

1.23.21

The Way of a Peacemaker Is NOT Easy Part 2 Matthew 5:9-12

Matthew 5:9-12, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons (and daughters) of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad; for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

One of the points we looked at last week was, when as children of God, we make an effort, no matter how feeble, to love and pray for our enemies, be peacemakers, then I believe the Holy Spirit inside of us is activated and great things happen.

I believe the first action step of being a peacemaker is to take whatever and whoever before the Lord in prayer before a word or any other action is taken.

But as I was reading and teaching on David last week, David said this to the Lord. **Psalm 7:3-4, “O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is injustice in my hands, if I have rewarded evil to my friend, or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary...”**

David began his prayer with a self-examination before the Lord. If I have had any part in what is going on, if I am at fault, every partially, show it to me God. David was seeking a pure heart in everything that was happening in his life.

Steps of being a Peacemaker

- 1. Bringing yourself first before the Lord for examination is key, then you are in a position of purity to bring the person or problem you are facing to the Lord**

James 3:17, “The Wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.”

First pure then peaceable – not the other way around. We see this in the order of Jesus’ teachings. Blessed are the pure in heart comes first then blessed are the peacemakers. Purity takes precedence over peace. Purity is the biblical basis of peace.

After prayer, self-examination and being led by the Holy Spirit in how to pray for yourself and the person or situation you are struggling with, then the next action step I believe God would have us do is to...

- 2. Take some physical action. A peacemaker makes some physical moves towards reconciliation**

Let’s look at a couple of scriptures.

1 John 3:18, “Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions.”

I think this love in action can be shown in a couple of different ways. Jesus says this a little later in this sermon.

Matthew 5:47a, “If you greet only your brothers (fellow brothers and sisters in Christ) what more are you doing then others?” (those who are not Christians)

In other words, if there is a rupture in one of your relationships, of if there is someone who disagrees with you and you with them and you feel tension, don’t nurse that grudge. Don’t feed that ill feeling by ignoring or avoiding that person. That is the natural, fleshy thing to do.

You see them at Wal-mart and you skip the aisle they are in so you don't have to speak with them. You avoid a get-together or family function because you know they might be there. That is not what a Spirit led peacemaker does.

A peacemaker with a pure heart sees the opportunity to build bridges like Jesus built bridges with them. A peacemaker does not want any animosity to remain, they want reconciliation and harmony. So according to this passage, they may an effort to greet their enemy or person they are struggling with or who may be struggling with them.

They cross the street when they see them and they look them right in the eye and say, Good morning John. How are you? They do this and say this with a longing for peace. It is not a phony glassed over form of politeness that covers their anger. But it is from the heart with a desire to both have a pure heart themselves and to make peace when possible.

In light of this here is one of the things I believe we really need to think about.

The brother of Jesus said this. **James 2:17, "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself."**

While this is talking about faith that shows action I believe it also says our action shows our faith.

If we really believe that being a peacemaker is what God wants us to be and we show our obedience in God's call as a peacemaker, we are showing our faith in God to do a healing both in ourselves and in the other person if it is needed. This goes back to one of the points from last week but with an addition.

3. When as children of God, we make an effort, no matter how feeble, to love, pray for and to reach out to our enemies, be peacemakers, then I believe the Holy Spirit inside of us in activated and great things happen

When we are obedient to the teachings of Jesus great things happen in our lives, in the life of others and in this great country we are a part of.

I did some research and found that researchers believe there is around 384,000 churches in the United States. I also read that 65% of Americans claim to be Christians. The latest population numbers show the United States a little over 328 million. That would mean approximately 213 million American claim to be Christian.

If this is the case, then why have we slidden, as a nation, so far away from Christian values?

I heard a story that might shed some light on this.

There was a guy who fell upon tough times. He looked everywhere for a job but couldn't seem to land one. His last effort landed him at a zoo and as he was interviewing he said he would be happy to feed the animals, clean their cages and whatever else needed to be done.

The manager said the zoo had plenty of animal caretakers but noticing the man's large size he said this. One of the main attractions, an ape, just fell sick and died. If you are okay with impersonating an ape till our new one arrives, this is something I could use you for. The man was desperate for a job so he agreed to do it.

The manager got him a realistic ape suit and set him up in the ape cage. The people didn't notice and really seemed to enjoy the antics of the man dressed up as an ape. The man got into his part as well, beating his chest, howling like an ape and swinging around on the ropes and trees.

One day, this man was really getting into his part and as he was swinging on a rope he went too high, lost his grip on the rope and flew into the neighboring cage where there was a lion.

Knowing he couldn't yell for help as it would give himself away, he backed away into a corner from the lion, hoping someone would come and help him. As the lion began to drift nearer and nearer the man lost his nerve and began to yell for help. When the lion drew really close to him, it said in a low voice, be quiet or we will both lose our jobs.

My point is, faking it doesn't work does it. Saying you are a follower of Christ doesn't make it so. If we want to be change makers of our world around us, and I believe that is what God is calling us to be, then we come to know and are obedient to the teachings of Jesus.

Look at this next teaching of Jesus that fits into what we are talking about.

Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother (or sister) has something against you, leave your offering and go; first be reconciled to your brother (or sister) and then come and present your offering."

This teaching really elevates Jesus and God's thoughts about unity doesn't it? Jesus is not talking about if you have been offended in some way by someone. He is saying if someone has been offended by you in some way even if you don't think you have done anything wrong.

If your brother or sister in the faith has something against you, who is to take the initiative according to Jesus? You are. You are the one who is to be willing to go and make things right. Don't bring your offerings of praise, of tithes, of worshipping to God if there is disunity between you and another.

How many times would this leave us out of worshipping on a Sunday? More Sundays than we would probably care to admit.

Paul wrote this. **Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”**

So, as a peacemaker, we are taught to pray for, to greet and to try and make amends.

One last way I believe we can be a peacemaker in the manner that Jesus is asking us to be and that is...

4. Peacemakers serve their enemy or the person they are having a conflict with

Jesus speaking again says this. **Luke 6:27-28, “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to (serve) those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”**

Do good to those who hate you.

I had the opportunity to do something similar last week. Not for an enemy, but for someone who asked me to do something and I didn't really want to do it. But it was in the midst of developing a new relationship so I said okay. It wasn't like serving an enemy but the concept is the same.

As a peacemaker, we set aside our own personal wants, wishes and things we are comfortable with to serve another. We never compromise biblical truths but we are willing to sacrifice our own comfort and desires in order to serve another.

In closing this morning, we start our peacemaking in prayer. Prayer for ourselves, prayer of blessing on our enemies. Then we look for opportunities to greet and to serve our enemies.

As far as it depends on us, we strive to live at peace with everyone.

As peacemakers though, we know that peace doesn't always come and we will talk about this next week.

Let let's pray.