

Blessed are the peacemakers

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 5 and verse 9. We continue this theme on the Beatitude. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Now if we ask ourselves how do we live like Christians, then we must inevitably turn back to the Sermon on the Mount and we must listen to what Jesus is saying because this is the sermon that he preached primarily to his disciples.

And this is what Jesus says to them about living the Christian life. So if I want to live the Christian life I must go back to Jesus and I must listen to what Jesus is saying to me.

And he says to me it's only the poor in spirit that get the kingdom of heaven. It's only those who mourn that really are comforted.

It's only the meek who will enjoy the earth. Especially when we think of the earth in its eschatological concept.

[1 : 21] It's only those who hunger and thirst after righteousness who really will be filled, says Jesus. It's only the merciful who will enjoy mercy. It's only the pure in heart who will see God.

And you see the standard that Jesus is setting. And it's such a high standard. And we must never on any account lower that standard to suit ourselves.

We're not at liberty to do that. And so Jesus says there these are the standards. And you must live like that if you are going to be my people.

These are the marks that ought to be seen in a Christian life. These are the virtues and the qualities of life that ought to be in every Christian man and in every Christian woman.

And so Jesus goes on and he says, Blessed are the peacemakers. For they shall be called the children of God. It would seem to be as if Jesus is saying this.

[2 : 28] Look at these kingdoms of the world that are around you. And what is it that is characteristic of these kingdoms of the world? Every kingdom in the world today has got its armed forces.

Every kingdom in the world that we are in today, every kingdom has got its arsenal of weapons. And these are either for the purpose of defense or aggression.

But, says Jesus, my kingdom is not like that. In my kingdom there are no swords. There are no guns.

There are no bombs. My kingdom, says Jesus, is a kingdom of peace. Now we are not, having said that, we are not suggesting for one moment that the Bible, or the teaching of Christ, advocates pacifism.

In a world that you and I are living in, we cannot afford to be pacifists. You see, this is a world of greed.

[3 : 50] And in this world of greed it may be that an individual or a nation may take what does not belong to them. In this world we may find that there is a tyrant who suddenly emerges.

And this tyrant is full of his own self-importance and he wants to conquer the world. Now with regard to a tyrant like that, we must offer resistance.

In other words, we have a right to self-defense. I have a right to defend myself if I am attacked. If my family or my property is in danger, I have a right to defend the freedom of my family, or the freedom to live as I want to live.

And so it is with a nation. And a nation may have to take the sword for the purpose of defending its right to freedom.

[4 : 59] So what I have said is this, that the Bible, as I see it and as I read it, and the teaching of Christ does not advocate the doctrine of pacifism.

But what our Lord is talking about here, you see the pacifists, they may make a great deal of this text, blessed are the peacemakers. What our Lord is talking about here is the individual. And our Lord is saying to us this, that the disposition in the Christian heart must essentially be that of peace.

And that is true. There is no Christian that wants really war, or ought not to want war, or aggression of any kind.

The disposition in the Christian heart is towards peace. The disposition of the Christian heart is to love, rather than to hate.

[6 : 06] I take you back to the old Scottish commentator David Dixon. This is what he says.

The seventh mark of true disciples is peaceableness. Peaceableness. Whereby Christians study not only to live peaceably with all men, but also to procure peace among men where they live, so far as in them lies.

Ah, that's the mark of real Christianity. Peaceableness. The mark of real Christianity is this, that I want to live at peace.

To be at peace with God, to be at peace with myself, and to be at peace with my neighbor. That is the mark of real Christianity. And not only is it that I want to live at peace, and to be at peace, but I try to create the conditions that will establish peace.

You see, after all, what is God? Isn't he called in the Bible the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ?

[7 : 26] God is not a God of war. He is the God of peace. And Christ Jesus, what is he called in the scriptures?

He is called the Prince of Peace. And those of us who have been reconciled to God, and who enjoy the peace of God, my Christian friend, are you understanding what I am talking about?

I am sure you are. You do understand what I am saying, don't you? You are a Christian. You have been reconciled to God. Now what is it that you enjoy most when you have been reconciled to God?

It is this, God's peace. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding. That is a wonderful thing, to have that in your life, the peace of God.

