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Matthew 5:9 – *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*

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Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

To get at what is a peacemaker...

We first have to understand peace.

So, what is peace?

I want you to picture your life and the different relationships you have:

You're a mother in relationship with your children;

A husband in relationship with your wife;

A girlfriend in relationship with your boyfriend;

A son in relationship with your parents;

A sister in relationship with your siblings;

A friend in relationship with your peers;

A student in relationship with your teacher;

A citizen in relationship with the government;

A worker in relationship with your company and bosses;

One of God's people in relationship with God;

A self, in relationship with you;

A patient in relationship with your doctor;

A congregant in relationship with the local church;  
 A homeowner or renter in relationship with your neighbors;  
 A customer in relationship with the bank or credit union;  
 A member of Western culture in relationship with the systems of society;  
 An inhabitant of earth in relationship with the creation...

The list could go on and on...

Life is made up of relationships.

Now imagine that each one of these relationships makes up a block in a wall...

A wall that is your complete life...

A lot of blocks put together to form a whole.

If that particular relationship is good...

Then that individual block is structurally sound.

But, if there's something wrong in that relationship—

Someone is sick;

A wildfire threatens your house;

You have bad memories from childhood with your family members;

You're living in guilt from something you did;

You're unhappy with a certain institution's handling of covid;

You're at odds with a boss, coworker, or friend—

If there is anything wrong in that relationship—

Then there is a crack or break in that particular block.

Individual relationships with people, institutions, creation, and society...

Making up the whole of your life.

So, what is peace?

Biblical peace—

Shalom—

Is having each and every one of these blocks whole or complete:

No missing blocks;

No gaps;

No cracks, breaks, brittleness, or gashes.

Peace in the Bible—

Is not just the absence of war—

It is comprehensive well-being.

It is wholeness and completeness in all of the complex pieces of our lives.

And it's not just our individual lives...

Because the biblical idea of peace/shalom...

Reaches out to creation...

It reaches out to every individual, society, and institution in the world.

Biblical peace is all-encompassing.

It sees us all as being interconnected...

Our lives—

Our blocks and our walls—

Fitting into the larger wall that is our world.

Shalom is all of these complex pieces fitting together in perfect harmony...

No cracks, blemishes, or gaps...

Everything living in perfect relationship...

Wholeness.

That is “peace.”

But there's a word that is added to this word, “peace”:

“Blessed are the *peace-makers...*”

Notice that Jesus doesn't say blessed are the *peacekeepers*.

Jesus doesn't say, blessed are the *peace-lovers* or *peace-wanters*.

Jesus knows that there's no peace to *keep...*

Our world is full of brokenness...

The blocks that make up our individual wall—

And our collective wall—

Are cracked, brittle, and in some cases missing altogether.

No, *peace-keeping* will not do.

And, it's a good thing to *love* peace and *long* for peace...

But a mere affection for peace won't do either...

*Peace-loving* and *peace-wanting* are too passive.

This word, “-maker,” is active...

It's a bundle of energy...

It's a doing word.

Actively working toward the well-being of all people and things.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

In the beatitudes...

Jesus isn't telling us how to become God's children.

“In order to be God's child, you have to be a peacemaker.”

No, he's telling us who we are.

As member of God's kingdom—

As God's children...

People saved by the blood of Christ—

We *are* peacemakers.

This is a part of our DNA now.

“The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.”

“Like Father, like daughter.”

“Like Father, like son.”

As God's people, we *are* peacemakers...

We take action...

We actively work toward the well-being of everyone and everything...

Because this is who God is.

In the beginning when our ancestors turned away from God...

We unleashed on this world widespread chaos and brokenness.

When we severed our relationship with God...

*All* of creation was impacted.

In Reformed theology this is part of the doctrine of Total Depravity...

Nothing in all of creation has escaped sins power and impact:

We see it in our relationship with creation;

Our relationship with ourselves;

Our relationship with others;

And especially our relationship with God.

We look around at the condition of our relationships—

At the brokenness—

And we know it's because of sin...

Systemic and individual sin.

God—

Seeing the destruction we caused to his perfect creation—

Didn't just sit back and say:

“You know, I'm really *longing* for peace.”

“I would really *love* for things to go back to the way I made them.”

God, seeing the mess we made...

Initiated action to fix it.

He set into motion his plan to bring back shalom to all of creation...

And that plan was centered on the 2<sup>nd</sup> member of the Trinity...

Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

In the book of Colossians it says:

“God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things...”

All things, meaning *all things*...

Every block in that wall that is cracked and brittle...

God wants to restore it.

How?

“By *making peace* through Jesus’ blood, shed on the cross.”

It’s that same word that’s in our passage:

“Blessed are the peace-makers.”

Our God is the great peace-maker...

Taking the necessary action to set things right...

To bring God’s shalom/peace into this broken world.

If in fact we are children of God...

Then we will image our Father...

The great Peace-maker.

I cannot tell you exactly what this is going to look like in your life—

How God wants to transform you...

And bring peace into your section of the world—

But we can say a few things.

First, it takes a willingness to engage...

A willingness to feel someone else’s brokenness.

A willingness to look at someone else’s wall and individual blocks—

To see the cracks and gaps—

And not turn away.

This is uncomfortable work...

