

# 7 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God

I see them often, sitting in church together. He's retired after a very successful career, bald and aging but still youthful in outlook. His wife is tiny, gray-haired, and she leans against him as they worship together. Their children are successful, happy Christians.

But I can remember back forty years ago, when that dear woman, a young wife, knocked on the back door of the parsonage, blinded by her tears. Someone had phoned her to say she could find her husband at a certain apartment number. So she went to check, and she could hear her husband's voice, laughing behind the door with an unknown woman.

Her dreams of a blessed, Christian marriage when she'd married this man, and children to come, seemed shattered forever. What in the world was she to do?

If there were ever a need for a peacemaker to bring them back together, that man and wife certainly did. My husband, who was their pastor, went to see the man, who, it turned out, was broken-hearted about his sin. After weeks of gentle, tender counseling, their marriage was restored, and they've been blessed with forty peace-filled, useful lives for God. Peace! How illusive!

1. It isn't just "bad" people who are quarrelsome. "Good" people are too often quarrelsome too!

I remember once when I was a teenager an argument began at the supper table. I have no memory at all of what it

might have been about; probably it was something perhaps as simple as whose turn it was to wash the dishes.

At any rate, it must have been common enough an occurrence, because after Daddy had let it go on for a while, he pulled out of the flower arrangement on the table his little dictating machine. He rewound the tape, and played it, and our loving, sisterly, quarrelsome family heard ourselves picking at each other about absolutely nothing important!

You know it's true, even in Christian families, even among Christians who worship together on Sundays!

Perhaps like never before, there is conflict on every continent: war, genocide, strikes, mobs, riots. In our own country, political parties wrangle. The media stir up conflict. Official peace-keepers are under attack. There is division among neighborhoods, churches, businesses, communities, families, husband and wife, parents and children. We pass Civil Rights acts, but people keep on acting uncivil.

Years ago Walt was asked to preach in Ian Paisley's church in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The historic city was literally in ruins. All the downtown ground-floor stores had been bombed out. By whom? The IRA, the Irish Republic Army, in a civil war between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State that has lasted for 200 years. The heart of the city itself had an 18-foot chain-link fence around it. Dr. Paisley's home had bullet-proof opaque glass window panes and a guard house in front of it.

Years later Walt and I were in the Irish Republic with my family. Our tour included a historic castle, but it was a

long climb, and I was tired. I waited in a pub at the foot of the hill while the others toured. No one was there except the young Irishman who served me coffee. He was red-haired, freckle-faced, eager to talk to an American.

The young man talked long and earnestly about the civil war that has nearly destroyed both north and south. His eyes filled with tears. "I just don't understand it! Why can't people just get along with each other?"

2. I had to tell him that it is because sin and guilt lurk in every heart, whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Animist, Atheist, or Agnostic.

What does Isaiah 48:22 say is the cause of all this unrest?

What is the truth, the reality of our pretense of being good? (Romans 3:12-17).

World War I was called "The war to end all wars," and the League of Nations was formed to assure it. But in less than 30 years, the whole world was again in its bloodiest conflict yet. Then the United Nations were organized to bring peace. Instead, we have civil wars all over the globe.

We talked about this broken world in our second lesson: we mourn the terrible consequences of our sin. And one of the most terrible consequences of our sin is the loss of peace.

3. Where can this troubled world find peace? Only in Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6,7 says, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. Of the increase of His government **and peace** there will be no end."

For Christ Jesus Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation

. . . So as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross. . . .

And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

Ephesians 2:13-17

4. We can be sure that God will plainly show us where this peace can be found: Jesus is our peace.

Isaiah 48:16 says, "Come near to Me, hear this: **I have not spoken in secret from the beginning**; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit Have sent Me."

Then what does God tell the Israelites (and us) what we must do in order to experience peace? (Isaiah 48:17, 18)

5. But the price Jesus paid for our peace was enormous. What was that price, according to Isaiah 53:4-6?

There was a price to be paid for our peace: we were healed by His stripes; we found peace because Jesus took our punishment. His death broke down the barriers forever between us guilty, petulant, quarrelsome people. He Himself is our peace!

6. Now God call us to be peace-makers, not just passively, but actively, really working at it. What does Psalm 34:14 command us to do concerning peace?

The Hebrew word for pursue is *radaph*, to chase, to follow after, to hunt for it. First Peter 3:11 quotes this from the Psalms: “Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14).

What, in Romans 14:19, are the strong commands to us about making peace?

So we are not to have a casual attitude about this beatitude that calls us to be peacemakers. We are to **“make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”** To whom should we offer this effort of peace? (Hebrews 12:14,15).

Notice, in this Scripture, that if we don't pursue peace with everybody, a root of bitterness might spring up that would defile many. That's how important it is for us to “Follow peace with all men”!

7. We cannot be a peace-maker until we are at peace ourselves with God and with others.

Romans 5:1 reminds us that “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” His peace can protect us from conflict with others.

What does Psalm 119:165 say about this?

And Proverbs 16:7?

What, according to Philippians 4:6,7,9, must we do if we are to experience “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding”?

How does James 3:13-16 describe the result of bitter envy and self-seeking?

But how does the wisdom from above act? (James 3:17,18)

And what is the fruit of those who make peace? (James 3:18)

8. Who needs the blessing of your peace-making today?

Proverbs 24:10-11 tells us specifically those whom we especially ought to offer the gift of God's peace. Who are they?

If we should say, "But I didn't realize they didn't know the Lord," what will He answer? (Proverbs 24:11,12)

Because we have been reconciled to God through Jesus, what ministry has God given us, according to Second Corinthians 5:18,19?

So, as God's ambassadors to this doomed and sorrowing world, what word of reconciliation are we to offer them? (2 Corinthians 5:20,21)?

9. What is the reward for those who offer peace to others, according to this beatitude? A family likeness! We will be called the sons of God!

Walt and I were once asked to visit a pastor who was going blind. He could no longer read the Scriptures, and he was broken-hearted because he couldn't do the work he felt God had called him to do. The burden of supporting the family had fallen on his dear, frail wife. They were both distraught.

We had a wonderful, sweet time with them, and they seemed comforted by our visit.

Later, we met with them again. He said to me, with tears in his eyes,

***“When Walt walked through that door, God came in.”***

**I offer reconciliation to others;**

**Jesus has broken down the walls between us.**