

“Blessed Are the Peacemakers”
(Matthew 5:9)

Introduction: One of the names which is given to our Lord in the OT is the Prince of Peace. Isaiah writes, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6). The reason why He is called the Prince of Peace is that when He was to come, He would bring with Him a kingdom, a kingdom which would in time bring peace throughout the world. Isaiah continues, “There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.” And how was this to happen? “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this” (9:7). We know from Scripture that Christ did come, and He did establish His kingdom. But this peace which He was to bring, was not to come right away. There was already in this world another kingdom, a kingdom of darkness. And the ruler of that kingdom didn’t take too kindly to having his territory taken away. And so he is fighting with all his might to hold his ground. He is fighting a losing battle, for there is no way that he will ever triumph. But he fights on anyway. Now what this means is that those who are in this Prince’s kingdom must also fight. They must fight to bring peace. It doesn’t come easy, it’s not coming right away, but it is through this warfare that it will come.

Now Christ has chosen us, He has called us to fight in this battle. And He has given us weapons to fight with, weapons of warfare. They are the Word of God and prayer. But our purpose is not to destroy the enemy, but to make them our friends. We are not to overcome evil with evil, but we are to overcome evil with love. Jesus tells us this morning,

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

I. First, what does it mean to be a peacemaker?

A. The answer is really quite simple. The word means exactly what it says: to be one who makes peace, where there is no peace.

1. Everywhere you look around you, there is conflict of one kind or another.
 - a. There is conflict within families.
 - (i) Today, many husbands and wives struggle to love one another. Divorce is rampant. Some even go so far as to kill their spouses to be freed from them.
 - (ii) Many parents hate their children, and children their parents. Child abuse has become epidemic in our society. Not too long ago, the daughter of one of our visiting families decided to kill her father, because she hated him so much. And so she crept into his room while he was sleeping, and shot him three times in the head, killing him instantly.
 - b. There is also conflict in the church.

- (i) There is strife among brethren. Because we differ from one another, in the way that we think things ought to be done, we complain, we grumble, and we fight with each other, trying to get our own way.
- (ii) Our hearts have grown cold, and we have become unwilling to forgive and love one another, the way that Christ told us we should.
- (iii) Even between churches there is conflict, because we disagree. One holds to infant baptism and another doesn't. One believes in sprinkling and another in immersion. And so each church looks at the other with suspicion and hatred, and some write each other out of the kingdom of God altogether. There is a family persecuting the Hughson church because they believe in the sovereignty of God and because they hold to infant baptism. The Hickman church has also begun a campaign to discredit the Hughson work, for the same reasons.
- (iv) Now don't misunderstand what I'm saying here. Truth is important. And we should always seek for the truth and seek to live by that truth. We must never compromise.
- (v) But we must also be careful not to take things too far. Yes there are doctrines which are foundational to Christianity, without which a person cannot be a Christian. You must believe in the Triune God. You must believe in a Jesus who is both God and man. You must believe in the Virgin Birth, in the miracles, in the perfect life and atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must believe in His bodily resurrection from the dead. If you do not believe these things, then you are not a Christian.
- (vi) But a person may believe these things, and yet differ in other areas. That's why there are so many denominations in the world. These differences have made it necessary for us to labor for Christ separately. But even though we are separate, yet we are still one body. We must not write each other out of the kingdom.
- (vii) John Owen, in a quote that I included in the bulletin this morning, writes this: "If ever we intend to take one step towards any agreement or unity, it must be by fixing this principle in the minds of all men—that it is of no advantage to any man, whatever church or way in Christian religion he is of, unless he personally believes the promises, and lives in obedience unto all the precepts of Christ; and that for him who does so, it is a trampling of the whole Gospel under foot to say that his salvation could be endangered by his not being of this or that church or way, especially considering how much of the world has mixed itself into all the known ways that are in it. Were this once well fixed in the minds of men, and did they practically believe that men shall not be dealt with at the last day in groups, as of this or that party or church, but that every individual must stand upon his own two feet, live by his own faith, or perish for want of it.... we should quickly find their keenness in promoting and contending for their several parties taken off."
- (viii) Yes, there is strife in the church. Some of it is good, because some have turned away from the truth to embrace error. But there is also much which is not good. There is much which dishonors the Lord.

- c. But there is not only conflict in the family, and conflict among the body of Christ, there is also conflict in society.
 - (i) There is strife between employer and employee, between governing officials and the governed, between state government and federal government, and between the officials themselves.
 - (ii) And there is, of course, conflict among nations, one of which we are very aware of as NATO continues to bomb Yugoslavia for their racial cleansing of Kosovo.

