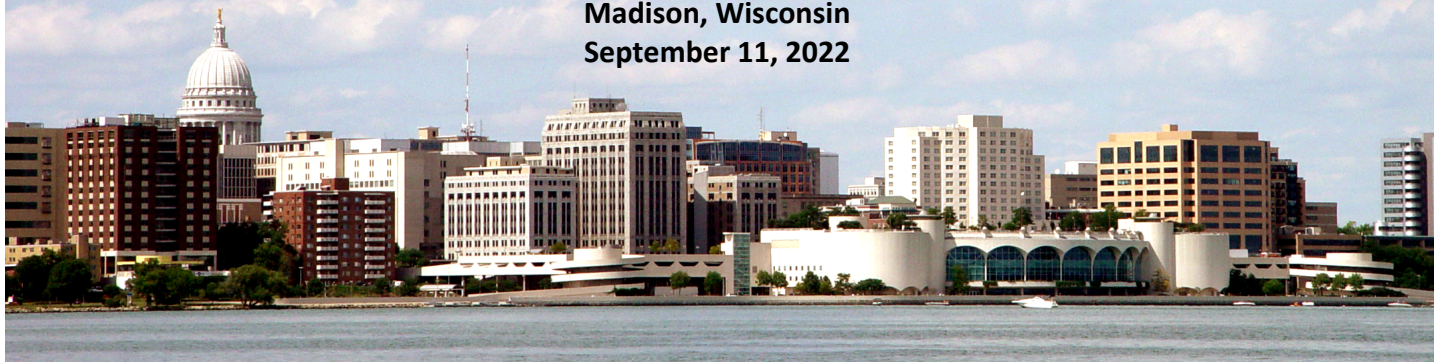


Kingdom Attitudes

PART 7 • MATTHEW 5:9 • Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Baxter T. Exum (#1658)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
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It is a great blessing to be with God's people this morning! If you are visiting with us today, we are glad that you are here, we would invite you to fill out a visitor card online, and we would also give the reminder that the elements for the Lord's Supper are available on the table in the entryway. We also have a weekly bulletin on the wall right inside the front door, with news and prayer concerns, and our contact information is on there as well.

Personally, we are thrilled to have Dale and Paula Berlin visiting with us this morning! They have been a great encouragement to our family for many years. My first memory of these two goes back to when my parents first studied with Paula using the Jule Miller filmstrips – a series of five lessons using a projector, and a screen, and a record player. I tagged along when I was maybe 6 or 7 years old, and I remember throwing up in their apartment as we were leaving one night – right there on the tile floor right inside their front door! But in spite of that, Paula would go on to obey the gospel, and then Dale as well. But we are glad that they have been here this weekend – to see both mom and dad. What a blessing!

Just a note on our schedule here over the next few weeks: After worship today, I hope to head toward Denver, to spend some time at the Bear Valley Bible Lectures. And then, I hope to head from there out to Washington (two hours west of Seattle) to be with my sister for a bit. I will also be preaching, once again, at the church in Port Angeles (on the last Sunday in September). Here, Gary Mueller and Hans Jensen will be preaching over the next two Sundays. And in our Wednesday class we will be looking at some videos produced by John Moore, a friend and fellow gospel preacher, who has helped put together some outstanding resources for understanding some key places in the Bible. He leads tours over there on a regular basis, and these three videos mention not only some places visited by Abraham (tying it in to our regular Wednesday class), but they also mention the Mount of the Beatitudes (tying it in to our Sunday studies). So, I hope you will pray for me as I travel, and I also hope that you will encourage Gary and Hans and also be sure to keep up with our Wednesday studies.

Before we begin, I should also give just a brief update on some recent contacts through the church website. Through the years, we've been getting regular messages from a gospel preacher in Mexico City, thanking us for the material and letting us know that he uses our sermons almost word-for-word. Well, just a few weeks ago, we got another message from Mexico, from a gospel preacher by the name of David, who preaches in rural Mexico, in the west-central area. David says he has been there for six months and is trying to establish a

congregation in an area he says is “excessively Catholic.” He says that it’s been difficult to establish classes in homes, but he is printing tracts as he can, using his own funds, and distributing those house to house. In his message, he was asking about copyright restrictions. And I can tell you, it is hard to find good material that is not copyrighted. And he was also having trouble running the PDF sermon files through Google Translate – Google was translating from top to bottom instead of left to right. Now, I want you guys to notice this last line up here, “I appreciate permission to translate and preach your sermons which are excellent.” I like that last part, and I just want to make sure you don’t miss that!

