

Blessed Are The Peacemakers

It was Christmas day, in 1914, when a Scottish chaplain climbed out of a muddy trench on the battlefield in France. Slowly, he walked across the snow-covered, desolate no-man's land toward the German trenches singing Silent Night. Every onlooker expected him to be shot at any moment. Reaching the enemy lines, he reminded the Germans that it was Christmas day and that in their land and his, families would be singing Christmas carols. He suggested a truce. Both British and Germans climbed out of the mud to attend to the needs of the wounded, bury their dead, show each other photos of their wives, and play football together. That Scottish chaplain eventually received the military medal for his bravery. Probably that was the best Christmas of his life. That chaplain was a peacemaker on December 25, 1914.

BACKGROUND. Sometime in the period between A.D. 31-32, a crowd of spiritually hungry people were listening to a spiritual peacemaker as He spoke the words that would later become known as the Sermon on the Mount. In that sermon, He presented eight Beatitudes that start with the word "Blessed." Those eight statements are famous and have been quoted by millions of people and by many authors. The speaker of the eight spiritual truths was Jesus Christ.

So far we have studied seven of the eight Beatitudes. The focus of this study is the eighth Beatitude. We find it in Matthew 5:9.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
(NASB) Matt. 5:9

The Greek word that Jesus used for peacemaker is EIRENOPOIOS. It only appears one time in the entire New Testament - here in Matthew 5:9. Jesus used a unique word that rarely occurs even in secular Greek. The word refers to a person who restores peace between people. This individual is a "peace-seeker."



Mahatma Gandhi was "The Father of the Nation" of India. He was the "Apostle of Peace" in the eyes of some men and women. His first name, Mahatma, meant "great soul." He was considered India's conscience. His ideas and approach to nonviolent confrontation, or civil disobedience, not only captured independence for India, but has influenced many political activists throughout the world. Gandhi was a pacifist. Gandhi desired freedom for India from the British Empire. While he was upset that violence occurred as a result of his actions, he was not a peacemaker. He accomplished his goal. India eventually became free of British control. He died on 30 Jan. 1948. He found independence, but he did not find peace. Peace has always been elusive even for a pacifist.

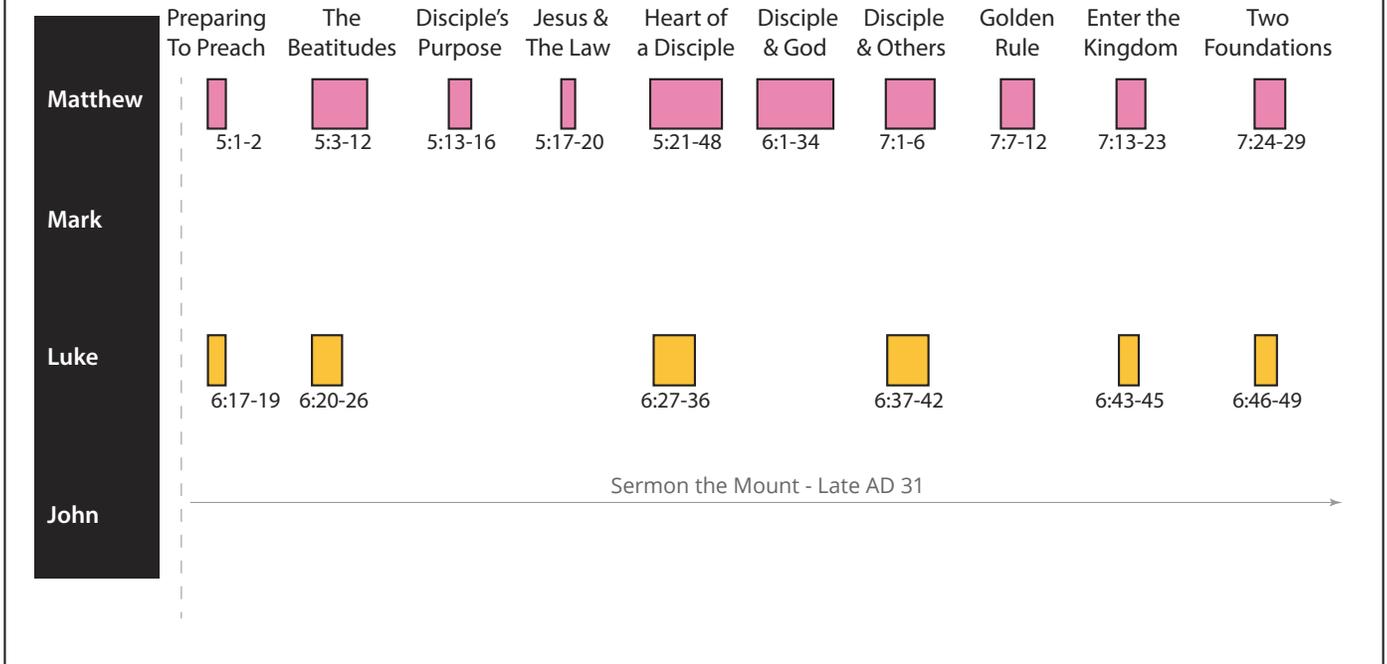
EIRENOPOIOS does not refer to a pacifist but to one who seeks peace. Jesus was not a pacifist. Jesus was a peace seeker in the spiritual realm. Even Jesus said that He came to bring a sword.

