in the image of your father. Jesus has promised, Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.

[9 : 06] So in other words, peacemakers are blessed. Peacemakers are living the good life because they are imitators of God their father. You have to be a part of the family of God to experience this, to know this.

If you want to be blessed, you must learn to be a peacemaker like your father is. If you want to live the good life, you have to learn to master the anger and the murder that is definitely a problem in your own heart.

Peacemakers imitate God their father. Peacemakers imitate God their father. Now if we were to look for one man in history who can truly in the fullest sense be called the son of God, the singular son of God, that one man is Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus was a perfect master of his anger. He was a perfect peacemaker. He knew exactly how to handle his anger. Last week, we read these words from James chapter 4 about anger.

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have so you murder.

[10 : 25] You covet and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel. Now you and I learned that our serious problem with anger, that is a serious problem fundamentally with our passions and our desires.

So the problem isn't what we hate. Fundamentally, the problem is what we love. Our anger problem is not a hate problem, it's a love problem.

Anger and hatred, they are the way that we feel and the way that we respond to something that threatens what we love, that we think is threatening what we love.

So what that means is that if our love is warped, if our love is misdirected, then our anger and our hatred are also going to be warped and misdirected.

That's why you cause so much harm to yourself, so much harm to others with your anger because your love and your passions and your desires are warped and misdirected.

[11 : 30] But Jesus, Jesus is the true son of God. Jesus is the perfect image, the perfect representation of his father God. Because just like his father, Jesus is fully God.

Jesus is 100% God just as he is 100% human. And so unlike you, unlike me, Jesus always loves, Jesus always treasures the right things.

Jesus loves the right things with the right intensity. He loves them for the right reasons. He loves them in the right way. And so because Jesus loves, because his love and his passion is perfect, he is a perfect master of his anger.

Whenever Jesus gets angry, he's always getting angry for the right reasons. He's always getting angry in the right way. He's always getting angry with the right intensity.

Jesus is just like his father. Jesus' anger and his wrath is always right. And so for example, Jesus gets angry in Mark chapter 3 when religious leaders, they twist the fourth commandment, that Sabbath commandment we talked about a couple weeks ago.

[12 : 45] Jesus twists it into a, Jesus is angry when religious leaders are twisting this commandment into a prohibition against healing on the Sabbath day. They want him to heal any other day that we don't heal on the Sabbath.

That's work. You're not supposed to work on the Sabbath. And here's what we read in Mark chapter 3. He, that's Jesus, entered the synagogue and a man was there with a withered hand and they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, come here. And he said to them, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?

but they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, stretch out your hand.

He stretched it out and his hand was restored. So Jesus' anger led him not only to heal the man but to do it in such a way to publicly shame these twisted and evil people to show how much better his father's law is than any of these man-made laws they're piling on top of it.

[14 : 06] How good the law of God is. How good his father is. Jesus frequently denounced, you could go over and over in the gospels, Jesus denounces the Jewish religious leadership over and over for similar reasons.

But Jesus, his anger isn't just towards religious legalism and hypocrisy. Jesus expresses anger towards one of his closest friends in Matthew chapter 16.

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him saying, far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you. But he turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan.

You are a hindrance to me for you are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man. Now, I don't care who you are. You don't call somebody Satan unless you're angry with them.

[15:15] Jesus was angry with Peter. And the reason is because Peter's loves were warped. His passions were warped. He had a warped desire for this political glory and so Peter was following in the footsteps of the devil.

Peter was trying to tempt, trying to entice Jesus away from the suffering and the death that would bring eternal life. Eternal life, the good life, that life of blessing to you and me.

If Peter had his way, we would not be sitting here. Jesus responded in anger. He called Peter on the carpet and thank God he did.

Jesus' anger grew out of a healthy root, the root of love for his father. Peacemakers imitate God, their father. In John chapter 2, Jesus gets as angry as we ever see him get.

Jesus explodes, not just with words, with decisive, destructive action against merchants who are turning God's house, the Jerusalem temple, into a marketplace.

[16:18] The Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem in the temple. He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers sitting there and making a whip of cords.

He drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables and he told those who sold the pigeons, take these things away, do not make my father's house a house of trade.

His disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house will consume me. Jesus was consumed.

He was eaten up by his love for his father, by his passion for his father's honor. Jesus valued the right thing.