But we’ll practice right here, right now.

Practice engaging with the brokenness (lack of shalom) of someone else.

Have any of your heard of the name Elijah McClain? (story from Osheta Moore’s *dear white peacemakers*)

Elijah was a 23-year-old man living in Aurora, Colorado.

He was walking home one day when someone called the police on him.

Elijah was anemic so his extremities would get cold...

So he would sometimes wear a ski mask.

The person who called the police said he looked “sketchy”...

But didn’t look armed or pose any danger to anyone.

3 police officers came out and confronted Elijah.

When he resisted—

I probably would’ve too if I was just walking home minding my own business—

Elijah was wrestled to the ground and cuffed.

He was held on the ground for 15 minutes...

At one point being put in a carotid control hold—

That controversial choke hold that cuts off the blood supply to your head...

Makes you go unconscious and is known for injuring the recipient’s neck.

Elijah was 5’6” and a whopping 140lbs...

I’m 5’9” and about 165lbs to put it in perspective.

He was a vegetarian and worked as a massage therapist.

During his lunch breaks he would go to the animal shelter and play the violin for the animals.

He was gentle...

You can hear it from his words to the police officers as they held him down:

“That’s my house. I was just going home.”

“I’m an introvert. I’m just different. That’s all.”

“I’m so sorry. I have no gun. I don’t do that stuff.”

“I don’t do any fighting. Why are you attacking me?”

“I don’t even kill flies. I don’t eat meat.”

“You are all are phenomenal. You are beautiful and I love you.”

Paramedics showed up because officers thought he was on something...

They thought he was high.

They administered a sedative, ketamine, and put Elijah in the ambulance.

One of the paramedics noticed that his chest was no longer moving up and down...

And that he didn't have a pulse.

Elijah was pronounced brain dead 3 days later...

And 3 days after that he died.

Where are the cracks or gaps in the blocks of Elijah's wall?

Relationship to his neighbors where they see him as a threat because he was wearing a ski mask;

Relationship to a system that immediately sees him as suspicious;

Relationship to police assuming he is high because he acts different;

And, if this was the first time something like this happened—

We could say it was a coincidence that he was Black—

But because it keeps happening...

We have to assume that the color of his skin played a role in his treatment.

So, his relationship to a system/culture that is automatically prejudiced.

This happened in 2019 before George Floyd and Breonna Taylor...

But it keeps happening.

There is a whole community of people with a different color of skin (black and brown)...

That have been living with huge cracks and gaps in their wall of shalom.

Laws and systems and people that have purposefully made sure they're not seen or treated as equals.

A whole economy and financial system succeeded on the back of their slave labor.

It's uncomfortable to engage with their brokenness, isn't it?

We want to say, "Yeah, but..."

"Yeah, but slavery was so long ago."

"Yeah, but it's not always like that."

"Yeah, but people shouldn't break the law."

Except every time we say, "Yeah, but..."

We're making an excuse for why we don't have to engage...

We're justifying why we don't have to actively work toward their well-being.

Maybe we want to say:

“Yeah, but that's the US.”

“It's not like that in Canada.”

Well, let's engage with our own mess then.

There are thousands of unmarked graves in Canada...

Sad reminders of the holes the church and government have punched into the walls of Indigenous people...

Making their lives anything but whole and complete.

The majority of people I see living on the streets—

My own perspective—

Are Indigenous.

God's peacemakers—

Disciples of Jesus Christ—

Are willing to engage with the brokenness of individuals and systems around them.

Which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing we can say about peacemaking:

It's not easy.

Peacemaking will call us to face our own sin and brokenness:

We'll be confronted with our own complicity in the brokenness of others...

How we've turned a blind eye to their pain;

It will call us to humble ourselves and seek the well-being of someone else;

Peacemaking will require our time and energy; (Mosaic Centre)

And, in some cases, it will result in persecution.

Use Jesus, the Prince of Peace, as our case study:

His main objective was to bring peace to the world...

Reconciling all things to God.

Thankfully the road he journeyed was easy and pain-free.

No! If Jesus suffered as a result of his peacemaking efforts...

We can expect to suffer too.

I think this is why the beatitudes build on each other:

It goes from purity of heart—

Make sure that the things you're pursuing are close to God's heart;

Then moves to actively working for peace;

And finally, it says:

“Blessed are you who are persecuted because of righteousness.”

Living in step with God and his kingdom demands sacrifice...

Expect it to be hard.

This is why, finally, and most importantly...

We need to begin with our own identity:

“Children of God.”

The work of peacemaking will demand our all...

So make sure you know who you are.

God loved you so much that while you were still his enemy...

Christ died for you.

Christ died so that you could be at peace with God...

Christ died for you so that you could be called son/daughter of God.

Unless it flows out of this identity...

Peacemaking will be in vain.

You'll be operating from your own strength...

Which will be diminished in no time.

When you're confronted with your own sin...

You'll be crushed by your self-guilt.

And when you're persecuted or don't see the results that you want...

You'll be left to despair.

God is the great peacemaker.

He is the original giver of shalom.

And he is working that shalom again in our lives and in this world...

Mending cracks and replacing missing blocks.

God is doing it through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit...

And, as his children, he's calling us to join his work.

Amen.