

## **Happiness Through Peacemaking**

### **Matthew 5:9**

#### **Pastor John Miller**

Because we only have one more week after today and I like to keep the context, let's back up to Matthew 5:3. Don't forget to memorize these Beatitudes.

Jesus said,

"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 meek,

For they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

For they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

For they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

For they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

For they shall be called sons of God."

Jesus begins His famous Sermon on the Mount, covering Matthew 5-7, with what we know as the Beatitudes. Notice that they are "attitudes." They are the characteristics of those who live in the kingdom of heaven.

I pointed out in verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and then in verse 10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." So the Beatitudes open with "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and they close with "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And everything in between is a description

of the character and the beautiful attitudes of those who are living in the kingdom of heaven.

They are “poor in spirit,” they “mourn” over their sin, they are “meek” and submitted to the will and the Word of God, they “hunger and thirst for righteousness,” they are “merciful” toward others, they are “pure in heart” and they are “peacemakers.”

Notice in verse 9, the blessing on the peacemakers: “Blessed...”—or “O how happy” or “To be envied”—“...are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons...”—or “the children”—“...of God.”

There is no question that we live in a troubled world. And for most of man’s history, there has been war, fighting and strife. Our hearts were sad this past week when we heard the news about the attack upon these mosques in Christ Church, New Zealand. I have been to New Zealand many times. It’s a beautiful place and would be the last place on earth you would think you would see violence of that nature. But we know that man is filled with bitterness, anger, hatred and sin and that it leads to man fighting against man.

We know that from the Old Testament, God started with peace in the garden, and we know from the New Testament, in the book of Revelation, that it will end with peace in a new city. But everything in between the two is war, war, war and war.

What theologians call the “mega-narrative,” the big picture, is that it all started with Satan’s rebellion against God. One of the greatest mysteries—if not the greatest mystery—of all the Scriptures is the mystery of iniquity; where did sin start? If “in the beginning there was God” and there was nothing else, and then God created angels, and God started everything, then where does evil come from? It doesn’t come from God; the Bible is clear about that.

God created angels, and one of those angels was called Lucifer. He was a beautiful, powerful, heavenly angel. But the Bible says that there was “pride in his heart.” Sin started in the heart of Lucifer. The best that we can do is to understand that this is the origin of evil: the heart of Lucifer. Lucifer wanted to exalt himself above God; he wanted to be greater than God. So Lucifer rebelled against God, and the Scriptures indicate that Lucifer was kicked out of heaven, he came down to earth, and on earth, he tempted Adam in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, rebel against His Commandments, and that has set man on a path of rebellion and war against God.

So today, at every level of war—whether it be personal, marital, in the family, domestic or whether in the city, the state, the nation or the world—these wars started in the heart of Lucifer or Satan, and then it came with the Fall and the disobedience of man. There is this cosmic war behind the scenes. It is pictured in the raging heart of man as he is at war with God.

Now the Bible doesn’t tell us that God is at war with man, but man is at war with God. The Bible uses the term “at enmity with God”; we’re enemies of God. But not on God’s part; God loves the world. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world...”—a rebellious world, a hostile world, a sinful world—“...that He gave His only begotten Son.” So the whole story of the Bible—here’s

the mega-narrative—is that God is trying to reconcile man back to Himself.

So it starts with peace in the Garden of Eden, then there is the fall of Satan and the fall of man, nothing but war, but when we get to the last chapter of the Bible in the book of Revelation, there is the new heavens and the new earth. All that is evil will be shut out, and there will be righteousness and peace forever. Praise God! But right now we are in this period in which there is fighting and warring going on.

The moment a person is born again and becomes a true child of God, they have peace with God. Romans 5:1 tells us that “Having been justified by faith, we then have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” So this is peace with God. At the moment of conversion, the war is over; I’m not fighting against God anymore. A little white flag has gone up in my heart, I surrendered and trusted Jesus as my Savior.

Philippians 4:7, a Scripture about peace, says that we can have “the peace of God.” The peace with God is salvation; the peace of God is sanctification. Sanctification is coming to a place where I’m trusting God and resting in God and believing His promises, and it’s God’s peace ruling and reigning in my heart and in my mind.

Knowing the God of peace and sharing the Gospel of peace and having the peace of God in my heart, we, as God’s people, become peacemakers. We are going to see that’s the identity—that we are the children or sons of God.