But, we replied, giving permission, and thanks to one of our young men, we already had a solution to the issue he was having with translating. Several years ago, one of our young men had a client at work who was looking for Bible study resources, but the man is both blind and deaf and uses his computer to communicate in Braille. But to do that, we had to start offering our lessons in plain text (in addition to audio, video, and the PDF text). So, we made that change, allowing this man here in Madison to access our material, even though blind and deaf. Well, this addition has opened up the ability to translate a bit easier as well. It takes me an additional 5 minutes or so every Monday morning, but it is a change that has been very helpful to a number of people. If you are not familiar with our website, we try to update the lessons every week, and this is what it looks like. We have the main image we used in the PowerPoint, and then we have the file available in MP3 (which is audio), PDF (which is the formatted text), TXT (which is the plain text), and then the link to the video of the whole service on our YouTube channel. We also have a way to share each lesson on social media. We hope this might be helpful in some way.

We are here this morning to worship God and to preach the good news that Jesus died on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up on the first day of the week. We obey that good news by turning to God in obedient faith, turning away from sin, and then demonstrating our trust in God through our obedience to his command to be baptized, immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins.

Our first example this week comes to us from Jake Sutton, a friend who preaches at the Piedmont Road congregation in Marietta, Georgia. Jake is a former police officer turned preacher, and he says, “It takes a village! Welcome your new sister in Christ, second from right, Charlotte Collins! She was baptized into Christ today for the forgiveness of her sins! The ladies on the end, Berma and Trisha, have been studying with her for a few weeks, and David Reece baptized her. What a difference all of God’s people can be!” And when he posted this on his personal page, Jake said, “What a day it’s been! I belong to a body of people where the preacher doesn’t have to do ‘it all’ and it’s the best thing I could be a part of!” Great news from Georgia this week!

The second example this week comes to us from the church up in Albert Lea, Minnesota. Some of you might remember that I spoke to a small group at the Freed-Hardeman Lectures back in February, when they asked me what to expect and how to reach people in the north. Well, they had a successful summer, and just a few days ago, Carter Guin, the young man who asked me to speak, says that “One of the first men we met in the neighborhood in Minnesota was baptized last night! Praise God!” And the church posted the video with the explanation that “Last evening Elliot decided to put Christ on in baptism. We praise God for his decision and welcome him into the family of Christ. Pray for our brother in Christ as he begins his journey.” I took a screenshot from the video. It was one of the most violent baptisms I’ve ever seen (“energetic” might be a better way of describing it), but right before he was plunged down into the water, the man yelled out, “I love you Jesus!” Truly, baptism now saves us and is described by Peter as “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (1 Peter 3:21). We share this by way of encouragement and reminder: What this man has done in a lake in Minnesota, you can also do today right here in Madison. Please get in touch if we can help in any way.

This morning, let's be turning once again to Matthew 5 as we return to our series of lessons on the "Beatitudes" or "Kingdom Attitudes," as found in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has just started preaching that **"the kingdom of heaven is at hand,"** and he starts this particular sermon with a series of eight statements where he uses a word that we translate into English as **"blessed"** or **"happy."** And we've been working through these over the past several weeks...

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

And then last week, ***"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."***

Today, we return to these kingdom attitudes with Jesus' statement in verse 9, ***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*** Once again, very easy to memorize, ***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*** And, as our custom has been, I'd like for us to note the blessing itself, and then we will close by looking at the reward.

I. **First of all, then, let's focus in on the BLESSING itself, as Jesus says, "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS."**

We should probably start by defining **"peace."** Many may define peace as the absence of war. And in a sense, this is true. However, we also know that peace is a bit more than that. Perhaps we can imagine a husband and wife who are mad at each other, maybe living in the same house, but not even talking to each other, and in fact, just barely tolerating each other. Are they at peace? They may not be at war with each other, but most of us understand that those two are not at peace with each other. And this is where we should note that the Hebrew word for peace is SHALOM, common greeting back in Bible times, a word referring to "everything that makes for the highest good." I don't know about you, but that's a little mushy! What does that mean? Some have suggested that SHALOM is not just peace, but complete peace, a feeling of contentment, completeness, wholeness, well-being, and harmony. We might compare it to wishing someone well. It's not just the absence of conflict, but it is a sense of calm, perhaps a feeling of satisfaction, a state of reconciliation.

