

Beatitudes-Peacemaking

(Week 7—Mar 10th)

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

-Matthew 5:4

UFC, *Gladiator*, Call of Duty, Lunchtime school fights, nightly news, gossiping, wars of words... We are continually surrounded by violence, conflict, hate, anger, death, and brokenness. And sadly, we oftentimes celebrate it. We have been so conditioned to either cheer on the main character as he avenges someone's death by slaughtering another, or we have been so desensitized of violence that our favorite video games are about who can kill the fastest. Is it wrong for a Christian to love Halo or GOD? The answer is not as simple and easy as you might think...

In the middle of our fallen, broken, violence-plagued culture and society, we are told by Jesus to be “peacemakers.” What does this mean? Is it possible today? Where do we start? Well as followers of Jesus Christ, if we genuinely want to become like our leader and Lord, then we must become like the “Prince of peace.” Being a peacemaker is not merely choosing not to start fights—physical, verbal, or otherwise. Being a peacemaker means actively stepping into the middle of conflict, disorder, and enemies and making efforts to create peace. Isn't this what Jesus did? Why did Jesus ultimately come to earth as a man? It was because God's creation was in conflict with its Creator. God's people had rebelled against their King and chosen to make themselves enemies of their loving, gracious, yet just God. Jesus came to step in between His Father and humanity to bear the punishment that we deserve for our sin. This is the most incredible example of taking a bullet for a friend as there ever was.

God's wrath and judgment were ready to be let loose to destroy all sin and evil that had infiltrated His creation—which meant He must destroy all of sinful humanity. But Jesus, the Prince of peace, chose to be our peacemaker and took action. Jesus stood between us and God. Correct that, Jesus hung between us and God on the cross in order to re-establish peace between the Creator and His creation. In other words, we were about to be taken outside and given a cosmic “beat-down” that we deserved and that we would not survive. But Jesus stepped in and saved us. He was willing to take the beat-down Himself, though He didn't deserve it, so that we could be spared. But not only be spared—so that we could become children of the most amazing Father ever, and so that we can enjoy an eternally fulfilling relationship with God. How amazing is that?!?

So when God calls us to be peacemakers, He is calling us to imitate Jesus. He wants us to look where there are problems—where there is conflict, disorder, chaos, hate, violence—and He wants us to bring the message of peace. Will it make us cool? Popular? Liked? Probably not. Is it going to cost us something? Will it hurt at times? Will it be inconvenient and difficult? Definitely. But Jesus tells us that it's the best way to act like a child of God, so it seems pretty crucial to living out whom we are in Christ.

Questions

Why is it often so difficult to stand up for or fight for peace?

Read Romans 14:19, Ephesians 4:3, and Hebrews 12:14. What is the common command? Why do you think God places such a high priority on peace for a Christian's life?

Read Matthew 5:21-22. What does God say in regards to our need to be able to show mercy to others and forgive those who hurt or offend us?

Read Matthew 5:23-25. Why do you think God says that we should wait to bring Him our worship until we have made peace with others?

Do you have any relationships that you need to make peace in right now? Do you need to go and ask someone's forgiveness? Do you need to go and graciously confront someone who has offended you and offer them forgiveness? Make a commitment to do this in the next week.

How can you help be a peacemaker through your general behaviors as it relates to your friendships and relationships?

Waging Peace

A woman's only son was killed. She was consumed with grief, hate, and bitterness. "God," she prayed, "reveal his killer."

One night she dreamed she was going to heaven. But there was a complication: In order to get to heaven, she had to pass through a certain house. She had to walk down the street, enter the house through the front door, go through its rooms, up the stairs, and exit through the back door. She asked God whose house this was.

"It's the house," He told her, "of the man who killed your son." The road to heaven passed through the house of her enemy.

Two nights later, there was a knock at her door. She opens it, and there stands a man about her son's age. He identifies himself: "I am the one who killed your son. Since that day, I have had no life. No peace. So here I am, my life is in your hands. Kill me; I am dead already. Have me thrown in jail; I am in prison already. Have me tortured; I am in torment already. Do with me as you wish."

The woman had prayed so long for this day. But now she finds she cannot kill him. She doesn't want him thrown in jail. Or tortured. She asks only one thing: "Come into my home, and live with me. Eat the food I would have prepared for my son. Wear the clothes I would have made for my son. Become the son I lost."

And so he did.

Peacemakers do what God Himself has done, making sons and daughters out of bitter enemies, feeding and clothing them, blazing a trail to heaven straight through their houses. No wonder they will be called sons of God.