

MATTHEW 5:9

INTRODUCTION

Our world is a world of conflict and although it looks for desires and works for peace; sadly peace so often seems elusive. We would love to see peace in Iraq or in Israel or in any of the other war torn parts of our world yet it seems so far from being achieved. Even within our own land we would love to see peace between quarrelling political parties or between communities that are in conflict because of their race.

In fact if every person were to be honest we would all love to have peace within our own hearts for we all know how elusive it is to find. We lie in bed at night and we are in conflict with ourselves as our mind constantly throws up things that disturb our peace. Family or work conflict or a whole host of other things just seems to rob us of much sought after peace.

This is why peace is a dominant theme within the bible. I am told that there are about 400 direct references in the Bible to the subject of peace. The bible begins with peace in the Garden of Eden and ends with peace in eternity. Although that peace on earth in the garden was shattered because of sin Jesus came into the world and died to make peace a reality. In truth there is and there can be no real peace until first of all we are at peace with God through forgiveness and through justification. There can never be peace between two people or families or groups or nations until there is true peace between people and God.

Peace can only truly reign in the hearts of people who have dealt with their sin through faith in Jesus Christ who has died to bring peace between men and God. Therefore the only people in this earth who can truly experience peace within their hearts are the people of God who are at peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

No one will be a peacemaker until they have come into a relationship with God until they are at peace with him for he alone is the one who enables people to be peacemakers. But it starts with being at peace with God.

1. THE MAKER OF PEACE

In reality as I have already said the reason why human beings lack peace here on earth is because they are without God who is the source of true peace. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament is full of statements demonstrating that God is a God of peace (Psalm 29:11 Isaiah 9:6 Romans 15:33, 2 Thessalonians 3:16). Since the time when mankind fell into sin the only true and lasting peace that men and women have known is the peace that comes from God as his gift to those who repent of their sins. Jesus Christ coming to earth was God's peace coming to earth because only Jesus Christ could deal with sin, which is the greatest barrier to peace (Ephesians 2:13-14).

Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection brings reconciliation between God and man and therefore brings peace and harmony where there was only conflict, war and disharmony (Colossians 1:19-20).

But we need to ask how can the cross bring peace? Well at the cross all of man's hatred and anger was vented against God. On the cross the Son of God was mocked cursed spat upon pierced reviled and killed. Jesus disciples fled in fear, the earth shook, darkness came over the earth and the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Yet through that violence God brought peace.

It's at the cross where God vents his anger upon sin and sinners who repent by pouring out his wrath against his Son who is carrying the sins of His people. It was through Jesus taking upon himself the wrath of God that peace is brought to sinners. Someone said, "At the cross God greatest righteousness confronted man's greatest wickedness and righteousness won the day." Because righteousness won then peace also won.

God the Father is therefore the source of peace but God the Son is the manifestation of that peace and the Holy Spirit is the agent of that peace. The bible tells us that when we receive the Holy Spirit then we begin to display the fruit that he brings into our lives and one of those listed for us in Galatians 5:22 is peace. So the God of peace sent the Prince of Peace who sends the Spirit of Peace to give the fruit of peace.

Now it is God's plan to bring peace to our world, our world began in peace and one day He will restore peace to it in the new heaven and earth. All of this is only possible because the God of peace sent His son to deal with sin and bring peace and reconciliation to all that turn to Him in repentance and faith. Now let us be clear there will never be peace in our world until men and women are at peace with God.

There will not be peace within our families or communities or nations until people turn from their sin and experience the peace of being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. However those of us who know peace with God can experience a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that does not depend on personal circumstances or well being. It is no wonder that Jesus says that such people are blessed, truly happy people.

However our text is talking about more than being at peace with God for it is talking about those who are peacemakers. But we will never be peacemakers until we are at peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ. In my home country in N. Ireland many years ago at the height of the troubles we had a movement started by women who had been affected by the troubles called the Peace People.

Their intentions were to bring peace into a conflict that had gone on for generations. Although their intentions were good, in reality they failed to bring peace because the truth is that only those who are in a peaceful relationship with God are able to be a true peacemaker, which brings me to my next point.

2. THE MESSENGERS OF PEACE.

Who are those who are God's messengers of peace here on earth? It is those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only true believers can be peacemakers because they are the only ones who belong to the God of peace who alone is able to make real peace between human beings because he offers peace between Himself and sinners.

Christians have experienced God's peace they have been reconciled to God therefore God has called every believer to peace (1 Corinthians 7:15) and gives to each one of his people a ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). The ministry of reconciliation is really the ministry of peacemaking. If God has called us to peace with Himself then He has also called us to make peace.

God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation; we are Christ's ambassadors in this world with a ministry of peace to our world (2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

Now there are I want to suggest at least three things, which should characterise a peacemaker.

a) He is One Who Himself Has Made Peace With God. I know I have dealt with this but it is so important that we need to repeat it. The gospel of the Lord Jesus is all about peace. Before we came to faith in Christ we were at war with God. No matter what we may have consciously thought about God our hearts were opposed to Him and against Him. We were God's enemies and hostile to God But it was while we were in this state that we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son Jesus Christ (Romans 5:10).

We did not need to change our ways before reconciliation was possible but it was while we were at war with God that reconciliation and peace came into our lives. When we received Jesus as Saviour, God imputed (transferred) Christ's righteousness to us and our battle and war with God was over we were at peace with God.

