

Blessed are the Peacemakers

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0:00] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read, Matthew chapter 5. We're looking at verse 9, one of the Beatitudes there, Matthew chapter 5, verse 9.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Now, as we know, Jesus' teaching was revolutionary and radical.

When Jesus burst on the scene, the Jews found this teaching just so different to the dead, formal, sort of external type of religion that the scribes and the Pharisees taught and that they highlighted. Jesus taught with a power and with an authority that they weren't used to. In fact, we're told that in chapter 7, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes.

Because although the scribes were great students of the word, when they taught, it was very dead, it was very formal, it was kind of lifeless. But when Jesus burst on the scene, there was a power, there was a life, there was an authority, and they marveled at his teaching.

[1:24] Now, we read here that as Jesus began to teach and to heal, vast crowds followed him. Wherever he went, there were great crowds.

And we read here how Jesus, when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountain, and his disciples came up, and he began to teach. Now, Jesus' whole message, of course, concerned the kingdom of God, the coming of the kingdom.

That was his great theme. His theme was the kingdom. And, of course, part of the Lord's Prayer is, Thy kingdom come.

We pray that every day. We are longing for the coming of God's kingdom. And, of course, in a sense, Jesus ushered in the coming of the kingdom.

Because he, when he came into this world, he himself was the king of that kingdom. And, of course, that's why his teaching and his preaching was all about the kingdom.

[2:26] But as we know today, the kingdom of God is very different to any earthly kingdom. We are part of a kingdom. We live in the United Kingdom. And when we tend to think of a kingdom, we think of a location.

We think of a place. We think of some geographical setting. And we say, well, we live in the northwest part of the United Kingdom. Maybe other people in here, and they live in a different part of the United Kingdom.

Or maybe there are some who are from some other part altogether. But we understand locations and geographical places and such like. But the kingdom of God is different.

Because the kingdom of God is not so much a location, although in one sense it is. The kingdom of God, it is spiritual. Where is the kingdom of God found today?

It is found in the heart, in the life of believers. And that's why, in a sense, the kingdom of God can appear so unspectacular.

[3:30] When you compare it and contrast it with the kingdoms of this world. Because the kingdoms of this world can display themselves in great glory and great power and great might.

Sometimes when you see on television a display of might from a certain nation. And it displays its power from its forces.

And you see maybe the air force flying by. You see the military with all their tanks. And you say to yourself, oh, what power. What resources they have.

Again, sometimes there can be great displays of the wealth that nations have. And so when you look at the things regarding the world, it's so tangible.

It's so touchable. It is so easy to identify. But then when you come to the kingdom of God, we see it in people's lives. And that's why it today appears so unspectacular.

[4:30] Because the kingdom of God, the glory of the kingdom at the moment is seen in Christians' lives. And we become very aware of our own inconsistencies, our own failures, our own mistakes.

And here we are, sinners, yes, saved by grace. And it is the transforming power of God's grace that glorifies God.

And it is the display of that grace in people's lives that shows the kingdom of God here. Now, the thing is this. While today the kingdom in this world may appear very unspectacular, as we see adults and children who are saved by grace and who are displaying God's grace in their heart, there will come a day when that grace bursts, as it were, into glory.

Because grace, somebody said, what is grace but the beginning of glory? And what is glory but grace perfected? There will come a day when the glory of this world, its greatest glory, will pale into insignificance compared to the glory that will be demonstrated and will be visible throughout an endless eternity in the least Christian who walked this world.

In the poorest, weakest, stumbling, feeble Christian, they will shine throughout an endless eternity with a greater glory, the glory that their Savior has won, the glory that is in Christ as Redeemer.

[6:17] That glory will be theirs forever and ever and ever. And my dear friend, if you're here today as a believer, that's your future. You may feel very poor and insignificant and weak and helpless today, but it's going to be different.

There is a glory we cannot even begin to understand or comprehend. And if you're today without Jesus Christ, then there is the great offer of this glory.

Jesus is saying that he will give you himself. His grace is sufficient for you. You may be saying to yourself, Oh, how could I be saved?

