

## Matthew 5:1-9

### A People of Peace

**Introduction:** The Sermon on the Mount is not teaching us how to get into the kingdom - the Bible makes it clear that entrance to God's kingdom is only through grace - by the sacrificial work of Jesus. The sermon is also not teaching us how we stay in the kingdom. Rather it is a description of the character and conduct of those who already belong to the kingdom. The Sermon is not a call to repentance, though that may be involved at times, it is a description of the expression and evidences of true repentance.

The audience is the disciple of Jesus.

The sermon describes the life that necessarily results from genuine salvation. What God is doing, and wants to continue in us. What he is making us into by the work of his Spirit and grace upon us.

So the purpose of this sermon, I believe, is for God to work his kingdom characteristics, his kingdom virtues in us, so that we can achieve the human flourishing that God intends for us, and properly represent him and his Kingdom until his return.

Jesus begins his sermon with the beatitudes painting a picture of what the state of true God centered human flourishing looks like; what true well being looks like in the kingdom of God. The beatitudes, like the rest of wisdom literature in scripture, are an implicit invitation to consider what the best way of being in the world is and to pursue it. True flourishing is a life that is lived in light of the eternal kingdom of God, the kingdom that Jesus claims is here now, and at work through him. Jesus our king is taken us somewhere - Into true flourishing as we follow him.

But as I warned before this is topsy turvy, upside down, counter-cultural stuff that Jesus is bringing to us and that is because his kingdom is like no other.

We pick up this morning in the 7th beatitude.

#### **1. Flourishing are the Peacemakers for they shall be called Sons of God.**

1. I don't know what comes to mind when you think of peacemaking. Maybe it's NATO, or the peace-corp. Maybe it's a photo of a flower

child at Woodstock or the Maharishi and transcendental meditation. Well, peace in Biblical terms is much, much, more than an outward state - absence of war, or hostility or an inner tranquility - peace of mind.

2. The Biblical term Shalom (Peace) conveys the picture of a circle; it means communal well being in every direction and in every relation; and it is directly tied to God and his kingdom rule. In Judges 6:24 God is called -“Yahweh is Peace.” Paul calls our God - The God of Peace (Romans 15:33)
3. Augustine said, *“God alone is the place of peace that cannot be disturbed.”*
4. God’s kingdom is described as a Kingdom of Peace...
  1. **“The government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. - Isaiah 9:6-7**
  2. **“Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” - Isaiah 32:16-18**
  3. For the Jews the Kingdom of God meant, a guaranteed new heavens and new earth where righteousness and justice were the norm, a healed material creation. Absolute peace, wholeness and well being on every side - physically, spiritually, socially, and economically.
  4. In scripture the Kingdom of God and *shalom are intertwined- The peace and glory of God permeating every part of the creation.* The Kingdom was said to be fully established when all that is broken and wrong with this world is mended and made right. As such, it is tightly bound up with poverty, oppression, misery and sin in all its various forms being brought to an end, and an ushering in of absolute flourishing, prosperity and blessing of the creation.

## 2. So who are the Peacemakers?

1. It is the the needy and dependent, broken-hearted, mourning, little lowly people, who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, practice his mercy, and are devoted to him..these are the peacemakers. Those who belong to the kingdom of God.
2. How did they come to be the peacemakers? Paul tells us.
3. **“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel - Colossians 1:15-23**
  1. The Son of God gave his life blood in order to make peace between us and God, reconciling us to God and making us sons and daughters... we are therefore called to continue that same reconciliatory work of Jesus, as sons of God to the world.
4. **“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 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. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” - 2 Corinthians 5:18-21**
  1. We are called God's ambassadors of peace; there is a cosmic distance between those outside the covenant and the God of the

covenant and our duty is to make the kingdom a place of refuge and safety for the lost.

2. The incarnation accomplished this task by bringing Jesus nearer to His people in every way; by bringing the kingdom to earth; by proclaiming a message of reconciliation. Our mission is then to make this kingdom such a part of our lives that others outside the kingdom will realize by God's grace that they live in a world of chaos and calamity, and that only in the Kingdom of Heaven will they find true and everlasting peace.
3. Remember what we discussed last week -wholeness of person is the main theme and goal of this sermon. Therefore those who have received peace with God, will express that peace by making peace. True love for God will always express itself in love of neighbor.. We are kingdom ambassadors..spreading and making known the king and kingdom of peace through our lives and actions..Peacemakers are the kingdom of God in action..

### 3. What does Peacemaking look like?

1. I think of Desmond Tutu and the work he has done in South Africa with the anti-apartheid movement and human rights; Dr's without borders, those doing refugee work around the world, MFT, counselors, social workers; those working in foster care and adoption -The work that Hector and Sonya do through foster care and RFK. That is what we should be thinking of; but of course this peacemaking applies to every follower of Jesus where-ever and with whomever.
2. Peace making is not being nice nor is it tolerance; rather it is an active entrance into the middle of warring parties for the sake of creating reconciliation and peace...
3. Listen to what Isaiah says, **“But he (messiah) was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”**
  1. One way we make “pseudo peace” is by not ever challenging or confronting each other with hard things, things like sin, compromise, spiritual lethargy, inconsistency... and therefore we have “peace” because we are not in conflict. often we make peace by avoiding the real, and hard things of life.

