

ESF, Lord's day service message
7/26/2015

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

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

You may have heard the story of the Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel who invented dynamite in 1866. This earned him fame and much of his wealth. At one point in his life he held more than 350 patents, operated labs in more than 20 countries, and had more than 90 factories manufacturing explosives and ammunition. Yet today he is most often remembered as the name behind the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1888 his brother Ludvig Nobel died while staying in Cannes, France. The French newspapers mistakenly confused the two brothers and reported that it was the inventor of explosives that died. What shocked Alfred was not simply the reporting of his death but the opinion people held of him. One French paper's headline read: "The Merchant of Death is Dead." He set about changing his reputation, and change it he did.

If your name appeared in the headline news today, what would be the headline that sums up your reputation? –A trouble maker or a peace maker?

Although nobody likes conflicts, conflicts are real and we must find a way to resolve them and create peace in our lives. How can we do that? Today's word teaches us how we can be peacemakers.

Make inner peace with the peace of God

To be peacemakers, what we need first is inner peace, peace in our hearts. If we try to make peace with others while our hearts are troubled, we can only make a superficial peace. It is a peace which avoids conflicts on the outside, but can still hold unresolved anger, depression, bitterness and even hatred in our hearts. Therefore, even if there is peace

on the outside, we cannot be peacemakers if we don't have peace in our hearts. But if we have peace deep in our hearts, we can make peace in all circumstances.

Some of the earth's most violent weather occurs on the seas. But the deeper one goes the more serene and tranquil the water becomes. Oceanographers report that the deepest parts of the sea are absolutely still. When those areas are dredged they produce remnants of plant and animal life that have remained undisturbed for thousands of years.

That is a picture of the Christian's inner peace. The world around him, including his own circumstances, may be in great turmoil and strife, but in his deepest being he has peace that passes understanding. Those who are in the best of circumstances but without God can never find peace, but those in the worst of circumstances but with God never lack peace.

What Jesus means by peace in "peacemakers" is a peace which starts in our hearts and eventually brings about peace outwardly as well.

How can we gain peace in our hearts?

The root of all conflicts in our hearts is our sinful desire. James 4:1 says, "*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?*" Our sinful desire makes us into enemies of God and brings us under God's judgment. Under God's judgment, our hearts are filled with selfishness, pride, hatred, an unforgiving spirit, jealousy, and bitterness. There is no way to have inner peace with such things in our hearts. These things which cause conflicts in our hearts don't go away until we are reconciled to God.

Jesus came to be the mediator between sinful men and God. By His death on the cross, He paid all the penalties of sin which are impossible for us to pay and reconciled us with God. Then He brought us "peace with God" (Romans 5:1). Peace with God eliminates all conflicts in our

hearts caused by our sins. Nothing can take this peace away from our hearts. This is the peace which remains in our hearts regardless of what happens in our lives and what people are doing to us.

This is the peace that Jesus gives: John 14:27, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.....*

When we have such an inner peace, people will see the God of peace in us and will call us the “children of God.”

Make peace with others

The bible encourages us to “*live at peace with everyone*” (Romans 12:18), and to “*make every effort to live in peace with all men*” (Hebrews 12:14).

President Lincoln became a great leader by making peace with all men. He once got caught up in a situation where he wanted to please a politician, so he issued a command to transfer certain regiments. When the secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, received the order, he refused to carry it out. He said that the President was a fool. Lincoln was told what Stanton had said, and he replied, “If Stanton said I’m a fool, then I must be, for he is nearly always right. I’ll see for myself.” As the two men talked, the President quickly realized that his decision was a serious mistake, and without hesitation he withdrew it.

To make peace with others, we must share the blessing of God’s peace in our hearts with others. Jesus encourages us to pray, “*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*” (Matthew 6:12). It means that when we forgive others, we can actually enjoy God’s forgiveness of our sins. Remember always how much and how many times God has forgiven you. If you do not forgive others, you are like the man who can’t forgive a small debt (a hundred denarii) owed him by one person after his enormous debts (thousand talents) are graciously forgiven by his master (Matthew 18:21-35).