My grace is sufficient for you. The Lord's grace is able to save you. There are many people in this church today, if we were to stand up and to start testifying about God's saving power, we'd say, It's amazing grace.

I would never, ever have believed that the Lord could ever have saved someone like me, but he did. And what he did for me, he can do for you.

[7:31] And that would be the testimony of so many people. And that's why it's amazing grace. And when his grace saves, as we said it is, but the beginning of glory. So as you say, Christ's teaching was all about the kingdom, but then Christ began to identify those who were partakers of that kingdom.

And he gives a list here, what we call the Beatitudes. And I just want for a moment to focus in on verse 9, where he says, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God, or the children of God.

Now, as we know, this world that we live in is a world that craves peace. And there are many people who have given so much of their time trying to promote peace.

We know that we've seen places where peace has come, that we prayed that peace would come, and we weren't sure whether peace would come.

For instance, in Ireland, we look and we say to ourselves, Well, it's amazing, because while we prayed for so long, and the vast majority of people were craving peace, we know that for so long, there were so many troubles.

[8:45] We look at places like Bosnia. Look at the Middle East just now. The peace there, very fragile. And there are little explosions here and there, and you're saying to yourself, It's like walking on eggshells.

But there's so much time, so much effort, goes into trying to get peace, trying to get people together. Because there are so many issues and so many difficulties, and we recognize that. It's very difficult sometimes to get people to come together because there are so many, sometimes, obstacles in the way. But there has often been a craving and a desire for peace throughout this world.

And there have been people who've tried to promote world peace and tried to make this world come together in peace. But so often, the efforts fail.

If you can remember back into the 60s, those who were around and about at that time, there was a great hippie movement. And while so much of that ended up in anarchy and chaos, and so much of it was built on wrong foundations, the heart, the desire, was for peace, that everybody would live and love and in peace together.

[10:04] That was a dream. It was a longing. Because there is this genuine longing in people's hearts for love and for peace. Now, we know that that collapsed, that ended up in so much anarchy and chaos, and there were just so many casualties from it, because they were trying to build it on the wrong foundation.

And sadly, if the foundation isn't right, then we can never have something that will, a building that will last.

And that is why peace has to be built upon Jesus Christ. Jesus came into this world, and remember the cry of the angels, or the song of the angels when he came.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace and goodwill towards men. The cry, or the song of peace, because Jesus is termed in Scripture the Prince of Peace.

He has come to bring peace. Because you see, the human race was at enmity, and is naturally at enmity with God. Mankind, men and women, boys and girls, teenagers, naturally don't want God.

[11:24] We don't want God. That's the bottom line. From the moment man sinned, man was on the run from God. Adam ran in the Garden of Eden. When he heard God coming, what did he do?

Did he say, oh, here's the Lord? No. He said, we find him running, and God shouting, Adam, where art thou? That is the natural inclination of the human heart.

Don't want God. The Bible tells us we're at enmity with God, that we are rebels before God, that we actually hate God.

Now people may say, hold on. No, that's what the Bible tells us. And that is why God had to take the initiative. Because we ourselves would never find our way back to God.

We ourselves do not even have the inclination to get back to God. The living and through God as is revealed in the Word of God. And it is that is why God took the initiative.

[12:29] God took that initiative from all eternity, in fact. And that is why God sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into this world in order to reconcile God and man, to break the enmity, to break the rebellion, to draw people to himself.

And it's the most wonderful thing in the whole wide world to be drawn back to God. Are you at peace with God today?

That's a very important question. Are you at peace with God today? And I believe that if you're here in the church today, that there is a deep-rooted desire for that peace.

there might be many things in your heart just now that are keeping the Lord away. And you're saying, yeah, yes, I would like to be at peace with God and Jesus Christ.

But, but, I have other issues. I have other things that I want to deal with and I want to do before I come round to sorting that out.

[13:41] Before I die, that is one thing I'm going to get sorted. I'm going to be at peace with God and Jesus Christ before I die. But right now, right now, it's a wee bit down on the list of priorities.