Jesus loved perfectly. And so Jesus responded in anger to whatever or whomever threatened what he loved.

[17:26] So the question for you and me, it's not a simple and childish question, you know, do I get angry? If even Jesus got angry, then yes, it is possible to be angry for the right reasons, to respond in anger in the right way.

In fact, we should. If Jesus got angry, that means there are times when we should be angry too. And if we're not, something's really wrong. We're not meant to live in this, you know, zen state of blissful detachment from passion and anger.

We're not. Now the first question that you and I need to ask ourselves is, what do I get angry about? What do I get angry about?

Is it something that God and his son Jesus express anger about? Do my loves match theirs? Does my anger line up with what they're angry about? Or do I tend to get angry about situations and actions that merely prevent me from getting my way, from getting the things I want in the time I want them?

Is it thy kingdom come, thy will be done? Or is it my kingdom come, my will be done? And if it isn't, if it doesn't, I'm angry.

[18:46] Second question you and I need to ask ourselves, in addition to what do I get angry about, is who am I angry toward? Who am I angry toward? Is there a person in your life that you respond irritably toward?

who you lash out at? Who you complain about? Who you fantasize about telling off? Is it your spouse?

Your children? Your boss? Your neighbor? Your parents? Your pastor?

Now remember, you get angry when what you love is threatened. When what you desire is taken away from you.

Think of anger in your life. I think it's helpful to think about it this way. It's a red flag. It's a bright, flashing, warning light. And it tells you, that bright, flashing light says, this is what you love.

[19:53] This is what you really love. Not what you say you love, but what you really do love. Here's what you really value.

Here's what you really desire and are passionate about. Your anger tells you who or what your God is. Who or what your God is.

It tells you who or what you worship. And anger tends to express itself in one of three primary ways. Three ways that anger often express itself and shouldn't.

The first expression of anger is blowing up. Blowing up. It's lashing out. This is what we most commonly think of. It's lashing out against the person you're angry toward.

You know, lashing out with physical violence. Or lashing out with a loud voice. With sharp and poisonous words designed to hit the person where they're most vulnerable.

[20 : 48] And it always feels right. That's the funny thing about anger, right? You're never angry and as you're angry you're thinking, boy, I'm wrong here.

You always feel so righteous when you're angry. Maybe not later, but in the moment you always feel so righteous and so right and so good. And the other person, why can't they see how righteous you are?

Anger always feels righteous. We even justify this blowing up. We justify by saying, I'm being authentic. I'm just being honest.

Ever said that one? I'm just being honest. I'm just telling you how I feel. Oh, wow. What a virtuous, honest person you are. We cloak our anger in false righteousness.

False righteousness. But the Holy Spirit, He tears away our fig leaves in James chapter 1. Know this, my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear.

[21 : 49] So when you're in a moment of conflict where tensions are rising, quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

You're not right. You're not righteous. You might feel righteous, but you're not when you're blowing up. You're not being honest when you're blowing up.

You are being authentic, authentically evil. That's not a good thing. So when you do blow up, for what reasons do you blow up?

Against whom do you blow up? What are the patterns? In counseling, they often recommend make a journal if this is a problem for you. Like, write down on what occasions you blow up. What happened?

What preceded it? Who are you talking with? Note the patterns. That will tell you who or what you truly love, what the idolatry problem is in your heart.

[22 : 50] The second expression of anger, complaining. Complaining. This is my personal favorite. I like this one the best. You whine. You whine about the way someone treated you.

You grumble about your difficult morning. You whine because Starbucks ran out of the vanilla syrup for your latte. And we justify all this by saying things like, well, I just need to vent.

I just need to vent. I need to get a load off my mind. I need to get this off my chest. And so you complain and complain about the way someone's treating you. We cloak our anger in this psychological self-righteousness.

Proverbs 29, verse 11. Tells us what God thinks about venting. A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back. So there you go. Venting is for fools. You don't need to vent or grouse or grumble or gripe or bellyache or fuss or whine or snivel or complain.

[23 : 54] We have so many words for complaining in the English language. It's our British roots. That's what I think. I'm going to complain about the Brits. It's their fault. You need self-control.

Holding back. We need God's Holy Spirit giving us self-control to hold back from reinforcing. And here's the problem. When you vent, all you do is just dig that trench deeper. You're reinforcing. You're entrenching your anger by complaining. It makes the problem worse. When you want to complain, when you want to verbalize your anger, I think the first question is who do you complain to? Because there is a right way to complain.

