

Peacemakers

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[0 : 00] I'm sure there's a, in the vast, vast majority of people, there's a desire for peace. It is one of the things that I would say nations crave, communities crave, people crave.

We know that there's violence in our land. We know of all these things, but the vast majority of people all around the world long for peace. And I think it's one of the things that really struck me and would have struck you with regard to the Queen's passing and the subsequent days, and particularly the funeral, was the amazing sense of peace that seemed to prevail.

And I think that was very reflective of the kind of person that she was, because it's very evident that in her life, she was somebody that always wanted to promote peace.

There wasn't always peace around her, but she did what she could to promote it. And that, of course, is what every child of God ought to be about, is promoting peace. And I think that was reflected very much in these days.

Now, as we see here, Jesus, his teaching was quite revolutionary. If we had lived in the days of Jesus, we would have been absolutely amazed to hear him preach.

[1 : 24] Because, as it says elsewhere, he taught not like the scribes or the Pharisees. He taught as one having authority. Because the teaching of the scribes and the religious leaders was very dry and dead, and it was all bound up in externals and these sort of things.

Whereas, when Jesus came, he taught in a way that grabbed people's attention, and his teaching was really radical, and it was revolutionary.

And that's, of course, what it says, that he taught not like the scribes and the Pharisees, but he taught as one having authority. Now, of course, the great message that Jesus preached to us about the kingdom, that's what it tells us there, that he brought the message of the kingdom.

That's what it says in verse 23, and he went throughout all Galilee, teaching their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. And, of course, that's the great message. It's part of the Lord's prayer.

Thy kingdom come. It's something that you and I should be constantly praying for, is the extension of the kingdom of God. And, of course, we find it quite difficult, in a sense, to understand what the kingdom of God is really like.

[2 : 50] Because we're used, when we talk of a kingdom, we live in the United Kingdom, and we're able to understand that. We can see it as a sort of geographical location, and we live in the northwest, we could say, of the United Kingdom.

So, we often tend to think of kingdoms regarding geographical locations, but the kingdom of God is different. The kingdom of God, its location is within the heart of people.

The kingdom of God, as the Bible says, is within you. And, in a sense, that's what makes the kingdom of God so unspectacular in this world, as opposed to the kingdoms of this world.

Because, as we saw at the Queen's funeral in the United Kingdom, and so often it is highlighted that there are very few places in the world that can do the whole pageantry and the way that things operate.

It's so sort of, it's done almost with military precision, and there's so much goes into it. And the glories of this world are often so spectacular, they're eye-catching, they catch the whole imagination.

[4 : 07] But then, when you come to the kingdom of God, it seems so unspectacular, because the kingdom of God is seen in people like you and like me, who are often inconsistent, who often fail, who often make mistakes.

And yes, there are, as it says there in verse 16, that we're asked, in the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who's in heaven.

And that's your prayer and my prayer. Since the day we came to faith, it's something we often say, Lord, may your light shine through me. But so often, we find ourselves maybe at the end of the day and saying, Lord, forgive me, I've been really a poor witness.

And we keep thinking, if this is, if I'm a representative of the Lord's kingdom, if I'm an ambassador for Christ, I haven't been a very good ambassador today.

And so that's why the kingdom of God can sometimes appear so unspectacular as opposed to the glories of the kingdom of this world. But that's all going to change.

[5 : 18] Because at the end of the day, when the Lord returns and when he brings all his people home, the glory of the kingdom, of God's kingdom will be seen.

And it will outshine any glory that was ever seen in this world. Because the church will be all glorious within. And tonight, you may feel very stained and impure and deceitful and all kinds of things come that day.

Tells us the king's daughter is all glorious within. That's how it will be for every single believer. All glorious within.

Reflecting the glory and the majesty of their saviour, the mediator. And if we ever want to think of that, just think for a moment of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Remember how his whole being began to shine. And there was this awesome display. It's like who he was broke through for a moment.

[6 : 21] And it was this dazzling brilliance that was virtually blinding. It was too much for Peter, James, and John. But that's a glory that we will reflect in glory.

And so that's a great future that waits for all the people of God. So Jesus' teaching was all about the kingdom. And of course, it was radical.

It was different because he was teaching things that up until this point they hadn't understood. And back then, they always thought that the kingdom would be a physical kingdom.