2. This is not the way of Jesus. Jesus' work of peacemaking is described not in serene, stress free ways. Jesus goes to the cross, to the blood and guts of calvary to make peace for us, to reconcile enemies, sinners, rebels to the God of justice and mercy
4. Jesus teases out what this peace making will look like in the rest of the sermon. From the control of anger to fidelity in marriage to love of enemies...
  1. Peacemaking is: interrupting our time and routine at a church gathering in order to make reconciliation with someone that has offended us or that we have offended.
  2. It is refraining from repaying evil with evil.. under no circumstances are we to retaliate with vengeance but only with mercy, forgiveness, and love just as God has shown us.
  3. Peacemaking goes the second mile in service in response to the hostility of our oppressors
  4. Peacemaking means loving our enemies and praying for them and not against them.
  5. When we are disciplined to remain faithful to our marriage covenants rather than abandoning our partners, we are being transformed into peacemakers (Matt. 5.27-32).
  6. When we are committed to telling each other the truth in love, without self-righteousness, we are being transformed into peacemakers (Matt. 5.33-37)
  7. When we are content to practice righteousness for its own sake, and not wear our piety as a badge of honor, we are being transformed into peacemakers (Matt. 6.1-18).
  8. When are willing to store up heavenly treasure by giving to the needy rather than hoarding treasures on earth, we are being transformed into peacemakers (Matt. 6.19-23).
  9. When we are determined to pursue God's kingdom and justice first, rather than our own security, we are being transformed into peacemakers (Matt. 6.24-34).
  10. When we are able to confess the poverty of our own lives before judging others, we are being transformed into peacemakers (Matt. 7.1-5).

11. When we allow God's care of us to determine our care of others, we are being transformed into peacemakers (Matt. 7.6-12).
12. Peacemaking is bringing good news to the poor, binding up the brokenhearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, opening of the prison to those who are bound, proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God. -God's mercy and his justice! To comfort all who mourn with God's peace!
5. Peacemaking is not pretty. It's ugly, it's hard; but it's real and the results bring true, real, lasting peace.
  1. Church if we are going to create a kingdom culture of peacemaking here at Refuge, and in this city we must Listen to this wisdom from Peter - **“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days,(Who wants flourishing?) - let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”? - 1 Peter 3:8-12**
  2. **Question?** Do we as individuals or are we as a community perpetuating hostility, un-forgiveness and bitterness or are we making peace? Do we encourage others to stand up for themselves, to make their voice heard, to hold onto grudges.. is this the kind of council we give and receive?
    1. In what ways do we seek harmony and unity in this church community?
    2. It's easy to say we are for peace, or to think we are for peace. But how is that being manifested in our everyday lives and relationships?
2. **James says, “If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish**

**ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” - James 3:14-18**

3. You say, “But I’m right, and they’re wrong. I was hurt by them.” Was that how Jesus approached the lost and rebellious world? “But I’ll get taken advantage of!” So did Jesus, - Look at the cross. If we only imitate Jesus when it makes sense, or when we think people are deserving, it is not really the life of Jesus we are following. And with that mentality we will not get far into the true virtue of mercy, justice and peacemaking, and loving out the flourishing that Jesus promises.
6. Peacemaking looks a lot like Jesus..which is why he says, the peace makers shall be called Sons of God...
  1. *“Those who would conform their lives to the way of life described in the Sermon on the Mount will find themselves transformed into peacemakers as a consequence of God’s work among them. It is not a matter of obeying a command to become a peacemaker or striving after an abstract virtue called “peacemaking.” Rather, it is a matter of our participation in the life of the risen Christ, who is our peace and who is our virtue. Peacemakers is who we become when we conform our lives to the Sermon on the Mount, which is the form of Jesus’ life with us.” - Unknown*
4. **Flourishing are the peacemakers for they shall be called Sons of God**
  1. Now ladies don’t get offended because you think the Bible is patriarchal and anti women. Jesus was actually saying that Everyone of his peacemakers gets an identity and place as that of a first born son.. Jesus is telling everyone that we share his status before the Father. What an incredible honor this is to have a share in the family of God. As John says, “what kind of love is this, that WE, should be called sons of God, but so we are.” -
  2. “And that is enough to raise your thoughts to what may happen when the redeemed soul, beyond all hope and nearly beyond belief, learns at last that she has pleased Him whom she was created to please. There will be no room for vanity then. She will

be free from the miserable illusion that it is her doing. With no taint of what we should now call self-approval she will most innocently rejoice in the thing that God has made her to be, and the moment which heals her old inferiority complex forever will also drown her pride... Perfect humility dispenses with modesty...If God is satisfied with the work, the work may be satisfied with itself....I can imagine someone saying he dislikes my idea of heaven as a place where we are patted on the back. But proud misunderstanding is behind that dislike. In the end that Face which is the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us either with one expression or the other, either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised.....To please God... to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness... to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son- it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is." -The Weight of Glory

**Conclusion:** *"What Jesus teaches in the sayings collected in the Sermon on the Mount is not a complete regulation of the life of the disciples, and it is not intended to be; rather, what is taught here is symptoms, signs, examples of what it means when the kingdom of God breaks into the world which is still under sin, death, and the devil. You yourselves should be signs of the coming kingdom of God, signs that something has already happened."* -Joachim Jeremias

What if we actually lived as signs of the kingdom? What if we actually put into practice, in our hearts, in our homes, at our work, around our neighbors, in our politics the upside down kingdom of God? That's what this sermon is calling us to. To incarnate the kingdom of God in the small everyday parts of our lives

Jesus, the master, says this is the way of true flourishing. Will we believe him and take him at his word? Will we repent of our self-reliant, proud, assertive self justifying, unmerciful, half-hearted, waring, selfish ways and take his yoke upon us, his kingdom mission and learn from him? I pray we will.