The Psalms give us a ton of help here. If you ever want to see a lot of expressions of anger, open up the Psalms. They're filled with them. Anger against evil and unjust people.

And you know what the Psalmists do? Instead of blowing up their enemies, instead of going to their friends and venting about them to others, the Psalmists, they get on their knees and they pray.

[24 : 54] They speak honestly to God and they tell God how they feel. They tell God, this wicked person is mistreating you. Would you deal with this? Remember last week we learned, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

Not your job, that's his job. And the Psalmist says, I appeal to you. You take care of them. That's where he goes first.

He doesn't go to his, you know, to his buddy and he doesn't just start, you know what so and so said to me and just like spent half an hour getting it off his chest. He talks to God first. He speaks honestly to God.

He doesn't try to hide and be politically correct and hide things that he knows he's not supposed to feel. He tells God the truth about how he's feeling and he asks, appeals to the Lord for help. Now most of the time we complain to other people first and I think a lot of the times we do that is because we know deep down that our anger is unrighteous most of the time and unacceptable to God.

So I can't talk to him about it so I'll talk to my friend. So what do you complain to others about? That will tell you what you truly love.

[25 : 58] That will tell you where your heart is. Third and final expression of anger after blowing up after complaining. The third and final expression of anger is for those of us who are clever and we decide that blowing up complaining we realize that's going to cause a lot of damage maybe I shouldn't do it so this third expression of anger is clamming up.

Clamming up. And this is the typical response of the counterfeit peacemaker. You can be a counterfeit peacemaker. You know you stay quiet.

Shove everything under the rug. Don't speak up or admit that anything's wrong. Maybe you punish the other person by giving them the silent treatment. That never happens in marriage thankfully. We justify this by saying well I can't talk with him about that.

I don't want to rock the boat. I don't want to rock the boat. Confrontation isn't my style. Can't we just move on? Deep down you are bottling up the anger.

It doesn't go away. Inside your soul it spreads like cancer. Until you become irritable bitter toward the object of your anger.

[27 : 14] Because you're still thinking about them you're still beholding them in your mind and you become what you behold. you become like them the longer you're angry at them. The rage builds.

Are there sensitive subjects that you avoid that you refuse to talk about? Is there any person that you can't seem to say a good word about? These patterns of silent bitterness they will tell you who or what you truly love.

They will tell you what's going on in here. Blowing up complaining clamming up none of these responses are the behavior of a true peacemaker. Because peacemakers make it a priority to restore relationships to wholeness.

They make it a priority to turn relationships into what God meant them to be. Peacemakers imitate God their father. So what do you do?

How do you live as a peacemaker imitating our father? Well in Jesus sermon on the mount in Matthew chapter 5 Jesus explains to you Jesus explains to me how to live as a peacemaker.

[28 : 25] How to pursue peace and forgiveness. So let's take a look at that. First we'll look at Matthew chapter 5 verses 38 through 48 so that's about you know page flip away.

Matthew chapter 5 verses 38 through 48. You have heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth but I say to you do not resist the one who is evil but if anyone slaps you on the right cheek turn to him the other also and if anyone would sue you and take your tunic let him have your cloak as well and if anyone forces you to go one mile go with him two miles give to the one who begs from you and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

You have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy but I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust for if you love those who love you what reward do you have?

Do not even the tax collectors do the same and if you greet only your brothers what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

So here Jesus is telling us that peacemakers imitate God their father by showing mercy to their enemies. Peacemakers imitate God their father by showing mercy to their enemies.

[30 : 15] So Jesus lays out two peacemaker responses. Two peacemaker responses when you are angry with someone who has hurt you. Think of it this way that anger is a signal that it's time to take action it's time to respond.

That anger the peacemaker it's not the peacemaker never gets angry the peacemaker takes that anger and says you know what time to act. And here's what the peacemaker does.

Here's how the peacemaker channels the anger. The first peacemaker response is unmerited kindness. Unmerited kindness. Verses 38 through 42.

Last week we learned about the lex talionis an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Basically the punishment should fit the crime. It's a very simple basic principle of justice it's a good thing. Jesus says it's a good thing and it's not your job. Not your job. It's God's job. So the peacemaker does not retaliate.