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (NASB) Matt. 10:34

Jesus was referring to the

Life and Heart of Jesus

Sermon on the Mount



division that would occur within families over Himself. Many families have been divided since Jesus walked on this planet because one of the members became a Christian.

A great illustration of peacemaking is found in a story involving Aristippus (approx. 435-366 BC) and Aeschines, (approx. 425 - 350 BC), who were Greek philosophers, followers of Socrates, and friends. It is reported that Aristippus and Aeschines had a strong disagreement and then left each other. Later Aristippus returned and asked Aeschines if there could be peace between them. Could they remain friends? Aeschines said that he would like that with all his heart. Then he added that Aristippus was the “worthiest of us. I started the strife and you began the peace.” Aristippus was the peace-seeker - the peacemaker. He sought for it.

THE PEACEMAKER. Who is the real peacemaker? The New Testament says that God is the real peacemaker. God is our example. Read the following passages.

[Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. \(NASB\) Rom. 15:33](#)

[The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. \(NASB\) Rom. 16:20](#)

[... and the God of peace will be with you ... \(NASB\) Phil 4:9](#)

[Now the God of peace ... \(NASB\) Heb. 13:20](#)

God is a God of peace. God is interested in peace. True peace comes from Him (2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; and Col 1:2).

TWO TYPES OF PEACE. There are two types of peace: false peace and real peace. False peace is peace that occurs between men who do not follow Jesus. They are not able to make lasting, real peace since they are controlled by sin. Sinful men and women are not interested in others but only in themselves. Sinful people seek their own interest. Real peace is elusive for them.

But true peace starts with God when spiritually dead men and women become spiritually alive and are influenced by the Holy Spirit. True peace starts with spiritual peace - when we make peace with God by believing in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . by faith . . . (NASB) Rom. 5:1-2

The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) . . . (NASB) Acts 10:36

By believing and trusting in Jesus Christ, the life of a follower of Jesus is gradually changed. The spiritually dead life is made spiritually alive (Eph. 2:1-2) and the Holy Spirit starts to transform the new follower of Jesus Christ he/she continues to submit to God.

The transformation occurs by God working in the follower's life. Galatians 5 tells us that the fruit or transformation the Holy Spirit produces in the life of a follower of Jesus includes love, joy, and then peace.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . . (NASB) Gal. 5:22-23

It is not a surprise that true peace comes by the Holy Spirit since we know that God is a God of love (2 Cor. 13:11). God is also a God of joy. Jesus said that He came to give us joy (John 15:11). We are also told that the Holy Spirit creates joy in our heart (Rom. 14:17; 1 Thess. 1:6). Love, joy, and peace are spiritual virtues.

TRUE PEACEMAKERS. True peace starts as a spiritual virtue in the heart which is then worked to the outside. In the following passage Jesus tells us why the peace of the world will not work.