- d. But the greatest conflict which goes on in our world today, is that which I already mentioned in the introduction: the conflict between the two kingdoms.
 - (i) The devil, through a lie he told to Eve, was able to gain control of this world. He had the government handed over to him. This is why he is called the prince of the power of the air, and why, when he tempted Christ, he was able to offer Him the kingdoms of the world. He controls the world. It is a limited control. God is ultimately governing all things. But it is something which the Lord allows him to do during this present time.
 - (ii) But the Bible tells us that his monopoly has been broken. It was first broken in a small way, in those few people the Lord called out of the world, such as Adam and Eve, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. But then it was broken once and for all and sentenced to destruction when that One who was stronger than he, came and crushed his head by dying on the cross.
 - (iii) The Bible says that Jesus, in that act, bound the strong man, so that he could no longer deceive the nations. And, in that act, He established His own kingdom in this world. It started small, like a mustard seed, but it will grow large, becoming the largest in the world. Its influence was small at first, like leaven placed within bread dough, but it's working its way through the world, until the whole world is leavened.
 - (iv) And while this is going on, while the kingdom of light continues to advance in enemy territory, there is conflict, conflict between the two kingdoms. It is the kingdom of darkness which is bringing all of this strife. God's kingdom is a kingdom of peace. And once it puts an end to this usurper's kingdom, then there will be peace.

- 2. Until that happens, there will be a need for peacemakers, for those who will make peace between those who in conflict.

II. The obvious application of this point to us is that the Lord has called us to be peacemakers. This is the responsibility of every Christian.

- A. Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."
 - 1. Who are these "sons of God", if they are not Christians?
 - 2. The Bible says that to be a "son of God" not only means to be adopted as one of His children through faith in Jesus, but it also means to be like Him.

- a. God actually makes us like Him, at least in some measure, before He takes us as His children.
 - b. He sends forth His Spirit, changes our hearts, and makes us love the things which are right and holy, so that we will love Him and His Son. And once we have received His Son, He then adopts us as His own children.
 - c. But this change of heart that He brings about is a renewal of the image of God in our souls, that image that was lost in the Fall, which our Catechism tells us consists in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness (S.C. # 10). Peter says that we who are Christ's are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). And once we become sharers in that nature of God, we begin to act like Him.
3. One of the ways, in which we will be like Him, is that we will be peacemakers.
- a. God desires peace. He sent His Son into the world to bring peace. Remember what Jesus said: The Father sent His servants, the prophets, again and again to the people. And then finally, He sent His Son, "saying, 'They will respect My Son'" (Matt. 21:37). And why did He send them? It was to reconcile them to Himself.
 - b. When Jesus was born, what was the message that God sent through the mouth of His angels? They said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Luke 2:14).
 - c. And Christ having come, and having died at their hands, according to His sovereign good pleasure, what does God do? He brings judgment on that nation to be sure. He sent His armies to destroy them in 70 A. D. But before He did, He sent out His ambassadors to proclaim peace to His people. He sent them out to proclaim this same message of reconciliation throughout the world. Paul writes, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you in behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). "For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13). It's not God's fault that men have wicked hearts and refuse to be reconciled to Him. It is their fault.
 - d. But since God is like this. We, who share His image, will be like this as well. That is our nature. And it is the greatest blessing in the universe to be made in the image of God, for this is God's mark of ownership upon us.
 - e. But since there is also another nature in us, a sin nature which fights against the new nature, the Lord also gives us the command to pursue peace.
 - (i) Consider what Jesus says in Luke 6:35-36, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." The Lord commands you to be just like Him.
 - (ii) God is a peacemaker, and so He commands us to seek for peace. He says, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). And He says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18).
 - (iii) This tells us that God wants us to make peace, not to stir up strife.

Solomon says, “There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers” (Prov. 6:16-19). God hates those who stir up hatred among the brethren. But He loves those who make peace.

- (iv) And so we should do all that we can to bring peace into every situation.
 - (a) We should seek peace in our families. Husbands, forgive your wives and wives your husbands. Be reconciled and love one another. Parents love and forgive your children, and children your parents. Children, love your brothers and sisters. How can your families experience the blessing of God as long as you are not at peace with one another?
 - (b) We should seek for peace in the church. Forgive your brothers and sisters their wrongs. Go to one another and be reconciled to one another. Uproot the bitterness from your hearts. If you are aware of strife between brethren, do what you can to promote reconciliation. Pray for peace among the different bodies of Christians, so that we might love one another as Christ called us to.
 - (c) Pray for your neighbors, for your friends, and for those you work with. Sow the seeds of peace wherever you are. Pray also for the peace of this nation and the other nations which are at war, so far as it is pleasing to the Lord.
 - (d) And above all, seek to reconcile those you know with God. Outside of Christ, all men are God’s enemies and will surely perish eternally. But God has given to us the word of reconciliation. We must proclaim it to them, or they will surely be destroyed in His judgment.
 - (e) Having said these things, realize that sometimes peace will not be possible. As long as there are those who refuse to submit to God and His Word, there will be strife. If that happens, there is nothing you can do. Sometimes there are those who must even be driven out of the church, because of the damage they do to the Lord’s people. Solomon again writes, “Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out, even strife and dishonor will cease” (Prov. 22:10).
 - (f) But remember, as much as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Make sure that you are not the cause of the conflict, make sure you do all that you can to bring peace. And you shall be called the sons of God.
 - (g) May the good Lord help us all this morning to hear His Word and give us the strength to do what it says. Amen.