As a result we enjoy his peace everyday in our lives, his peace guards our hearts so that outward circumstances and inward turmoil cannot disrupt our peace with God (Philippians 4:7). Now because God has given us peace through Christ he has called each one of us who are true Christians to share God's peace with others.

b) A Peacemaker Leads Others To Peace Christians are ordinary people who have received forgiveness from God through Jesus Christ and therefore at peace with God and are called to bring this gospel of peace to the rest of the world. The Pharisees who lived at the time of Jesus saw themselves as peacemakers but in truth they were everything that true peacemakers are not. They were smug and proud, complacent and determined to have their own way and to defend their own rights at every opportunity.

They had little interest in making peace with the Romans or with the Samaritans or even with many of their fellow Jews who did not follow the party line of the Pharisees. They co-operated with others only when it was to their own advantage, for example they co-operated with the Sadducees because they wanted to get rid of Jesus.

But the peacemaking spirit is the opposite from that for it is built on humility and sorrow over sin, gentleness, hunger for righteousness mercy and purity of heart. A peacemaker is someone who displays all the other beatitudes and therefore brings peace wherever he is enabled.

He will speak and preach the gospel of peace at every opportunity and to do that means preaching the gospel of Christ, for peace is only achieved through Jesus Christ. So the gospel is not about what we must do to receive peace like some sort of self-help book but it is about Jesus Christ and what he did in order to give repentant sinners the gift of peace. The only way that we who are Christians are going to promote peace in our world is to do so through clear gospel presentations to sinners who are in conflict with God because of their sin.

We ought as we are enabled, to do all that we can to promote the gospel among our family and within our communities and in our nation.

This is why the church is called to preach and proclaim the gospel and not to be involved in politics for the only way that we will bring peace within our nation is to bring people to the God of peace. The way to do that is through clear witnessing and proclaiming of the Gospel of Jesus Christ who came into our world to open the door for sinners to have peace with God.

So let us be clear if we have received God's peace then the kindest thing and the most loving and peacemaking thing that we can do is to tell others the gospel. If we are involved in conflict at work or home or within our community the best thing we can do is to gently speak the gospel of peace to them for nothing brings peace into people's lives like the peace that God gives to sinners who repent and believe. Our families and communities and nation would be completely transformed

and peace would reign if only more within our family and communities came to know this peace that God gives to all who turn to him in true repentance and seek his mercy and grace.

c) A Peacemaker Lives at Peace with Others - The moment a person comes to faith in Christ then their job is to be peacemakers in every situation that they find themselves in. Obviously as I have said the best way and only way to be a real peacemaker is to speak the gospel of peace to them. But we also must seek under God to be peacemakers between fellow Christians as well. Now this means that we who are Christians are to live at peace with others both Christians and unbelievers. Obviously within the church we have a duty to live at peace with our other believers. We are responsible as far as it depends on us to live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18) but that is especially true with God's church. If we are at peace with God then we ought to be at peace with one another. That's why we are told that we are to put reconciliation with our fellow believers before everything else including the worship of God (Matthew 5:23-24).

Now reconciliation even between believers is not easy for sometimes it involves rebuking our brother or sister because of their sin. Sometimes it means others will rebuke us because of our sin and that can often spark resentment within our hearts and can put a further barrier between ourselves and our brother and sister.

But in truth peace with our fellow Christians must involve showing one another the sins that cause the barrier between us. In doing so of course there is a price to pay. Often confrontation brings more turmoil and not less, sometimes it brings misunderstanding, hurt plus many other emotions but in truth if a sin has cause a barrier between ourselves and other Christians then that sin must be exposed and dealt with otherwise there will never be true peace. Remember as believers we are to be peacemakers. Remember the gospel exposes sin in order to bring peace and those same principles also apply when there is conflict between two Christians (Matthew 18:15-20).

3. THE RESULT OF PEACEMAKING

The merit or result of peacemaking is the eternal blessing of being called sons of God. Imagine we whom once were hostile to God and in rebellion against him are now because of Jesus Christ at peace with God and are known as sons of God. We who are sinners by nature and are at war with God are now known as sons of God, we are related to God, heirs with God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). This was all made possible through Jesus Christ who made peace between God and us through the cross.

Peacemaking is a hallmark of God's children because it is the hallmark of God. His children must show God's character and God is a peacemaking God as the cross of Jesus clearly shows us. . A person who is not a peacemaker either is not a Christian or is a Christian who is not walking in obedience with God.

The person who is continuous disruptive, divisive and quarrelsome has good reason to doubt his relationship with God for it the peacemakers who are known as sons of God. This relationship is eternal for notice the text says; "they will be called." The tense here is in the continuous future, which means that throughout eternity, in heaven we will be called sons of God.

There will never be a time both now in this world and in heaven when we will not be called sons of God but the evidence of this relationship with God in this world is that we will be peacemakers.

In conclusion therefore we who are God's people, who have been redeemed by Christ, enjoy God's peace and we want others to enjoy it. We want others to live with the fruit of knowing God's peace we want others to be peacemakers. We who are believers live secure in the knowledge that we are loved by God because we have been brought into a peaceful relationship with him through Christ.

We therefore live in this world enjoying this security but also live as people at peace with God. We desire that others may know this peace so we proclaim the gospel of peace and seek to live at peace with our fellow believers and seek under God to help our fellow believers to live at peace with each member within the family of God.

Amen