Also seek the fruits of the Holy Spirit such as patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Some of us may have those characteristics naturally. But to deal with conflicts and make peace with others, we need more than our own natural characteristics. We need the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who gives us supernatural characteristics. The fruits of the Holy Spirit always enables us to make peace with others. When we pray to God to give us the fruits of the Holy Spirit He will give them to us.

Receive the fruits of the Spirit. Let the fruits of the Spirit saturate your heart. Then treat others with these fruits.

If we treat others patiently, kindly and gently, usually others will treat us the same way. If we are patient, kind and gentle to others, we will be good listeners. And when we are good listeners, we can understand them well, and we can be compassionate to them. When others feel that they are treated kindly and compassionately, they have no reason to be angry with us.

The same words spoken in different ways can have very different effects. If we speak kindly and gently, it can prevent, reduce, or even resolve conflict. Proverbs 15:1 says, "*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*"

Many conflicts arise due to a quick temper. When we quickly react to other people's offensive words or attitudes with anger, we create tension and conflicts. But when we control our temper, we can deal with even very difficult people peacefully.

When others see the peace made by the fruit of the Spirit in your character, they will call you "a true believer."

Make peace between others

The word “peacemakers (eirenopoios),” on a general level means “to bring people together; to solve disputes and erase divisions; to reconcile differences and eliminate strife; to build right relationships.”

To make peace between others, we have to encourage them to have peace with God first and seek the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Good words will not bring peace when a person remains in conflict with God and does not have inner peace. So, before doing anything else, we have to preach “the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15) to those who are in conflicts.

As a mediator between people in conflicts, we also must follow the example of Jesus who is **the peacemaker** and the mediator.

Jesus always encourages his followers to treat each other with humility and respect. When the disciples were in conflict arguing who was the greatest, Jesus taught them the truth that they have to serve others to be greater than others (Mark 10:35-45).

People are in conflict because of selfishness and pride. When we encourage those who are in conflict to be humble to each other, we can make peace between them.

Also, Jesus encourages people in conflicts to follow His example of loving others: “*Love each other as I have loved you*” (John 15:12).

Jesus always sees the best in everybody. Jesus always treats everybody as a precious soul. Jesus sees marvelous potential even in the life of the worst sinner.

Jesus never spoke anything bad of somebody to another. He never talked about something negative of one disciple to another disciple. Even when he knew that Judas Iscariot was planning to betray Him, He neither

exposed the bad part of Judas nor directly talked about it to the other disciples (Matthew 26:19-25).

As Jesus did, we must try to reconcile two people in conflict by speaking the best of one to the other.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, were "on the outs" over a very trivial matter. This deeply concerned Deacon Brown, so he prayed that he might be a peacemaker.

He called on Smith and asked, "What do you think of Jones?"

"He's the meanest crank in the neighborhood!"

"But," said Brown, "you have to admit that he's very kind to his family."

The next day Brown went to Jones and inquired, "Do you know what Smith said about you?"

"No, but I can imagine how that scamp would lie about me!"

"This may surprise you, but he said you're very kind to your family."

"What! Did Smith say that?"

"Yes, he did."

"Well, if you hadn't told me, I wouldn't believe it."

"What do you think of Smith?" asked Deacon Brown.

"Truthfully, I believe he's a lowdown scalawag, but you have to admit that he's very honest in business."

"Yes, there's no getting around that; in business he's a man you can trust."

The next day Brother Brown called on Smith again. "You know what Jones said about you? He claims you're a fellow that really can be trusted in business, and that you're scrupulously honest."

"You mean it?"

"Yes, I do," said Brown.

"Well of all things," replied Smith with a happy smile.

The next Sunday the former "enemies" nodded to each other. Brown continued his "meddling" until the next annual business meeting of the

church when Smith and Jones shook hands and finally voted on the same side!

When we reconcile people in conflict by Jesus' love and bring peace to them, they will see the difference in us. The difference is not something from ourselves, but from Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Then they will call us true believers.