

The Great Reversal: The Peacemakers

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Matthew 5:9

Today is quite a historic and momentous day regarding our history and the present.

- 400 years ago today, 41 of the first forefathers of America, the Pilgrims, signed the Mayflower Compact which was the first governing document of the new world in America. It would provide the basis of law and order and submission to God that became the foundation for American civil and spiritual life.
- Their intent was clear, “The glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.” It was those values upon which our nation would eventually form, become independent, and place forth a model of liberty, independence, and a government that operated from the bottom up, not the top down. If ever we needed to be reminded of the moral, spiritual, and civil underpinnings of our nation, it is now.

Seeing that we also celebrate Veteran’s Day, we are reminded that our freedoms, prosperity, peace, and safety has not automatically existed, but has been defended by millions upon millions of men and women who have put their own safety and comfort at risk in order to **protect and propagate** those freedoms both at home and abroad.

It also happens to be the anniversary of Armistice Day when Germans signed an armistice agreement with the allies in France to stop the carnage and warfare of World War 1 in 1918.

- With all these things said, it doesn’t shock me at all that we find ourselves in this natural progression through the beatitudes, at this powerful statement of Jesus, “***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.***”

[Matthew 5:9 NKJV] 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

THE DILEMMA OF PEACE

This idea of peacemaking has sent the church all over the map over the centuries.

- Some have taken this principle to the point of embracing complete passivism in regard to war or justice.
- Some have taken this to mean that they must embrace absolute concession in everything in order to not create conflict or stir the pot.
- Yet I struggle when I see this approach because it was Jesus, the ultimate peacemaker, who once said, “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword...” Speaking of course to the reality that sometimes the same truth that brings peace will also bring division.
- There is often not a clear-cut road to peace in a world full of conflict and division:
 - Sometimes peacemaking requires flexibility, other times it requires immovability. Sometimes it requires one to quietly submit, and other times it calls for vocal opposition. At times making peace requires diplomacy, and other times it demands a battle.
 - The big question tonight is, “Do you want to be an instrument of God’s peace?” If the answer is yes, the Holy Spirit will work in you His wisdom to show you how to be a sincere peacemaker.
 - St. Augustine said, “**Every war is fought for peace.**” In a broken world, sometimes war is the only pathway to peace... but there is a battle for peace.

“It is not security, but false security, which we would kill; not confidence, but false confidence, which we would overthrow; not peace, but false peace, which we would destroy.”

Charles Spurgeon,

PEACE SYMBOLS

All throughout history, mankind has always desired and tried to bring about some form of peace.

- There are those who have righteously sought for peace, fought for peace, and died for peace. There are those who have done plenty in the name of peace, but in reality, it was false peace.
- **Everyone wants it, but not everyone wants the One who can bring it.**

In the '60s and '70s came the rise of the peace symbol and the hand gestures which came to signify opposition to war (Specifically the Vietnam War).

- But these symbols eventually became more of an anti-government, anti-military, pro-free sex, drugs, and rockin-roll expression; a symbol of the hippie movement. That version of “peace” would have been better defined as, “let me live a destructive life of sin and affirm it.”
- The world has unknowingly adopted an early Christian symbol of peace, the dove and the olive branch. This, of course, originated with Noah sending out a dove after the flood and the dove returning with an Olive branch. Early Church Fathers saw this as an expression of peace from God after His wrath. Since then it has become a symbol of anti-war movements, especially in 1949 in the post-war peace movements after WW2.
- Peace has been the cry of generational icons:
 - **Whether it was Nixon’s staple peace sign wave, or John Lennon declaring, “All we are saying, is give peace a chance!” From Gandhi to the Pope, and Nelson Mandela to Muhammad Ali, and most recently Joe Biden, people have been shouting “Peace, peace, healing, healing, safety, safety.”**
 - **The declaration of peace is not the achievement of peace.** In fact, before the Lord returns, do you know what the cry of the world will be?
 - **[1 Thessalonians 5:3 NKJV] 3 For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.**
 - The world wants peace... but for all their wanting, it has never been achieved in its history... and it never will be. **For true world-peace will not come until the Prince of Peace rules the world!**
- ***Why? You can’t dispense what you have not received.***
- ***Human peace apart from Jesus is and always will be incomplete because you can’t have or make true peace without a transformed heart and mind.***

But the ultimate symbol of the peace that every human needs, the peace that is transformative and eternal, is the cross of Jesus.