If we are going to understand and live out this Beatitude, we need to ask some questions about the peacemakers. The first question we want to ask is, “What did Jesus mean by this term ‘peacemakers’?” This term only appears here in the whole Bible. There are other variations, grammatically, of this, but this is the only place that this exact term “peacemaker” appears.

Jesus isn’t saying, “Blessed are those who have peace,” or “Blessed are those who are peaceful,” but “Blessed are the peacemakers.” So we need to understand what he means by that term. Notice that it has two parts: “peace” and “makers.”

The word “peace” or “shalom” is more than the absence of trouble. When we think of peace, what do we think of? We think of being in the mountains on a warm, spring day. You stretch out your cot and lay on it, you have your iced tea or lemonade, the wind is gently blowing through the pine trees, you can hear the squirrels and hear the pine cones falling and your wife has taken the kids for a long hike. Praise Jehovah! You’re just kickin’ back. Blessed peace! “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.”

But I tell you that to say that peace is not the absence of strife. Maybe for your ladies, peace is when your husband is gone all day and you can have peace and quiet and he won’t disturb you. Peace is not just the absence of conflict or war. Rather, peace is all that is good from God.

I would define peace as encompassing all that makes for a person’s well-being and is positive. It is God’s blessing on your body, soul and spirit. When you are in Israel and you greet people,

they say "Shalom." They don't say, "How ya doin'?" They say "Shalom." If you're from Texas, you say, "Shalom y'all." But if you're from Israel, you just say, "Shalom," and then you respond, "Shalom, Shalom." You have to give them an extra "Shalom." It means all the blessings, the goodness and the prosperity and the provisions of God. So peace is not just the absence of strife; it's the presence of blessing.

Then what does Jesus mean by "makers"? I have to admit, of all the Beatitudes, this is the hardest for me to grasp. But I believe it means that we do something actively. We pursue peace. We actually help make peace. We are to pursue the things that make peace. It involves that I have peace with God. You can't be a peacemaker if you're not at peace with God, if you're not saved. So I'm saved. It also involves the peace of God in my heart. I can't be a peacemaker if I'm not at peace. Then I seek to reconcile people. But I also take the Gospel of peace or the good news of Jesus Christ that the war is over and that you can be reconciled to God. So we are reconcilers or ambassadors for God.

Now I want to tell you what a peacemaker is not. A peacemaker is not an easy-going person, who glosses over issues and acts as though everything is okay when it is not. Do you know people like that?

"We have an issue."

"No, we don't."

"We have a problem."

"No, we don't."

Maybe in your marriage; your wife says, "Honey, we have to talk."

You go, "Oh, no. Can we talk tomorrow?"

"No. The Bible says, 'Don't let the sun go down on your wrath.' Let's talk."

"No, no. Let's do it tomorrow."

"No; the sun's going to come up on our wrath if we don't deal with it."

A peacemaker isn't passive. It isn't a person who says, "I don't want to ruffle feathers. I don't want to upset people. I don't want to confront issues. I don't want to deal with problems. I just want to sweep it under the rug." We want to use that expression and make like there are no issues here. That's not a peacemaker.

Secondly, a peacemaker is not an appeaser or one who settles for peace at any cost.

I want to give you a principle here. Everything I say today is summarized in this principle. Go

back to verse 8, which says, "Blessed are the pure in heart." What follows purity of heart is peacemaker. That's no accident. Purity always comes before peace. Truth comes before unity. There must be integrity, no hypocrisy, if there is going to be harmony in our homes. You can't cover sin. The Bible says that if you try to cover your sin, you won't prosper. If there are issues in your life or in your home or in your workplace or in your church, they must be confronted and dealt with. So the point I want to make, and the principle that is all throughout Scripture, is that purity always precedes peace. The Lord says, "There is no peace to the wicked. They are like the troubled sea." If there is sin in your heart, there is going to be strife in your life. So you have to have a pure heart.

The book of Jude says that we should "contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints." There are things that we should argue about and fight about, and we should contend for the faith. We should stand for the truth of God's Word. We're not going to fight over the color of the carpet or the style of our worship or dress codes or things that are non-essentials of the faith. But we are going to take a stand over things like the Bible being the Word of God and Jesus is the only way of salvation. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We're going to take a stand and fight, if we have to, over the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, over His substitutionary death on the Cross, over His bodily resurrection. These are things that we stand for, so to have purity and truth, we must stand for righteousness in God's Word. As Christians, we are to be peacemakers, not to be peace-breakers. That comes when we are willing to stand for the truth.

