

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

For those of us with biblical ears this should present a problem for us:

THE PROBLEM:

Christ came to bring both war and peace.

- We think of Christ as the peace child, at Christmas we sing songs of peace and goodwill to earth.
- We don't think of Christ as coming to earth to bring war... or maybe we do and our brains never register the contradiction. We don't wrestle with what it means to believe Christ came to bring both.
- The following passages are taken simply from the gospels, there is plenty more to be said in OT prophecies and in the NT epistles, but let's JUST zone in on the gospels...

Matthew 10:34-35

³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

Luke 1:76-79

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
 for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
 in the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
 whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
 to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Matthew 11:12

¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.

John 16:33

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have *peace*. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Luke 12:49-53

⁴⁹ "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! ⁵¹ Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. ⁵² For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my **peace** I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

And here we are today, landing on "Blessed are the peacemakers"

- Being a peacemaker is an identifying mark of being a Christian.
- In fact only the peacemakers will be called "sons of God".

To understand this seeming contradiction we need to know a couple of things:

Who are we at peace with?

1. God → *Romans 5:1-2* → Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
2. One another → *Romans 12:18-21* → Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

What are we at war with?

1. Ourselves → *Romans 8:12-14* → ¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
2. "Opposition to the knowledge of God" → *2 Corinthians 10:3-6* → ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

THE SOLUTION:

Understand war and peace through a biblical lens.

Picture Jesus standing in front of Pontius Pilate:

- Pilate was a Roman governor, he represented an empire that sought PEACE through the means of WAR.
- Peace to the Romans meant that the land and its people were united under a single national identity with similar goals and philosophies.
- War meant destroying all opposition. Killing the rulers of opposing nations, defeating their armies, tearing down relics, imposing Roman ideology.
- Jesus represented a NEW kind of kingdom. In Jesus' kingdom peace meant submission not to a uniform idea, but submission to the order of the universe. God, the creator, was establishing peace not by force, but by mercy.
- WAR was not against individuals, but against the lies that held individuals captive from seeing the world as it truly is... in opposition to God and in need of peace with the divine.
- In Christ's kingdom enemies aren't destroyed, they are loved, prayed for... enemies are defeated not by force, but by peaceful opposition.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Being an ambassador means representing the king of another kingdom
- It means you're in foreign land
- It means your ideas, way of life and behaviours are different from the land in which you reside.
- Your mission is to carry out the mission of the one that sent you, to represent your kingdom in the foreign land

Be an ambassador:

1. Divorce yourself from worldly ideas.
2. Love your enemies.