- Only Jesus can bring the threefold peace that a person needs: **Peace above (with God), peace within, and peace around (with others).**
- The cross brings us **peace with God, the peace of God, and peace with others.**

A great many people are trying to make peace, but that has already been done. God has not left it for us to do; all we have to do is to enter into it.

D.L. Moody,

Being on the temple mount when the Molotov Cocktail was thrown.

A pastor texted me, ***“If only the Jews and the Muslims could act like good Christians there might be peace!”***

I was convicted by the statement and my first thought was, ***“What if Christians could act like real Christians when it came to being instruments of the peace of God?”***

Christians are to be peacemakers...

- Not peace-breakers – people who are constantly in the middle of carnal conflict, always finding a way to stir the pot (Not in order to cook the food but spill the beans).
- Not peace-takers – those who are at war within and around and can't stand that others aren't so they steal the peace of others.
- Not peace-fakers – Those who avoid conflict due to its inconvenience or difficulty but are inwardly bitter, angry, and divisive.
- Peace-makers – those who have received the greatest peace, genuinely seek to convey that peace in every area of life and relationships.

No wonder being a peacemaker is probably the hardest of all the beatitudes to achieve. Making God's kind of peace requires complete death to self, pride, and our selfish desire to be justified.

YET THE CHRISTIAN, having been brought the greatest peace, are to be dispensers of that peace in a world torn apart by sin.

- So, today I want to address the big question of WHY. Why must we strive to become makers, bringers, and purveyors of peace? In asking the why questions, we will also discover the HOW we become those kinds of people.

Peacemaker

poieō – To bring forth

eirēnē – Peace, harmony, safety, protection

QUOTE

The peacemaker is the one who always is willing to bring truth over emotion. They are not easily inflamed with carnal anger but can bring a confident yet humble solution. They are not ruled or swayed by circumstances but walk with a broad and wise view of a situation. They see beneath the surface while rising above the difficulty. They bring perspective to those who can't see beyond their own challenges, and they put off more light than heat. They are willing to fight for peace when necessary but are also willing to become the target if it ensures ultimate peace for others.

QUOTE

You could say a “peacemaker” likes to fight. He confronts hostility and assaults misunderstanding. She attacks problems with solutions. They war for peace.

1

We are peacemakers because God has made peace with us

In the New Testament, God is referred to as “the God of peace” 5 times.

- Interestingly enough, this is not a title that God carried in the Old Testament. It’s not that God changed, but that it wasn’t until Jesus was revealed that the ultimate expression of God’s peacemaking was manifested.
- Remember the angelic announcement upon the birth of the Messiah, “Peace on earth and goodwill toward men.”
- Jesus (God in human flesh, dying on a cross) is God’s ultimate and eternal declaration that He brings peace to those who were His enemies!

And why do we have peace with God? How can we have peace with God?

- After all, the Bible clearly tells us that we are natural enemies of God because of our sinful and rebellious hearts.
- Yet when God looked upon us as His enemies, as people dead in sin, the Bible tells us this mind-blowing truth about Jesus:

APPLICATION

For us to have peace with God wasn’t without a great cost.

- In order for peace to be possible, a great war had to be waged... a war against sin, death, and Satan. Jesus willingly made Himself a temporary victim of that battle, but only to become the ultimate victor of that war.
- Sometimes peace is only achieved when someone is willing to sacrificially fight for what is right. It was through the shedding of His blood that our peace was made possible. This is why the cross is such a center point for our faith. The cross is non-negotiable.
 - It breaks my heart to hear the modern thought of spiritualism today. Oh, we can all be right with God just as we are. We can have peace with God through whatever medium feels right to us. But that idea is a slap in the face of the great price Jesus paid on the cross.
 - This is why Jesus said, **“I am the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by me.”**
 - He wasn’t trying to be narrow for the sake of trying to make salvation difficult. He was telling the truth... that peace with God is so humanly impossible and unattainable, that the only way that could be found was through the perfect sacrifice of the son of God.
 - Even Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, asked the Father, **“If there is any way this cup could pass from me let it be so! Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.”**

The blood of Jesus was the only way for God’s wrath toward our sin to be appeased, and Jesus, out of His love for us, willingly accepted that cost in order to make the way of peace available to us.