Have you got it? Is there someone here who is not a Christian, and you say to me, you know, I would love to have that peace? Well, you can have it. Will you not come to Christ this morning, and Christ will give you that peace, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding?

[8 : 44] And I tell you this, that when you come to Christ and receive this peace from him, you will have a peace that the world knows nothing about. It's a tremendous gift.

It's a tremendous thing for God to come to you and say to you, here, here is my peace. Enjoy it. You see, once we understand the peace of God like that, then the family likeness is in us all as Christians.

And we want to be peacemakers. And just as we have been reconciled to God and reconciled to one another as Christians, we want all men and all women everywhere to enjoy this peace of God, to enjoy this wonderful reconciliation with God, and not only that, but to enjoy this wonderful reconciliation with one another, with one another.

You see, this world that we are living in is dominated by sin. And because we are living in a world that is dominated by sin, there is the inevitable strife in the world.

And that strife in the world is to be seen on the international scale, on the international scene, rather. And what do we notice on this international scene?

[10 : 27] Wars. And wars. Wars. Wars. And wars. And rumors of wars.

That's what we see on the international scene. And it goes and makes for an unhappy world. I was listening to someone coming along the street I didn't know the person this person was just speaking to their neighbour and I just happened to overhear this person saying there's nothing much bright in the world today in the news no there's nothing bright in the news is there it's a world of ugliness oh the physical world is very beautiful make no mistake about that it's the most beautiful thing to look at that river going through the heart of our town but you see it's the men who have made the world ugly because of their hatred and their diabolical fury against one another and it's not only that we see this in the international scene but on the national level and we are so heartily sick of listening to men as they are urging one section of the community to go against another section of the community and there is this bitterness being created and stirred up in the hearts of men and women

in our country there is nothing Christ-like about that attitude is there nothing Christ-like at all and all this you see has spilled over onto the domestic front and instead of finding perhaps a man and a woman who betroth themselves to each other in marriage vows sticking it out to the end as they ought to do all too soon they get tired of one another and off to the divorce courts and the unhappiness and the misery that they cause not only to themselves but to their families and what an unhappy scene that we have in the world of today in our own country apart from looking at any other country the strife the anger the hatred the violence the cruelty there is nothing Christ-like about that blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God and indeed one of the saddest features of all is seen in the Christian church and the divisions in the Christian church it's staggering to think of these divisions and I don't wonder at the world turning to us in the Christian church and saying you get your own house put in order before you begin speaking to us look at the church we don't know what to believe one group is saying this another group is saying that and you're so divided among yourselves you remember Paul writing to the people of Corinth he says this it has been declared to me my brethren by them which are of the household of Chloe that there are contentions among you oh he says there are contentions among you Christian people and it ought not to be and I hear that some of you are saying

I am of Paul and others are saying I am of Apollos and others are saying I am of Cephas and I am of Christ how unbecoming says the apostle Paul the whole thing is because if there is one thing that ought to characterize the Christian church then that is this it's unity Paul says to these Corinthians is Christ divided?

is it right that one part of Christ should be opposed to another part of Christ and this terrible division should creep in? is Christ divided?

and that is the point is Christ divided? blessed are the peacemakers and you know how sometimes in a church and it might even be in a congregation suddenly there is a stirring up of strife and one group begin to oppose the other group and there is no reconciliation the true Christian must desire peace the true Christian must desire a halt to this whole thing the true Christian must desire above all else that the divisions as the old Scottish Calvinists used to speak of it the scandal of division and the true Christian must really desire that the scandal of division should come to an end for it's not easy to be a peacemaker you see what happens is this we sometimes feel wrong isn't that true? [16:52] we sometimes feel that someone has taken advantage of us or it may be that we feel that someone has been dishonest with us someone has miscalled us misrepresented us and then when all that happens we begin to feel resentful if it stopped there it wouldn't be so bad but you see our resentment spills over and it becomes in the end hatred and this hatred disturbs us and creates within us this revengeful spirit and we say to ourselves I'm going to get my own back on him on her or on whoever else it might be now I am not suggesting for one moment that the Christian has to take everything lying down not at all and I'm not suggesting for one moment that the Christian must become a doormat for everyone to tramp over him or her the Bible doesn't advocate that you remember when Jesus was struck on the face before his trial and he was the one who taught when you're struck on the cheek turn the other also but he didn't turn the other