As we think about this blessing coming from Jesus, and as we think about this as something that is encouraged, even commanded, by the King himself, as something he wants to happen in his kingdom, perhaps we should start by noting that Jesus himself is a peacemaker. Jesus is the ultimate example of this. In other words, as our King, Jesus never demands that we do something that he is unwilling to do himself. He is the example of peacemaking. In Isaiah 9:6, he is described as being the ***"Prince of Peace."*** In Luke 2:14, the angels announce his birth by praising God and proclaiming, ***"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."*** Just before he is crucified (in John 14:27), Jesus says to his disciples, ***"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."*** On the day of his resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples and the first thing he says is, ***"Peace***

be with you” (John 20:19). Jesus, then, is truly the **“Prince of Peace.”** So, as we think about what it means to be peacemakers, I’d actually ask that we look at another passage that describes exactly what Jesus did to bring peace, and that passage is Ephesians 2:13-16,

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

So, thinking of Jesus as our example, looking to our King for inspiration on this one, let’s notice that when Paul talks about Jesus **“establishing peace,”** he uses the same two words that are combined into the word **“peacemaker.”** Jesus, then, is the original peacemaker!

As we learn about peacemaking from our King, I would like to make three observations on this passage. First of all, let’s notice that Jesus made peace between God and mankind by reconciling us through the cross. In Isaiah 59:2, Isaiah says that our sins have separated us from God. We get to a point in life when we choose to sin, and even the very first sin builds a wall. I’ve illustrated this many times by explaining that if I steal your car, we have a problem, don’t we? Things are not okay between us. That’s what sin does. Sin separates. Well, in this passage, Jesus brings us back to God through the cross. In verse 13, we who formerly were far off have now been brought near to God by the blood of Christ. Peacemaking, then, involves restoring the relationship between God and humanity. Obviously, we play a role in this as we direct people to Jesus. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:18, **“God...reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”** We make peace like our King when we tell the world about his sacrifice – either from a pulpit, in a classroom, in your own home, or in a neighbor’s kitchen – whenever you share the gospel, you are a peacemaker.

The second aspect of peacemaking in this passage is that peacemaking also involves restoring relationships between people. Notice (in verse 14), **“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.”** Not only did Jesus restore the relationship between God and humanity, but he also made it possible for humanity itself to come together. He broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. Years ago, I got to see an actual warning sign from the wall in the Jerusalem temple. It was on loan to the Jewish Museum on the south side of Cleveland (near where Jordan went to school). This sign was once mounted on the wall that excluded Gentiles from the inner courtyard of the temple. I’m paraphrasing, but it basically said, “If you die as a result of crossing this barrier, you have only yourself to blame.” Well, in his death on the cross, Jesus tore down that wall, the wall between Jews and Gentiles. We play a role in this as well. What is important to our King is also important to us: Bringing people together – whether Jews or Gentiles or other groups. As peacemakers, we can try to understand what others are feeling; we can see something from someone else’s point of view, and we can bring peace to those around us.

A third aspect of peacemaking in this passage is that peacemaking is active, not passive. Peacemaking is something we do, sometimes at great personal sacrifice. We get involved. We do something to make the situation better. The blessing in Matthew 5:9 is not on those who are “peaceful,” but on those who make peace, the **“peacemakers.”** A peacemaker will make the first move. We think of God approaching Adam in the Garden. Fellowship was broken, and God didn’t just sit around waiting for Adam to do something about it, but God moved first. He was a peacemaker – not a peace-wisher, not a peace-dreamer, not a peace-hoper, not just a

peace-lover or a peace-talker, but a peacemaker. And our King calls us to do the same. Later in Matthew 5, for example, our King says that ***“...if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”*** Later, Jesus will tell us what to do if somebody sins against us, but this is what we do if we think that somebody else thinks that we might have done something against them. Does that make sense? If I feel that you might have a problem with me, I don't have to wait for you to say something, but I can make the first move. I am to be a peacemaker. If we have either sinned or have been sinned against, make the first move. Make peace. Be active. Start the conversation. This is something I can do. It may be uncomfortable, but it is doable. I think about the stereotypical pageant where the contestant has a goal of achieving world peace. I'm sorry, but I think I'm giving up the goal of me personally ever achieving world peace. But you know what I can do? If I sense a break in a relationship between me and another person (even if I didn't cause the break), I can start the process of establishing peace between us. I can love before being loved in return (Romans 5:8). This is in keeping with our King's example of being a peacemaker.