[31 : 16] When a peacemaker is angry he or she recognizes the best way to thwart that person who hurt you is by responding with unmerited kindness.

kindness. This is the escape hatch that will get you out of that cycle of retaliation. The unmerited kindness of a peacemaker that is standing in such sharp contrast.

It stands in contrast not only to the unkindness of vengeance and retaliation and getting your pound of flesh and getting back at somebody who hurt you. It also stands in sharp contrast to counterfeit kindness as well because unmerited kindness you know it's not manipulation.

This doesn't mean that you're doing something nice in order to guilt your enemy to manipulate them into doing something for your own advantage. If I do something nice for them then they have to do something nice back to me.

Unmerited kindness is not that. It's not enabling. It's not being a doormat to someone who's hurting you. That's not loving them. Unmerited kindness is an active, creative, even aggressive response.

[32 : 41] I think that's why it takes anger to stir us up towards that. Because it takes creativity, it takes aggression, it requires activity, and you need a push. The peacemaker knows when I'm angry it's time to swing into action.

Unmerited kindness is, according to Jesus, giving bonus clothing to someone who has sued you. It's telling a Roman soldier who has conscripted you to carry his load for a mile, he says, you know what?

Why not carry it for you for two miles? Not what the Roman soldier was expecting, let me tell you that. Some real-life examples I've heard that delivered amazing results.

baking a batch of cookies for the auto mechanic that ripped you off and treated you rudely. Instead of going in and yelling and screaming at them, show up with a batch of cookies. Amazing how that turns people around.

Holding the door for the kid at school who bullied you. Not just sniveling and taking the punishment, doing nothing. No, you're active, you respond. You're aggressive in the way you respond with unmerited kindness.

[33 : 50] It is the peacemaker's escape hatch. And the second peacemaker response is undeserved love. Undeserved love. Verses 43 through 48, Jesus says that any person, no matter how bad they are, you won't find many people on earth who don't do this, any person will love someone who showers affection on them.

Right? Have you ever met, just about anybody does that. There's nothing righteous about that. You'll get no heavenly reward for that.

God calls his children to a higher standard. God says it's not enough just to be a decent citizen. My children are more than just decent citizens according to the world's standards. They're holy.

God calls his children to show undeserved love even to the point of praying for someone who is taking away their job or seizing their home, threatening their life for the sake of Christ.

God calls his children to greet or to welcome not only your brothers, not only those people you get along with, even to welcome those people that rub you the wrong way, that you're at odds with.

[35 : 03] Undeserved love is the peacemaker's escape hatch as well. And when you respond to those who've hurt you by proactive, creative, aggressive, unmerited kindness and undeserved love, what you're doing is you're taking your anger and you're directing your anger rightly.

You're letting it work for good. You're letting it work for peace and life rather than conflict and murder. And in so doing, what you are is you are imitating your father in heaven because your father does the same thing.

Sends rain on both the just and the unjust who are his enemies. Your father is perfect. And when you act as a peacemaker, you reveal his perfection.

You show the world something they have not seen. You show his peace to a world that doesn't know his peace. And so peacemakers imitate God, their father, by showing mercy to their enemies. Peacemakers also imitate God, their father, by seeking reconciliation with their brothers. By seeking reconciliation with their brothers. Take a look. A few verses earlier.

[36 : 18] Matthew chapter 5 verses 21 through 26. Same sermon on the mount. And here's what Jesus says. verse 21. You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, and whoever says, you fool, will be liable to the hell of fire.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there, remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go first, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. So here Jesus is urging you and me, seek reconciliation with our brothers.

[37 : 30] Jesus warns us that murder in its early form, it appears as these words of anger, it appears as insults, accusations, condemnation. And Jesus says that we will be judged by each and every word that we fire off in a moment of red-hot fury.

We like to think of those as disposable words that don't mean anything. Jesus says, uh-uh. Oh, they mean a lot. Jesus thinks they mean a lot. And we will be judged for them.

We will stand not only before human authorities, we will stand before God, the judge of all, and we will have to give an account, you will have to give an account for every word, every word that comes out of your mouth.

You can't say to God, well, I didn't really mean that. I was upset, okay? Jesus is saying, God won't listen to that excuse. You'll be liable to the hell of fire.