The second question I want to ask about verse 9 is, "What are the marks of a peacemaker?" A lot of these points dovetail together. Number one, a peacemaker is characterized by honesty. That ties in with purity. There is integrity. If you're practicing hypocrisy or duplicity or dishonesty, do you expect there to be harmony in your home? No way. If you're trying to cover sin and you're living a life of duplicity and you're not real, you wonder why there's not harmony in your marriage. It's not going to happen. In your relationship with people, you must be honest. And in your marriage and in the church.

The Bible tells us to "Speak the truth in love." I'm amazed how often in my counseling with people that I have to come back to this point: "Speak the truth in love." They ask, "Pastor John, how do I deal with this problem? I'm not getting along in my marriage." Or "These kids are doing.... What's going on? How do I deal with it?" I tell them, "Speak the truth, but speak it in love." Someone said, "Truth without love is brutality. Love without truth is hypocrisy." It's so true. If you speak the truth in love, then you become a peacemaker.

In the Old Testament book of Jeremiah, it talks about the false prophets. It says, "They have also healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace." So the false prophets were saying, "Peace, peace!" when there was no peace. They were giving a false message; they weren't dealing with the problem.

Secondly, a peacemaker is willing to risk pain, the pain of asking for forgiveness or the pain of confronting an offender. In Matthew 18:15-17, the Bible says that if someone has an offense

against you, you go to them in love and confront them. Say, "What's the problem? Why are you treating me this way? Why did you say this about me? What is your problem with me?" Then you deal with it. You don't go to other people. You don't gossip. You don't backbite and complain. You don't come to the pastor, first off, by the way.

"Pastor Miller, I just need to tell you that this person said this about me."

"Have you gone to them to ask them about it?"

"No, no. I just thought I'd let you know first."

I don't need to know that. I don't want to know that. "Go to them."

"Oh, but that's scary."

"I know. But you want to be at war? You want conflict?"

"No."

"Then muster up the courage and go to them. 'Speak the truth in love.' Go humbly. Go gently. Go with kindness in your heart."

Maybe you did something to offend them that you're unaware of. I can't tell you how many times people have come to me and I say, "I didn't know. I'm sorry. I love you. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. It wasn't intentional. Please forgive me." That's something very hard for us to do: to say that "I was wrong. I'm sorry. Please forgive me." It's so hard to get that out.

I grew up in a Christian home and had an amazing, godly, Christian mom and dad. My dad set an example for me that I pray I can maintain. I know I fail sometimes. But my dad was always humble enough to admit when he was wrong. I'll never forget my dad coming into my room at night and saying, "John, forgive me. I'm sorry. I was wrong." I actually saw my dad tell me, "I'm sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me. I love you." He apologized to me. Dad apologized to me. So he set an example for me with my wife and with my kids and with my staff and with my other relationships; to be willing to admit that I was wrong. A peacemaker has to admit when there is sin in their own life that is causing friction and be willing to admit it and forsake it.

Thirdly, a peacemaker must declare war on sin, on the thing that is breaking peace. I think of Jesus, Who was the ultimate peacemaker. But He went into the temple and made a whip and overthrew the tables of the money changers. You know the story. He did it at the beginning and at the end of His ministry; Jesus did it twice. He drove them out of the temple. He said, "It is written, 'My Father's house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of thieves." He's got a whip and He is hitting them, and He's knocking over the tables and chasing them out. Jesus did that.

You say, "Well, that's not very nice."

If I'm going to love peace, I have to hate sin. So Jesus took action. We need to do the same. It's so very important. James 3:17 tells us where war comes from. James says, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." Then he goes on to say in 4:1, "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure..."—or "lusts"—"...that war in your members?" There is first the purity, then there is the gentle, easy-to-be-entreated and easy-to-get-along-with-others peace. You need to deal with sin in your own life.

The third question I want to bring out from this Beatitude is, "What are the blessings of the peacemaker?" We've learned that we must have peace with God, we must have the peace of God, we must seek to reconcile others to God, we must try to get along with others by "speaking the truth in love" and admitting when we are wrong and dealing with sin. Now there is a blessing—as with all the Beatitudes—here in verse 9. It says, "For..."—or it's the rationale—"...they shall be called sons..."—or "children"—"...of God." Now "Blessed" or "O how happy are the peacemakers..."—and here's the reason why—"...for they shall be called the children of God."