But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. (NASB) Matt. 15:18-19

Only peace that starts as spiritual peace will work. True peace starts with a spiritual transformation. As a result the followers of Jesus are the real ambassadors of peace. They have peace with God. A peaceful attitude is growing inside, and as a result they are becoming peacemakers. Only the fol-

lowers of Jesus are the real peacemakers. Only the follower of Jesus can bring peace.

PEACE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. So it is not surprising that the followers of Jesus are called to seek peace.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. (NASB) Rom. 12:18

So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (NASB) Rom. 14:19

Pursue peace with all men . . . (NASB) Heb. 12:14

The followers of Jesus are called to seek peace - to pursue it. This requires more than a passive approach in our relationships with others. We should strive for peace in all relationships. We should be just like Aristippus.

But how do the followers of Jesus pursue peace? First we need to remember that we are in a spiritual war. Read the following passage from the Psalms.

Lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. (NASB) Ps. 85:10

Did you notice that righteousness and peace go together just as lovingkindness and truth do? We cannot have peace without righteousness. We have discovered so far that this true. Here is another reminder of this truth.

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (NASB) James 3:18

The evil one wants war between nations, cities, peoples, within families, and between friends. True peace comes

from above. Righteousness and peace go together.

The Italian scholar Francesco Petrarca (A.D. 1304-1374) said that the enemy of peace was sin with this comment,

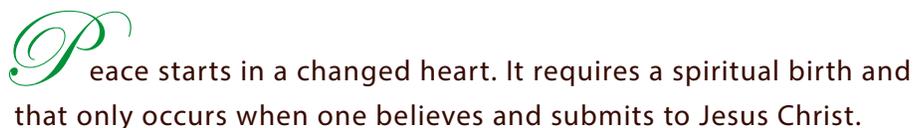
The five great enemies to peace inhabit with us: avarice, ambition, envy, anger, and pride. If those enemies were to be banished, we should infallibly enjoy perpetual peace.

He had great wisdom.

PEACE-SEEKING. So how do the followers of Jesus seek peace? There are at least four steps they can take.

First, we are to encourage those who are not at peace with one another. In Philippians 4, the Apostle Paul publicly encourages two women who were apparently at war with each other to live in peace with one another.

I urge
Euodia
and I urge
Syntyche to
live in harmony in the Lord. (NASB) Phil. 4:2



While a public statement like that would not be welcomed in many cultures, Paul's example reminds us that whenever we hear someone complaining or criticizing another person, we should challenge them to forgive and make peace with that person. When a follower of Jesus listens without taking action it means that he or she is not a peace seeker.

Second, we should appeal to others to forgive and accept those who have wronged them. Paul wrote a letter to Philemon. In that letter Paul encouraged Philemon to accept Onesimus. Onesimus was Philemon's servant. Here is Paul's request.

If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me.
(NASB) Philemon 17

Peace seekers get involved and help restore peace. Peace seeking starts with those who believe in Jesus. They must forgive others first. All true peace starts with our forgiveness.

Third, the followers of Jesus might need to perform church discipline. The first step of what might have been a church discipline situation is given to us in 3 John.

I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. (NASB) 3 John 9-10

Righteousness and peace did not exist in this church. This church leader was responsible for discord and unhappiness. He was in sin. Righteousness and peace go together. When peace does not exist, look for sin. The Apostle John warned this

man that if he came, he (John) would deal with him.

That is church discipline. The pattern for church discipline is given to us in Matthew 18:15-18.

The fourth step of church discipline follows if the person does not repent. Sometimes a member of a church is in sin and will not stop. At that point, the only biblical option is to continue the process of church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18:15-18. The goal of church discipline is to restore a sinning follower of Jesus - to cause him or her to stop sinning. The goal is not punishment. Peace will follow if the individual repents and stops sinning.

CONCLUSION. Peace starts in a changed heart. It requires a spiritual birth, and that occurs only when one believes and submits to Jesus Christ. Then the Holy Spirit takes over one's life and the spiritual fruit of peace starts to grow. Every follower of Jesus Christ is called to be a peace-seeker by encouraging others to make peace, to forgive, or by rebuking those who sin, and if necessary by following church disciplines.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace!

- Francis of Assisi