So, with Jesus as our example, 1.) we make peace between God and humanity by telling others about the way of salvation, 2.) we make peace in the world around us by improving relationships between people, and 3.) we make peace by getting involved, we make the first move, we do something to make the situation better. With this in mind, most of us can probably think of a situation in our lives right now where we've noticed a lack of peace. Maybe we have the privilege of stepping in and leading somebody to the Lord (making peace between God and mankind). Maybe we have the ability to bring peace between people (just as Jesus did). Or maybe we have a broken relationship that we can take action on right now. Regardless of whether we caused the lack of peace, in this passage, Jesus gives a blessing on those who make peace. He gives a blessing on those who get involved to make these situations better.

II. This leads us to the REWARD, ***“Blessed are the peacemakers, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD.”***

The reward is being ***“called”*** something. It's the idea of being named or designated, just as we might name the captain of a team or publicly recognize somebody for some accomplishment. And the title or description, the recognition in this case, is that those who are peacemakers will be called ***“sons of God.”*** Some translations have tried to update this by changing it from ***“sons”*** to ***“children,”*** but the most accurate translation here is apparently ***“sons”*** – not that women are excluded, but there's another word we might translate as ***“children,”*** and this is not it. Jesus really uses the word for ***“sons”*** here. So, I'm asking ***“Why?”*** Why would Jesus be so specific? Why ***“sons of God”*** and not ***“children of God”***? It's good to be ***“children of God,”*** but why ***“sons”*** and not ***“children”*** in this passage? Some have suggested that it's the picture of a family resemblance, ***“like father, like son,”*** as we might say today. It's a statement of character. We think of Barnabas being known as the ***“Son of Encouragement.”*** He wasn't a ***“child of encouragement,”*** but he was a ***“son of encouragement,”*** there was a resemblance to an encouraging person. Or for the opposite, we might think of Jesus speaking to the Pharisees and saying, ***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves”*** (Matthew 23:15). On another occasion (in John 8:44), Jesus also spoke to the Pharisees and said, ***“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*** We don't want to be sons of hell! We don't want to be sons of the devil! We want the opposite of that. And so, when somebody sees us actively making peace, they may notice that we take after our Father, that we are doing what he has done, that we are like him. If I could put it

this way: We are children of God when we obey the gospel, but we will be called ***“sons of God”*** when we make peace (like he did, when we are like him) – when we reunite friends who’ve been separated, when we bring peace to a struggling family, when we reconcile with someone who has sinned against us, and most importantly, when we introduce someone to the Prince of Peace.

Conclusion:

We haven’t had time to talk about the opposite of peacemakers. But the good news this morning is that if we’ve ever been troublemakers in the past, we have the opportunity to change! Did you guys ever play “King of the Hill”? I’m thinking that may not be allowed these days, but in the mid-80’s, back behind Coventry Elementary School in Crystal Lake, Illinois, the playground had a series of obviously man-made hills, maybe half a dozen, and maybe 6-feet tall. At recess, we would take turns fighting to stay on top of a hill. If you got tossed, you had to go to the end of the line to try again. It was a constant stream of violence, and then we would get back to learning how to read. I can’t believe I survived my own childhood. It seems, though, that some people live like that. They attract all kinds of drama and conflict. There has to be some satisfaction to it, or they wouldn’t do it. But what an awful way to live. The better way is the way of peace. The rewards of conflict are so short-lived, so temporary. And so, the question is: Would we rather be king of the mountain for a few minutes during recess? Or would we rather be called ***“sons of God”*** for all eternity?

All of us have been placed in some stressful situations in this life. All of us have the potential to face some conflict. As children of God, our goal is to make peace, just as Jesus did – peace between God and mankind, and peace between each other – ***“If possible,”*** Paul says in Romans 12:18, ***“so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”*** Make peace, and let’s be called ***“sons of God.”***

If we can help you be at peace with God, we hope you will talk with me or one of the other elders after worship today.

Before we continue with the Lord’s Supper, let’s close our study by going to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are a God of Peace. We sinned, but you loved us so much that you gave your only Son as a sacrifice. He came to this earth, he taught us how to live, and then he died in our place. We pray that we would learn from his example this morning. We pray for wisdom as we face decisions, as we encounter conflict – in everything, we pray that we would do what is right, that we would have the courage to be peacemakers. More than anything, we want to be known as your children.

We come to you in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com