

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9

Small Group Discussion

Opening questions:

- When you realize that you have a conflict with someone, what is your natural reaction? Do you run toward the conflict to resolve it, or run away from it? (There are no right/wrong answers here). Where do you think that tendency comes from?
- Who do you think of when you think of a “peacemaker?” Does anyone immediately come to mind?

Background: We have been studying the Beatitudes this summer in our “Happiness” series. Jesus’ statements at the start of the Sermon on the Mount are describing the attributes of people who have found true blessedness, or lasting happiness. This week’s Beatitude is v. 9: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Leaders: Work through the three sections below, reading the Scriptures listed and then discussing the questions.

I. What does Jesus have in mind when he talks about peacemaking?

- A. Pastor Josh referenced the Hebraic idea of *shalom* (peace), and described it as more than just the absence of conflict. *Shalom* refers to complete harmony in relationships.
 1. With that meaning in mind, what is a peacemaker? (Leaders: Pastor Josh answered, “Someone who pursues harmony in relationships.”) Feel free to let people elaborate on what this looks like in real life.
- B. Read Matthew 5:23-26.
 1. What kind of situation is Jesus here describing?
 2. Who is supposed to take the initiative to restore the relationship?
 3. What makes for a sincere, effective apology when you have offended or wronged someone?
- C. Read Matthew 18:15-20.
 1. What kind of situation is Jesus here describing?
 2. Who is supposed to take the initiative to restore the relationship?
 3. How would you go about addressing someone who has wronged you, in a way that would make for effective reconciliation?
 4. Given the different kinds of scenarios described in these passages, what might we say about the following question: Whose responsibility is it to initiate the reconciliation process when conflict arises in relationships? (Leaders: Pastor Josh said that in light of these passages, anyone who realizes that a relationship is broken needs to take the initiative to make it right. We can’t wait around, hoping that someone else will take the initiative.)
- D. Are there any relationships in your life currently, where there is conflict and one of these two scenarios needs to play out? Share as you are comfortable.

II. What is Jesus saying about people who have found “the good life?”

- A. Pastor Josh said that Jesus is *not* saying, “Become a good enough peacemaker and then you will earn the right to be called children of God.” Read John 1:12 for the one qualification that enables someone to become a child of God. (Leaders: receiving Jesus).
- B. Why could someone not be an effective peacemaker without first being a child of God?
 1. Read this quote from Thomas Merton, then discuss: “We are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God.”

- a. What does it mean to not be at peace with yourself?
 - b. Merton's reasoning says that apart from finding peace with God, through Jesus, we cannot be at peace with ourselves or with other people. Agree or disagree? How have you experienced this principle in your own life?
 - c. How does Jesus enable people to find peace with God and as a result, with themselves?
2. Read Colossians 1:19-20.
 - a. What does the Apostle Paul here say about how God was the ultimate peacemaker? How was this action necessary for people to find peace with God?
 - b. How has your relationship with God through Christ enabled you to find greater peace with yourself and other people?
 3. Discuss this claim from Pastor Josh's sermon: "Having that peace with God enables us to be true peacemakers with other people, because it teaches us that we don't have any special privilege because of our race, or because of our education, or because we live in the Three Villages, or because we're right politically. We don't have to leverage ourselves over other people with our credentials. We only have special privilege as sons and daughters of God because it's a gift we've received."
 - a. Have you found this principle to be true in your relationships? If not, how could this truth begin to change the way that you relate?
 - b. How could this truth change the way that we talk about race relations and other politically charged issues?

III. How can we be peacemakers?

- A. Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.
 1. How does Paul here describe the ministry that God entrusted to him and to all of us who have found peace with God through Jesus? (See especially v. 18).
 2. According to v. 20, what is the foundational way that we are to be peacemakers? (Leaders: Inviting people to be reconciled to God through Jesus.)
- B. Peter Kreeft writes, "Meanwhile, you can do more to save the world from nuclear war than any politician or weapons system can. For peacemaking Christ's way is soul-winning. Spread the good infection of Christ, by word and deed of love, and if enough of us cast enough votes for peace every day, we will be blessed with it." What do you think of Kreeft's approach to peacemaking here? Is he right?
- C. Pastor Josh said that being a peacemaker means "committing to pursuing harmony in relationships, even when that pursuit is costly."
 1. How can peacemaking be costly? Have you ever had an experience where pursuing harmony in relationships cost you something?
 2. How can you find the wherewithal to pursue right relationships even when you know that this pursuit will be difficult? (Leaders: Pastor Josh answered by saying, "Think about this: Jesus pursued harmony with you when it meant not only the risk of loss, but certain loss; he came and gave his life to make you a son or daughter of God knowing that it meant separation from his father, and death on a cross. He was that committed to giving you peace with God. And when you really savor how far he went for you to give you this new identity, it will enable you to pursue peace even when there is risk and sacrifice.")
 3. Is there anything that you need to do as a result of this Bible Study and discussion? Is there any relationship that you need to restore?

Prayer: Share areas where you need your group to pray for you. Especially pray for the Holy Spirit's leading and enabling in your efforts to pursue harmony in the relationships referenced tonight. Pray very specifically for one another.