It would be a geographical kingdom. They weren't grasping that primarily it was going to be a spiritual kingdom. And so Jesus here, he gives in what we know as the Beatitudes, he begins by teaching in these things.

He gives characteristics of the Christian and the impact that the Christian has in life. And so he says here, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

[7 : 31] And as we say, people by and large do want peace. And I know that the way it is just now in the world, if there's anything that we would love to see is peace come in Ukraine.

And we would say to ourselves, how is that going to be possible? Because there's so much anger, there's been so much hatred and so much violence and so many atrocities.

And sometimes you say to yourself, supposing right now they went round a table to try and thrash out. So many families have been devastated.

There's so much anger lying there. And you say to yourself, how will peace ever become possible? But throughout the history of the world, we know that peace has often been possible, where war has been brought to an end and peace has come in.

And we know that down throughout the years, there have been movements that have tried to capture the whole idea of peace. Remember in the 60s, there was a great hippie dream of this whole movement of peace and living all together as one.

[8 : 41] And in a sense, you'd say to yourself, it was a great idea, but it was bound to fail because it wasn't based on Christ, who is the basis, the source of peace.

And in fact, it became very degrading, the whole thing. But it reflected the kind of idea that's in people's hearts, people's minds. It's a love to have peace, love to have a world of unity where we're all together.

But no matter how we try, no matter what we do, if we're not grounded in the one who is the foundational root of peace, then that peace is going to fail.

And so that's why we find that Jesus has come into this world because the human race is not at peace with God. That's a fundamental problem, is that everything about us is opposed to God.

All our inclinations naturally, our attitudes, our appetites, all these things naturally are not what God shows us in the word.

[9 : 50] Because when you go to, say, for instance, in Galatians, and it gives us evidence of the flesh and the spirit, and you can see how they're contrary one to the other.

And yet, that's how naturally we are. We're on the run from God. We're haters of God. The Bible is very, very blunt. It tells us that we're haters of God, that we're rebels, that we're enemies.

And so it's God who has come to deal with our rebellion, with our hatred. And we cannot have true peace until first we are made right with God.

And, of course, that's what Jesus did, that he came and he died in order to reconcile us to God, in order to bring us to God. It's the only way possible.

He is, as we know, the Prince of Peace. And, of course, we know that the great thing is that God's justice wasn't in any way compromised.

[10:54] Because God, God as God couldn't just look down and say, right, you know what, I'm going to forgive everybody. I'm going to just turn. Because God can't do that. He is consistent to himself all the time.

And he cannot look upon sin or tolerate sin. He cannot turn a blind eye to it. He has to deal with it. And that's why Jesus came to deal with our sin.

He took our place. God wounded him. God bruised him. The Father poured out his wrath and his anger upon his son in order that we may be healed.

And that's how we come to this place of reconciliation. So before there can ever be peace, really, in this world, there, first of all, has to be reconciliation with God.

And you and I know ourselves that that's one of the great things that came into our life when we came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I've said it before here.

[12:01] People said, I remember people asking, when I became a Christian, what do you have that you didn't have before? And there was a lot I couldn't explain. I'm sure a lot of you are like that.

Sometimes when people would say, you know, how is it as a Christian? You might find it quite difficult to explain. But the one thing I could say is, you know, I have a peace I never had before. And that is true. There's an inner peace that begins to fill our heart because we are now right with God.

Beforehand, we weren't. We were running like we started running with Adam in the garden. Adam began to run away from God in the garden. And we joined that run with Adam.

We were running too until God came into our lives and turned us around. So we stopped running away and we started running too. Everybody's running. We've said it before.

[12:58] Everybody's running one way or the other. There's only two ways to run. Everybody's either running to God or running away from God. And once we came to faith in Jesus Christ, we began to run to God.

And that's where the peace is. We don't have that fear, that fearful sense of, you know, sometimes you realize, oh, I'm out of, I'm not in a good place.

If I die, I'm lost. You could feel there was this, that you weren't right with God. Now you feel right with God. And that's the beauty of, it's the beauty of, of, of being a Christian is that even when you sin, instead of running away as you did in the past, trying to bury your head and say, oh, I don't want to, don't want to face up to this.

You want to face up and you go to the Lord and say, Lord, I've really let you down. I messed it up a bit, but oh Lord, forgive me. That's what we do.