Jesus immediately retaliated why smitest thou me is there any cause for this said Jesus was it necessary for you to strike me on the face was it necessary for you to exercise this degree of violence you see what I'm saying is this that our Lord did not take things lying down or take for example our Lord's teaching on forgiveness where he says this if thy brother he says trespass against thee what are you going to do well says Jesus first of all you rebuke him that's what to do if he trespasses against you you go up to your brother and first of all rebuke him tell him the wrong that he has done to you and then says Jesus if he repent forgive him and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day and seven times in a day turn again to thee saying

I repent thou shalt forgive him but you see the forgiveness depends upon the repentance it only depends upon whether an apology has been made I am not at liberty to forgive you for a wrong you do me if you do not repent or if you don't offer me an apology and you are not at liberty to forgive me unless I do the same thing that's our Lord's teaching on forgiveness it's not just an arbitrary thing that you do you see the Christian may have a just cause for resentment he may have a just cause for resentment but what the Christian is not at liberty to show under any circumstances or under any condition he is not at liberty to show blind hatred it's one thing to feel resentful it's another thing to be filled with hatred blessed are the peacemakers that is those who are not given to strife those who show no ill will to others those who don't divide people from one another those who strive

to reconcile opposing parties blessed are they blessed are the peacemakers so we must be called peacemakers we must be peacemakers it's only when we are peacemakers that people see in us that we are the children of God and that people call us the children of God as someone has said the man who divides men is doing the devil's work the man who divides men is doing the devil's work the man who unites men is doing

God's work now says Jesus if you belong to my kingdom you will be a peacemaker and the motivation in your heart as a peacemaker will be that of love we read together John 13 where Jesus gave a new commandment to his disciples and it was this a new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you that ye love one another by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another I don't wonder that and I go back to the Christian church I don't wonder that people today have turned their backs on the church do you they've said to themselves well I don't see much love among these Christian people so why should I bother going there or going to be with them they're so divided among themselves and oh how we long for the spirit of revival to come and when the spirit of revival and quaking comes to the church of God these unhappy and unnecessary divisions will be brought to an end it may be of course and don't misunderstand me it may be that in the

Christian church and I go back to this it may be that in the Christian church that there might inevitably have to be certain divisions because of the interpretation that some people may make of some scriptural doctrines or practices we're not talking about that I understand the position that is taken up by my Baptist neighbour and I appreciate his position and I respect it but it doesn't divide me from my Baptist neighbour and at the present moment I can lift the telephone and contact Mr. [24 : 28] Maclean of the Baptist church on Castle Street and find that I'm on very good terms of friendship with him now he on the other hand will find the same with myself but he wouldn't accept my position with regard to baptism and I appreciate that and I wouldn't expect him to do so so from that point of view there may have to be a necessary division along these lines but having said that we don't turn our backs upon one another in a rage we don't begin to call each other names we don't do our utmost to prevent people from going there if they wish to go there or from coming here if they wish to come here no there must be reconciliation understanding a striving to come together blessed are the peacemakers and so the motivation within the heart is love towards each other blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of

God the children of God that means to say if I am a peacemaker if I show this kind of disposition in my life if I have regard through love towards my neighbor then it will be openly proclaimed that I am indeed a child of God but one day and this is what Jesus has in mind too one day it's not only that I'll be called a child of God here but one day before God's throne God will openly declare me to be one of his children because this has been a characteristic mark in my life this is how Joseph Addison Alexander the American commentator of the last century puts it he says this they who practice and make peace however little honored in the kingdoms of this world shall be named and accosted and proclaimed in the kingdom of the Messiah not only as servants but the sons of God in other words will it not be that when we stand before almighty God on the day of judgment God will name us and say this man this woman it wasn't just that they were my servants on earth but they were my sons because they were so like my own son who came into the world to make peace are you like that am I are you a peacemaker or are you a troublemaker oh God grant but all of us in this congregation will be peacemakers and that is how people will recognize us as the children of God because we are like Christ let us pray eternal God we pray that we may have this virtue this Christian virtue in our own lives and that we may be peacemakers bless us now as we return to our homes and bless our loved ones everywhere and forgive our sins in Jesus name amen fire thatész o because we we thank you