[Colossians 2:13-15 NKJV] 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

[Colossians 1:19-20 NKJV] 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him (Jesus) all the fullness should dwell, and by Him (Jesus) to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

If I am content to heal a hurt slightly, saying “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace; if I forget the poignant word “Let love be without hypocrisy” and blunt the edge of truth, speaking not right things but smooth things, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

Amy Carmichael, Calvary Love

The Old Testament gives us an allusion to this when Isaiah prophesied about the coming Messiah, Jesus:

[Isaiah 9:6 NKJV] 6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Jesus came as a man of peace and the God of peace.

And He still runs by that same title today. He is the prince of peace, and He diffuses His peace through those who have made peace with Him.

And that’s where true peacemaking begins when a human soul is at peace with God.

When this reconciliation actually takes place, and one has “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”—even “the peace of God which passeth all understanding”—the peace-receivers become transformed into peace-diffusers.

Jamieson, R. Fausset,

APPLICATION

Whatever gap or distance exists between me and another person, it pales in comparison to the gap that existed between me and God.

- If I keep that in mind, then I shouldn’t have a problem being the initiator and extender of peace to those I’m in conflict with.

I love how plainly the Puritan writer John Flavel said it:

“What! At peace with the Father, and at war with His children? It cannot be.”

John Flavel,

[Romans 14:19 NKJV] 19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

- NOW: It needs to be said that the opportunity for peace doesn’t always = the achievement of said peace.
 - Jesus has made peace possible for all, but only those who humble themselves through faith will receive it.
 - In the same way, we should always be those who seek to make peace possible but realizing that peace is only achievable when all parties involved have the humility to walk in it.
 - This is why Paul writes:

Romans 12:18 (ESV)

¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

IF POSSIBLE: There may be times when it is not possible.

AS FAR AS IT DEPENDS ON YOU: You are responsible for your own willingness and openness to peace.

LIVE PEACEABLY: Don't be the one to create reasons for conflict

WITH ALL: Your husband, your wife, your children your neighbors, your co-workers, your friends, and your enemies!

2

We make peace because there is a need for peace

As I stated earlier, we don't have to look far to see the desperate need for peace at every level in our world and society.

- Even though some of the successful peace efforts, it doesn't take long for a new root of war to spring up because war and conflict are natural byproducts of unregenerated hearts.
 - Marriage counseling is a successful business because the minute one issue gets resolved, the flesh is ready to fight a new war once the couple gets home!

James nailed it when He wrote:

[James 4:1 NKJV] 1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

Wars without always stem from wars within.

Josh,

This is where Jesus comes in again!

- He doesn't only offer us the possibility of peace with God, but He offers the peace of God to govern and rule within our hearts.
- This is why Paul told us to... ***“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”***
- ***People cannot truly find peace around them if they don't first experience the peace of Jesus within them.***

Remember that beautiful promise Jesus made to His disciples before ascending into heaven?

[John 14:27 NKJV] 27 “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Jesus doesn't merely make peace, He gives peace... a one of a kind peace.

- ***The peace of Jesus is a peace that can sleep in a boat despite the raging, threatening storm all around it.***
- ***The peace of Jesus can embrace joy while carrying a cross.***
- ***The peace of Jesus can live every day free from the worry and anxiety of what the future may bring.***
- ***This is a peace a person can experience when they come to know Jesus.***

But can you really have this peace without Jesus? The answer is NO!

- I often open up fortune cookies just for laughs. Recently, Panda Express offered me this great piece of advice: **"Stay calm through the chaos."**
- As I thought about this, it hit me, "What a joy that I actually can stay calm because I personally know the keeper and calmer of the chaos!"
- Think about it. What reason would a person without Christ have for staying calm? Who or what are they trusting in to get them through their difficulty? Chance? Fate?
- **Hey, I KNOW PEACE IN A PERSON! A GOD! The one who lived in history, walked this earth, faced the most gruesome of fates, and then rose from the dead to eternal life and lives forever as the God who is sovereign over every detail of my life!**
- **Paul wrote to the Ephesians that not only did Jesus come to preach peace to us who were far off, but He himself is our peace. MY peace is not irrational or unfounded hope. My peace is a king who conquered death and reigns forever over all time and creation!**
- The peace I have is rooted in someone who can make that peace a reality. What's your peace rooted in?