It's like, that's what David did. Psalm 51, when he messed up big style, he didn't run away. He went straight to the Lord when he began to realize what he had done.

[14:09] And that's a wonder of it. That's what, what we do as well. And that's as a result of the peace that is now there. So the question we have to ask is if we are told to be peacemakers, how do we go about doing that?

Now, as we said, obviously, the first thing is that we ourselves must first come to that peace, but it isn't sufficient that we are simply, that we simply come to peace with God.

The Bible tells us here that it is our duty to be peacemakers as much as is possible with us. And that means that we have to try and live our lives by God's grace to live at peace with everybody as much as it is possible for us in our own home, in our place of work, in our community, wherever we are, we are to seek to live at peace with others.

And that means that quite often we have to put ourselves out. It means quite often that we have to swallow pride. It means that sometimes it's going to be very, very difficult for us.

But we've always got to think of our duty. We've got to think of the greater good. We've got to think of this command that is given or this statement that is making, which is one of the great

characteristics of the life of the Christian, that you and I are to be peacemakers.

[15:36] We are to live a life of peace as much as is possible in our church, in our home, in our community at all times.

And of course, as we know, peace is one of the great characteristics of the Christian life. And, you know, it's quite a thought.

But the world that is so opposed to the Christian often owes the peace that is in the world to the Christian.

They don't realize it. This world, it won't, people say a hell on earth, it's never a hell on earth, because God's mercy is still in the world.

God's grace is still in the world. But it would resemble more of hell, where the Christians to be taken away.

[16:32] God preserves because of the Christian. God withholds his judgment because of the Christian. Classic example of that is Sodom. Remember when Abraham was praying for Sodom?

And Abraham said he was so wanting Lot to be safe. And he said to the Lord, Lord, if there's 50, imagine, Lord, if there's 50 righteous people there, will you destroy?

No, he said, I won't. And remember, he came down, 45, 40 down. And he came all the way to 10.

Lord, will you destroy Sodom if there's 10 righteous people?

Lord said, no, I won't. Isn't that incredible? And then we have the command. Remember the angels who were trying to push Lot out?

And they said, hurry up, for we can't do anything until you're out. Isn't that extraordinary? It's like the Lord's judgment is being held back until righteous Lot is out of Sodom.

[17:39] And that's a picture of what's happening in this world. And the unbelieving world don't get it. They don't understand that often God's judgment has been kept back because of his people.

And there are many today would love to eradicate the Christian, not realizing that in doing so, they would be opening themselves up to a judgment they haven't any understanding of.

But the Christian is, as we say, is required to be a peacemaker. So how do we do that? Well, I would say that one of the things we have to do is that we need to pray for those who are in authority.

We had both our brothers tonight. We're doing just that very thing. Remember what it says? I exhort that supplication and prayers and intercession with the giving of thanks be made for all, but particularly those in authority.

Why? In order that we may lead quiet and a peaceable life in godliness. Isn't that wonderful? So we have this obligation upon us to pray for those who are in authority over us, whether it's in royalty, whether it's in government, whether that's national government or local government.

[19:01] The Christian church really has to be praying in order that we will live peaceable lives.

That's going to be the outcome of it. And so you can see what a duty, because if the Christian doesn't pray, nobody else is going to pray.

And so often when you come to the scripture and look at it, you think, you know, the responsibility of the well-being of the land is not so much in the government. It's more in the Christian church.

Because remember how the Lord says, you know, back there, if my people who are called by my name, if they repent, I will heal the land.

So the obligation is not upon the rulers and authorities, but upon God's people. So you see, we have a huge obligation and a huge responsibility for the good, the welfare of our land to be praying for those who are in authority over us.

And I believe that when, like, for instance, when the Iron Curtain came down back, was it 91? I can't remember exactly when the whole thing overturned by around about then, was it?

[20:16] I believe that that was in response to the praying of the persecuted church. Because the persecuted church behind the Iron Curtain was a powerful church.

Yes, a church that was soaked in blood. And a church that was soaked or found themselves imprisoned and silenced so often. But their cries went to heaven in order that the Lord would break down.

And the Lord did break down. And so it's important that we take seriously this for peacemaking. Again, we ought to be praying when God's judgments are abroad, when God's judgments are threatening.