The Greek word translated "children of God," would be better translated—and I want to be faithful to the text—"sons of God." Some of the modern translations do that, because the Greek term there is "huios" or "sons." It's not "teknon" or "children." You ask, "Well, what's the difference? A child is a son and a son is a child."

The term "son of" was used in Bible days to indicate character and nature. You were a son of a father, so you were like your father. It was an expression that was used to convey the idea of reflecting character and the nature of God. James and John were called "the sons of thunder," because they wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the people of Samaria. Can you imagine that? "Sons of thunder"—let's fry them on the spot! Let's go witnessing with a flame thrower. Turn or burn! Get right with God or go to hell! Pretty radical. So the idea of "son of" is conveying the idea that they have the nature, the character and the attributes of God, if they are "son of God."

Now let me make a distinction here. Jesus alone is the son of God. That means that in a unique sense, He alone is divine; He is the son of God. We are "sons..."—plural, and also "daughters"—"...of God." Not that we are God in any way but that we are His children. When the word is used not as "children" but as "sons," it is carrying the idea of adult sons and daughters of legal age, who can enjoy the blessings and benefits of God and have His nature and character.

Who is calling them "sons of God"? The answer is that God is. The amazing thing here is—and what an awesome blessing and privilege it is—that God the Father calls you and me His sons and daughters. We're His children, and because we are showing peace and making peace—we're merciful and pure in heart and we're peacemaking—then we're labeled the "children" or the "sons of God."

By the way, as with all the Beatitudes, the word “they” in verse 9 is emphatic. It means “they, and they only.” They, and they only, have the blessing and the joy and the happiness of being called the children of God.

There is one last question I want to ask. That is, “How do we become peacemakers?” There are four steps. First, realize that peace comes from God. He is the God of peace. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’” So peace starts with God. If I’m going to be a peacemaker, I must be right with God.

The second step to becoming a peacemaker is that I must repent of my sin that is breaking the peace. Isaiah 48:22 says, “‘There is no peace’ says the Lord, ‘for the wicked.’” So whether that is sin in my life, sin in another person’s life, sin in a church, sin in the nation—I must confront that sin if we are going to have peace, and I must repent.

Thirdly, I must receive Jesus Christ as my Savior. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right...”—or “the power” or “the authority”—“...to become children...”—or “sons”—“...of God, to those who believe in His name.” How do you become a son or daughter of God? You believe on Jesus’ name. In Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is called the “Prince of Peace.” When we come to know Christ and He dwells in our hearts, we become peacemakers.

And the fourth and last step to becoming a peacemaker is to take the Gospel of peace to others. Isaiah 52:7 says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace.” If you go to people and tell them about Jesus, you have beautiful feet. You are spreading the Gospel of peace. In Ephesians 6:15, when Paul is talking about the armor of God, he says, “having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.” So they are called the sandals of peace. So every day you put on your sandals of peace and go out and tell people that they can be reconciled to God.

Paul, writing in 2 Corinthians 5:18, said, “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” Remember that I told you that the world was at war with God. The world is hostile toward God, but God is not angry with the world. God is not hostile toward man. He has proven it by sending His Son from heaven on a peace mission. He sent Him to a cross to die a horrible death as a substitute for man’s sin, the cause of war. And when Jesus died on the Cross, He paid the penalty for our sins so that we can be reconciled back to God. When Jesus hung on the Cross, it’s almost as though He took one hand and reached out to God the Father, and with the other hand, He reached out to sinful man. In the Cross, there is reconciliation.

There is what the Bible calls “peace through the blood of His Cross.” It’s in Colossians 1:20: “having made peace through the blood of His Cross.” The only place for true peace to be found is in the Cross of Jesus Christ. If we’re going to have peace in this world, we’re going to have to have peace with God. If we’re going to have peace in our home, we’re going to have to have

the peace of God in our hearts. Peace comes from knowing Jesus Christ, Who is the Prince of Peace. We can go out with beautiful feet and become peacemakers. We call people and tell them that the war is over. The peace treaty has been signed.

Do you know that at the end of World War II, in the South Pacific, a lot of Japanese soldiers were still hiding in the jungles for months after the fighting had ended and the peace treaty had been signed? They had to go into the jungle and find these soldiers and tell them, "You don't have to hide anymore! You don't have to run anymore! The war is over!"

That's our message for this world: "You don't have to run anymore! You don't have to hide anymore! You don't have to be warring anymore! God has signed a peace treaty. It's with the blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross."

He calls to you to be reconciled. Amen.