That's what Jesus is saying. And so Jesus' conclusion is that, hey, you and I, we must make every effort to reconcile relationships that have been torn apart by anger.

[38 : 38] The alternative to being a peacemaker is being punished by God. That's what Jesus is saying. If you launch, if you participate in a war of words, you will face fiery judgment.

If you avoid reconciliation, if you drag your heels into such a time as you're ready to deal with the problem, Jesus says in verses 25 through 26, you'll have plenty of time to come around when you're in prison, or perhaps not if your sentence is eternal hell.

In verse 23, Jesus tells his listeners, you know what? Stop. Interrupt your worship of God to reconcile with one another.

You're at the altar. You've got a gift in the altar. Everyone's waiting for you to go. Drop everything. Run out of there. Find your brother. Reconcile. Go.

Go now. He's saying that you and your worship will not be accepted by God if you have not attempted reconciliation. So let us allow our anger to stir us up to do the work of a peacemaker.

[39 : 52] So what is the work of a peacemaker? Well, peacemakers, we see here, imitate God their father by seeking reconciliation with their brothers. Now, this is important to be clear on this point because we're talking here about the process of forgiveness.

And forgiveness has two components. two components of forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation. We've already talked about mercy. Now we're talking about reconciliation. On the one hand, you and I can always, always, always show mercy.

Even towards our enemies, even towards those who are unrepentant, even towards those who don't care that they've hurt us. you can always show mercy. On the other hand, you and I can't always reconcile with our enemies.

It's not always possible. Because that takes two people. Showing mercy just takes you.

Reconciliation takes two. We can't always arrive at that component of forgiveness.

But we can always seek it. We can always seek it. And that's what Jesus is telling us in verse 24, how to seek reconciliation. That's how a peacemaker acts on anger.

[41 : 10] Seeking reconciliation. Jesus says in verse 24, the peacemaker acts, first of all, as soon as possible. Leave your gift there before the altar and go. Go. Quickly.

Those are his words. Drop everything. Take action. The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 4, Be angry and do not sin.

Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. So he's saying, look, you're angry. He doesn't say, don't be angry. He says, okay, you're angry. Don't sin. By just letting

things slide and not really doing anything about it and letting the sun go down.

You've done nothing. Because what you're doing there is you've cracked open the door and say, hey, Satan, come on in. Come on in. Mess up our relationship. Get in the way. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that you need to get everything resolved before sunset.

Boy, you're going to have some miserably late nights in your marriage or whatever if that's the case, right? You can't always resolve every conflict before you go to bed, right? That's not always going to happen. But it does mean that you must not let the sun go down before you have acted in response to your anger.

[42 : 25] You've started the process of reconciliation. Even if all it is is like, look, we do need to reconcile this and work this out. Let's sleep on this and let's talk about it in the morning. Make plans.

Take concrete steps towards resolving the problem. Now, how do we approach a brother or sister in Christ or someone who has wronged us?

Well, Jesus gives us really an absolutely masterful twist because Matthew chapter 5 verse 23, you know, take a look at what Jesus says. If you were offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you.

Now, you'd expect him to say that, you know, you've got something against your brother. You know, you're the one who's angry, right? Well, Jesus says, no, your brother's got something against you.

So, Jesus is saying the first thing you do is you don't identify as a victim.

The first thing you do, this is the danger. We go in thinking, I'm 100% victim, you're 100% guilty.

Now, let's work this out. Let's resolve this situation. That doesn't really work very well.

[43 : 32] I don't think I've ever encountered a relationship in conflict in which one party is 100% guilty, the other is 100% innocent. Often what happens is somebody hurts another person, the other person lashes out back at them.

And it might be, frankly, the guilt might be 90% on one side and 10% on the other side. Or even more. Who knows? But Jesus says the escape hatch of reconciliation, that hatch only opens.

It only unlocks and it opens when you deal with your own sin first. When you deal especially with words of anger that you've spoken to the person who has wronged you.

That's why Jesus is bringing this up. What words of anger did you speak? Jesus says the first thing you do is you go to the other person and you identify them how you've sinned against them. Here's what I did.

This was wrong. This was sin against you. This was unrighteous. Will you forgive me? Will you forgive me?

[44 : 31] What's just as important as that is what Jesus doesn't say. Jesus doesn't then say, okay, that out of the way. Now tell your brother, now let me tell you what you did wrong. I've tried that before.