But it's going to be a priority before I leave this world. My friend, you don't know when you're going to leave this world. And I believe that you're in, being in here today indicates that deep down in your heart you want to get this sorted.

well, I would suggest from God's word that you deal with that right here, right now. And that you ask the Prince of Peace who we believe is present where as few as two or three are gathered that he is here.

You call to him. You cry to him and ask him to become Prince of Peace in your heart, in your life, even here, even now.

Blessed are the peacemakers. So I believe that in order for a person to be a real peacemaker as is spoken of here, that person first of all has to come to peace with God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[14:52] That is the first step. But we have to ask the question, how do I become a peacemaker? So we said, first of all, we have to be at peace with God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, it's not enough that we come to our knowledge of peace with God in Jesus Christ. We are to be peacemakers.

You know, a lot of people think they look at the Christian life, a lot of people when they're converted and they say to themselves, what can I do for the Lord? And there might be people here who've followed the Lord for many years and they're saying to themselves, I don't feel that I have ever given any service to the Lord.

Well, I think people give far more service to the Lord than they realize. Take, for instance, if you are somebody through your life who has been promoting peace, then you are living a life of service to the Lord.

You see, there are so many things. We tend to think that in order to be serving the Lord, then we've got to be either a missionary or a minister. We've got to be doing something, I said, we're like in a full-time capacity.

[16:10] Not at all. Our whole life ought to be service. And this is a great, this is an area, this is an area of service where people are living promoting peace.

Are you a peacemaker in your home? Are you a peacemaker at school? Are you a peacemaker at work? Are you a peacemaker in the community? Are you a peacemaker in church?

You see, this is one of the things that we are required to do. Peace is one of the great characteristics of the kingdom. And it is something that should characterize our lives.

Now, it's not always easy to be a peacemaker. Because often that involves putting yourself out. It often involves, there's often an accosting board.

Sometimes you will have to climb down. Even when you feel within your own heart, it's not me that should climb down. But unless someone climbs down, there's ongoing confrontation.

[17:16] Now, sometimes it will require great grace. And sometimes we will fail. I don't believe that there's any Christian who has lived their whole life.

Totally and absolutely fulfilling all these beatitudes. Because we will fail. But like every time we fail, we have to go back to the Lord and confess our sin.

Because failure is sin. If you are not promoting peace in your life, then you're sinning. If you are in confrontation, and if you're continuing to battle and to argue and not deal with issues, then you're sinning.

you've got to take a step back and say, Lord, I'm sorry. And sometimes it's difficult. I know there might be times when people are unreasonable. And there might be times where you feel that you've gone as far as you can.

And sometimes that is true that you cannot. But at least you have tried. And you have tried gracefully. And you have tried prayerfully. But you see, the responsibility lies on us to be peacemakers.

[18:26] Again, as peacemakers, we are required to pray for those who are in authority over us. Do we? Have we taken that responsibility to heart?

That is a vital part of peacemaking in the world that we live in. Remember what it says. This is what Paul says. I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men and for all in authority.

Why? That we may live a quiet and peaceful life in godliness and authority.

It's not interesting. So that we may live a quiet and peaceful life in godliness. as we look at the nation today, we've got to ask ourselves, I wonder, is the Christian church, are all Christians praying for those in authority over us?

I wonder. Because that's not the direction it seems to be that the nation is going, where we are being allowed to live a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness.

[19:40] so we've got to ask the question, are we really praying? Are we? Are you praying? Am I praying? Is it not just now and again, is this a vital part of our prayer life?

Because what the scripture indicates is that if we are taking that seriously and we're praying that, then that's how it will be in our nation.

And if it's not like that in the nation, then we've got to ask the question, are we taking our responsibilities to heart? It has been suggested by many people, and I believe it is true, that the iron curtain was taken down by prayer.

That the Christian church behind the iron curtain, the persecuted Christian church, they were praying and praying, and what we in the west couldn't do, we believe, that the praying church did. God responded and answered their prayers. It is an awesome and weighty responsibility to be praying for those who have authority over us.

[20:53] And again, scripture shows us that we are to be praying when we see God's judgment coming close. And we see that in scripture so often. Take for instance, Moses. God was going to wipe, but he declared, I will wipe out Israel.