But here's the thing about possessing the peace OF God in your life. You want others to know that same peace. You start to see other people who are not at peace with each other and your heart breaks because you want them to be free of their bitterness and selfishness and to be reconciled to God and each other. You begin to find a way to bring Jesus into the lives and situations of others.

- **When a coworker is having marital problems, you want to tell them about Jesus and what He would do so they could have peace.**
- **When a friend is suicidal or depressed, you want to bring them to Jesus so they can find peace with themselves.**
- **When your friend is in a bitter battle with another friend, you want to pray with them and for them, finding a way to insert Christ into the equation.**

The peacemaker is a shock absorber. He or she stops the angry, vicious cycle that produces wars and fights.

- The dad gets pushed around at work so he gets home and pushes around the mom who turns around and pushes around the kids who turn around and push around other kids. But when that cycle hits the Christian, it should never exit.
 - I thought another analogy would be that the Christian is a punching bag, but I thought shock absorber sounded less like a victim. But even the guy who hits the punching bag eventually gets worn and tired out from hitting it. You can hit the bag as hard as you want, but it keeps coming back into place, never wounded or hurt... and eventually you get tired.

The Christian can...

- Take a blow and turn the other cheek.
- Take evil and return good.
- They don't revile when reviled but entrust vengeance to the Lord.
- When wronged, they entrust themselves to the Lord rather than wronging and hurting those around them.
- **Selflessly fight for what is righteous and good because they know that peace cannot be achieved when evil goes unchallenged!**

What is the result? The peace of God within them starts to bring peace to the wars and conflicts outside of them.

[Hebrews 12:14 NKJV] 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

[Psalm 34:14 NKJV] 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.

We make peace because it identifies us as children of God

Called sons:

The likeness of the Father is seen in the child.

If you look at my children's physical appearance, you know that they come from Ashley and me. There are physical traits and characteristics that can be identified. When you get to know my children, you can tell whose personality they favor between my wife and me because we've rubbed off on them.

Apparently, when it comes to being identified as a child of God, the highest identifying "birthmark" is the desire and ability to strive for and deliver peace.

- ***They will know we are Christ-followers by the love we have for one another, but they will know we are sons and daughters of God when we are pursuing peace with all people.***

I find it interesting that Jesus uses this phrase "**sons (children) of God**"

- It implies a family relationship. It implies traits that are passed from the father to the child.
- Jesus called the Pharisees, "Sons of the devil." In John 8:44 He told them, "**You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do...**"

When a person becomes a child of God, the desires of their Father, they want to do, the pinnacle of that being to make peace where peace is needed.

We look like we come from the same DNA as Jesus when we are self-giving for the sake of bringing peace where enmity and animosity exists.

Josh,

So as we come to this conclusion, it's simple yet in so many ways contrary to our natural tendencies.

- There are blessings and favor that come in being a person that seeks to make and offer peace.
- Why?
 - Because God, the ultimate peacemaker, made peace with us, ushering us into a new and wonderful life and relationship with him.
 - Because everywhere we look in this world, the peace that only Jesus can bring is needed. It's needed within the human heart and in human relationships. Brokenness is everywhere that only the ***God of peace and the peace of God*** can repair.
 - Because God identifies us as His offspring when we seek peace. We look like Jesus to a world at war when they see His peace in us and extended out of us even when it comes at a personal cost.

Martin Luther once told a story of two goats that met upon a narrow bridge over deep water. He said, "They could not go back; they dared not fight. After a short parley, one of them lay down and let the other go over him, and thus no harm is done. The moral is easy: Be content if your person be trod upon for peace's sake. Your person, I say, not your conscience."

[James 3:16-18 NKJV] 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 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. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Prayer of Saint Francis (anonymous):

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring love.

Where there is offense, let me bring pardon. Where there is discord, let me bring union.

Where there is error, let me bring truth. Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.

Where there is despair, let me bring hope. Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.

Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

*O Master, let me not seek as much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that one receives, it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned, it is in dying that one is raised to
eternal life.*

Anonymous,