It is a bad idea. This is a terrible idea. Because what happens then if you do that is the other person rightly senses, oh, that confession of sin. Ah, that was just a tool to manipulate me, to guilt me into a similar confession.

So here's what you do. You confess your sin. You ask for forgiveness. Conversation over. Next day, come back and do what Jesus commands in Matthew chapter 18 verse 15.

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. So that is when you identify the other person's wrongdoing.

Jesus says, so you do it. And it's very important, I think, to do it at a separate occasion. To show you're not manipulating them. You're dealing with your own sin first. But you still do need to resolve the other side of the dispute.

[45 : 42] I've found that when people follow this process, most of the time the other person breaks down. And you don't even need a second meeting. The other person says, I was so wrong when I did this to you.

Because what you've done is you're pointing guns at each other's heads. And what you've done is you've said, I'm taking my gun down. And the other person says, oh, thank God. And they take their gun down. It doesn't always happen like that.

You might have to have that second meeting. But this makes all the difference in the world. Jesus says, Matthew chapter 18 verse 15, you shouldn't involve anyone else unless absolutely necessary.

So, you know, you don't go walking around, you know what so-and-so said to me or did to me, and you're complaining and you're fussing about the other person to all your friends and rumor gets

around. No. A peacemaker acts on anger by seeking reconciliation, not by running around complaining.

Between you and him alone, Jesus says. In context, part of the larger text this verse is a part of, this is part of the process of church discipline. So, within a church, if your brother or your sister won't listen to you, and so you've had these two meetings and they're like, I don't see what I've done wrong.

[46 : 54] Now, you bring in other people. Now you involve the several other brothers and sisters in Christ to sit down with them. Now you can start calling in the elders of the church.

A peacemaker pursues reconciliation with the help and the support of other believers at times when you can't do it on your own. And it's okay. There may be times when the situation is so difficult and messy and you need help in knowing how to respond to the other person.

That's why we as your elders are here, why your growth group leaders are here, to help give you guidance and help with it, to do it discreetly, to help you sort through these things. We need one another for this.

A lot of times we're just way too close to the problem. We're not seeing clearly, but we need one another. The Holy Spirit has given you, your family in Christ to help you work through these things, to be a peacemaker.

And that's the challenge behind all this. You can't do it on your own. Personal conflict is complex and difficult. The work of a peacemaker is the work of courage and kindness and love.

[48 : 01] And it also takes wisdom. If anyone, if this were easy to do, everyone would be doing it. If you could do this without Jesus Christ, without the God, the Holy Spirit, without the church the Holy Spirit has given you, if you could do it without all these things, everybody would be doing it.

But they're not. And that's why Jesus tells us, encourages us, peacemakers are blessed.

They're living the good life and they have more good life to look forward to in the future. Jesus wants us to know there is a reward.

There is a reward for the hard work of the peacemaker. We saw last week, Jesus is the true peacemaker with a capital P.

Jesus is the one who truly reconciles us to God and to one another. Jesus died on the cross and he did that to take the place of the murderer, Barabbas, and the murderer, you and me.

[49 : 05] So that everyone who believes in Jesus will be rescued from our unrighteous anger, from eternal judgment in hell. Jesus paid the murderer's penalty.

Jesus has given us. He's done more than just pay the penalty and then somehow as if he's done that and left you on your own now to figure it out yourself. Jesus has given you the relationships.

Jesus has given you the resources that you need to live the new life of a peacemaker.

Jesus has given you the resources that you need to live the new life of a peacemaker. Why are you not taking advantage of all the good things Jesus has given you, of all the people in your life, in this church that Jesus is giving you to be a peacemaker and to live the good life, the blessed life?

Romans chapter 5 tells us about Jesus. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

That's you and me. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die, but God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[50 : 29] If the work of a peacemaker feels like death, it's because it is. Death is the center of love. Since therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

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 we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. That's what our Father has done for us. He's given us the peacemaker who laid down his life for us so that we would know reconciliation, not only the mercy of God, but the reconciliation of God, the peace of God, and the joy of being welcomed into our Father's family, and the joy of living the way our Father lives, and experiencing his resurrection life, the good life.

And so peacemakers imitate God their Father by showing mercy to their enemies, by seeking reconciliation with their brothers. This is our work and it is a good work. Let me pray.

Thank you.