I will make a new nation from you. And we find Moses pleading and interceding and praying on behalf of the people. Again, as peacemakers, one of the things that we've got to be doing is praying for the salvation of souls.

This is coming back to this serving the Lord. One of the greatest areas of service that any person can give is prayer. To devote time every day to prayer.

Praying for the salvation of souls. Why? Do you know what the Bible tells us about those who are without the Lord Jesus Christ? That they have no peace. So in order to be a peacemaker, you see how it all ties in?

If you are a peacemaker, you are somebody who is praying that peace will come to rule and to reign in people's lives. So you pray and pray.

[22:12] Do you know it's a wonderful thing to be a child of prayer or an adult to be prayed for. I believe the Christian church is full of people who have been prayed into the kingdom.

Now I know that God is sovereign and I know that God is going to bring in. But he works it in a wonderful way where there's this wonderful link up and connection with those who are praying and those who have been prayed for.

And it's amazing how often Christians who have lived and they have prayed and they have prayed and they have prayed for their children and the Christians, old Christians have gone, they've died, and they've never seen in this world.

The answer to their prayer, but years later. And many a person will say, ah, there's the answer to so-and-so's prayer as people have been brought into the kingdom.

Let us not be discouraged, but let us keep on praying. It's a great incentive to pray and to pray. And so we see that we are to be peacemakers.

[23:26] And then we see just in a word the great promise that is given. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God or children of God.

Once they were children of wrath, now they are children of God. How are they children? Because they are born again, born from above, the new birth. And the wonderful thing is that when we are born again and we become children of God, we are brought into all the privileges of the family of God.

and we begin to take on the characteristics of the kingdom. Just as children in this world will display mannerisms, traits, characteristics of their parents.

You know how often you will see somebody walking? You say, oh, he walks just like his father. Did you see that person? His grandfather used to walk exactly the same way.

Or maybe somebody who is very witty, they'll say, oh, well, it's in his people. And often you hear that expression, it's in his people, because the traits, the characteristics are passed on.

[24:42] And you will see the resemblance facially and in mannerisms, because that's how it is. That's how it works genetically. That's how it works.

These things are passed on. Well, spiritually, when a person is born again, although they do not lose the uniqueness of their own personality and their own character, yet there is a molding and a shaping taking place where we are being conformed to the image of Christ, where we begin to take

on the characteristics, the mannerisms that are displayed in the Word of God.

what a wonderful thing, my dear friend, to have the heavenly Father as our Father, one who will care for us and protect us and keep us and shield us and shelter us and shepherd us and guide us and eventually take us home.

It's a wonderful thing, my friend, today to know that you are a child of God, to know that the heavenly Father has you in his hand, and although you may be buffeted in this world and tried in this world, nothing and nobody, not even the forces of darkness, will be able to open the Father's hand and take you out, but that the grip that he has on you is a grip that will lead you home. And homecoming is something everybody loves. There's something beautiful about coming home. that's what makes the tragedy of the ILA one of the most heart-rending stories ever.

[26:25] When you think of the men who had fought right through the war and the families waiting at home, the great longing and desire in the homes here and in the hearts of those who are coming home, and then disaster, the very borders of home.

We all love to come home. Well, if we are children of God, then we will go home and there will be no shipwreck. But if we are without God, then we are without hope in this world.

Oh, won't you look to the Lord today and won't you discover in him the peace, the safety, the security, the identity, so that you will belong to him.

You will know why you're here and where you're going, and you're going to be with him forever and ever and ever. seek Jesus as your Savior. Let us pray.

Oh, Lord, our God, we pray today that we might know the peace that we've thought about, that we might know it in our own heart, that we might know that peace that is found in Jesus, and that we may seek then to promote that peace in this world.

[27:37] Oh, Lord, our God, we ask thee that we be not difficult people, but that there will be hearts of love and hearts of care, hearts of concern, hearts that will seek the good and the development of one another.

Bless us, we pray, with all spiritual blessings. Do us good and take us to our home safely, forgiving us all our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask all.

Amen. Amen. We'll conclude unhappily. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.