Moses is a classic example of that. God said to Moses, he said, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to wipe out Israel. And I'm going to make a nation of you. I'm going to start all over again. Did Moses say, oh, that's okay, Lord? No. We find Moses, he's pleading and pleading and pleading before the Lord. That in wrath, the Lord would remember mercy.

[21 : 27] And the Lord did. The Lord heard his cry. And it is incumbent upon us, too, that we cry to the Lord. Because his judgments are abroad. And in doing so, then we truly, we are peacemakers.

And again, we have to pray for the salvation of everyone. That's what we should be doing. Because it's only then, when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, that they will really know the peace of God for themselves.

And so we have to be praying that the Lord will change people's lives and change people's hearts. That the Prince of Peace, that's who Christ is. That the Prince of Peace would come to rule and to reign in people's lives. You know, you might say to yourself, you might be thinking about your neighbors and so on.

And you say, I would love that they would become Christians. But, you know, I don't think it's possible. You know, sometimes we have, we make out in our own mind who we think the Lord is going to be able to save or who he maybe won't be able to save.

[22 : 38] But we've got to remember that none of us, none of us should be saved. None of us can be saved naturally. But the Lord can save anybody. And the church is full of people that maybe others wrote off.

You pray. I need to pray. Pray for those who are outside Christ in your family. Pray for those who are outside Christ in your street. Pray for those who are outside Christ in the neighborhood, at work, wherever.

Because it's your obligations, your responsibility. It's your privilege as a peacemaker to be praying for them. And then we see the great promise that is given just in a word.

We're told here, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. It's not great. Born again, you become a son of God. Born into the family of God.

A new home, new family, new brothers, new sisters, new privileges, new status. You know, it's one of the wonderful things where we begin to reflect our heavenly father as is revealed in Jesus Christ.

[23 : 51] You know, sometimes a person is converted and they haven't told anybody, right? It's happened quite often with myself and I remember way back.

And seeing a difference in a person and wondering what had happened. And then discovering they'd become a Christian. Because there was a change had become obvious in their lives.

But you know that that change should become a marked change. Because we ought to be reflecting the Lord whom we serve. You know how children will often pick up.

It's not something that they just pick up. It's something they're oblivious to. But very often they have the mannerisms and things from parents.

They might walk. A son might walk like his mother or his father. Or they might talk. They might do certain things. And you'd say, well, that's so like.

[24 : 59] And so it should be. Because that's who they are. They've come from and they pick up their ways. They pick up mannerisms and characteristics and resemblances.

That's what family do. And so it should be with regard to our father in heaven. We ought to be reflecting. And the mannerisms and the characteristics.

And who he is ought to be displayed more and more in who we are. So that should be our prayer.

And you know, the more you reflect Jesus, the greater the peacemaker you will be in this world.

Be assured of it. The more you live like Jesus, the more your impact for good will be in this world.

Let's pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks that you work in us often when we don't realize.

We give thanks, Lord, that you know what you're doing even when we don't. And we give thanks that you have a great goal in view. A great end in view. And we give thanks, O Lord, that you are working in us.

[26 : 11] Working all things together for good. And for your own glory. Lord, help us to be willing to be servants for you. Help us, Lord, to be ambassadors for Christ.

And help us to be peacemakers. So that wherever we are, that we will seek to resemble the Prince of Peace. The Lord Jesus Christ. Watch over us, we pray, taking us to our home safely.

Do us good and cleanse us in the blood, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude singing from Psalm 133 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 133 in the Scottish Psalter. Behold, how good a thing it is, and how, becoming well, together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

Like precious ointment on the head that down the bearded flow. Even Aaron's beard unto the skirt stood of his garments go. As Hermon's Jew, the Jew that doth on Zion hills descend.

[27 : 20] For there the blessing God commands. Life that shall never end. Psalm 133, the whole psalm. Behold, how good a thing it is. Behold, how good a thing it is.

In an army coming well. Together such as brethren are in unity to dwell.

In unity to dwell. Like precious ointment on the head that down the bearded flow.

He did not fear down to the skirt. Did all his garments go.

Did all his garments go. Like precious ointment on the head that down the bearded flow. A servant to the Jew that doth on Zion hills descend.

[28 : 54] For there the blessing God commands. Life that shall never end.

Like precious ointment on the head that down the bearded flow. Amen. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore.

Amen.