

ESF, Lord's day service message
7/21/2019

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

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

Catholics and Protestants have had a long history of conflict. There was one incident which tested whether they could make peace with each other. During WWII, three American airmen, who had escaped from a POW camp, made their way to a French village. The French hid them and helped them. While there, one of the escaped prisoners died from sickness and exhaustion. The other two Americans asked the local priest if they could bury their friend in the church cemetery. The priest shook his head and told them, "Only Catholics can be buried in there, but you can bury him in that lot just outside the fence." They buried him there, but during the night the priest and some of the people took down the fence and moved it to include the new grave. The priest explained, "A Protestant may not be buried in the cemetery, but there is no rule that says that we cannot move the fence to include a Protestant."

Although nobody likes conflicts, conflicts are part of our lives and we must find a way to resolve them and make peace in our lives. Jesus says that if we become peace makers we will be called sons of God.

How can we become peace makers? Today we want to find how the bible teaches us to become peacemakers.

Make inner peace with the peace of God

To be peacemakers, what we need first is inner peace, peace in our hearts. What Jesus means by peace in "peacemakers" is a peace which starts in our hearts and eventually brings about peace outwardly as well. 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 believers' inner peace. The world around them, including their own circumstances, may be in great turmoil and strife, but in their deepest being they have peace that surpasses all 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.

How can we gain peace of God in our hearts?

The root of all conflict 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 conflict 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.....*

In 1555, a Christian, Nicholas Ridley was sentenced to be executed because of his witness for Christ. On the night before Ridley's execution, his brother offered to remain with him in the prison chamber to be of assistance and comfort. Nicholas declined the offer and replied that he meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life. Because he had the peace of God, he could rest even in the moment of death.

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 between you and 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).

To make peace with others, we must share the blessing of God's peace given to us with others, especially with those who offend us.

There is a story of a young soldier who was a Christian. After the lights were out in the barracks he would slip down on his knees by his bunk in order to pray. One night the sergeant, who had little use for anything religious or Christian, threw his very muddy boots at the praying soldier, striking him on the side of the head. The next morning the sergeant found his boots beside his bed all clean and polished to perfection. He was so impressed by the actions of the young man that he was eventually reached for the Lord.

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 debt (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 seem to 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 enable 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. Constantly seek the fruits of the Spirit. Let the fruits of the Spirit saturate your heart. Then treat others with these fruits.

If we are patient, kind and gentle to others,

1). 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.

2). We will speak kindly and gently.

Many conflicts arise due to a quick temper or harsh word. When we quickly react to other people’s offensive words or attitudes with anger, we create tension and conflicts. But when we treat others with gentle word, we can deal with even very difficult people peacefully.

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.*”

These days, most of us are frequently using our cell phones and social media to communicate. Use them to make peace instead of provoking conflict. Do not use this form to vent your anger or post unwelcomed comments to others or to publicize nasty stuff. Do not use them to criticize or attack others. Instead use them to promote kindness, caring and love for others. Before you send a text or post some of your thoughts in social media, ask yourself, “Is this text or post kind or beneficial to others? Is this text promoting a caring and peaceful attitude toward others?” Only if you can clearly say yes, send it or post it.

On the other hand, you may receive from others nasty texts or social media posts which offend you. You may be tempted to get even with them by sending a similar nasty text. But if you react that way, you will increase conflict and lose peace. You will become a trouble maker just as they are. Refrain yourself from doing it. Just ignore them. If you must reply, reply to them with a brief but kind word. Always choose a way to make peace. Then you will be called a child of God.

Make peace among others in conflict

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 conflict, 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.

In addition, Jesus encourages people in conflict 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.

In a church, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, were in conflicts 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.