

“BLESSED PEACE”
Matthew 5:9
Holiday Island Presbyterian Church
October 7, 2018

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. *Matthew 5:9*

SERMON: “BLESSED PEACE”

PEACE-MAKING VS. PEACE-KEEPING:

First of all, notice that the scripture says

“Blessed are the *peacemakers* – not *peacekeepers*.”

**Although the words seem to be similar,
there is a huge difference between the two.**

**Peacemakers and peacekeepers can actually be considered
complete opposites of one another.**

**Peacemakers strive to create peace
and attempt to reconcile things and people
that are at odds with one another.**

**Peacekeepers, on the other hand,
strive to keep peace at all costs –
- which includes the use of armed force and violence.**

**When the United Nations sends peacekeeping forces
into areas of conflict,
their goal is to use whatever forces in necessary
to bring about a cessation of hostilities.**

Peacemakers work to bring about reconciliation

between the conflicting parties.

Let me use the example of segregation and integration.

Southern white men and women
who were content with segregation,
were peacekeepers.

Their goal was to maintain things as they were
without discord or change;
they wanted to keep the peace as it was—
- racism disguised as peace.

Civil rights activists, on the other hand,
realized that for *real* peace to exist,
the status quo had to be confronted and changed.

They were willing to disturb the peace temporarily
in an effort to bring about real peace.

Peacekeepers will go to great lengths to avoid *anything*
that threatens to create discomfort disrupting the peace.

Peacemakers realize that not all hurt is harmful.

The disciples are a prime example of peacemakers.
They first had to disrupt peace
to usher in an even greater peace.

If they wanted to simply keep peace,
they would have not mentioned Jesus' name ever again.

Peacekeepers use threats of violence,
or the presence of physical power, to maintain peace.

**But peacemakers concentrate on the heart of the problem:
the hearts of people, starting with themselves.**

**While both of these have positive – and necessary – attributes
that are of value to society,
Jesus calls us to be only one: Peacemakers.**

**Jesus is the greatest example of a peacemaker.
He was even given the name “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).**

**Indeed, Jesus is the ultimate mediator
who made peace between God and humanity
and calls us to make peace with each other.**

**Yet, from the outside looking in,
one might argue that Jesus’ life was *anything but* peaceful.**

**Jesus was constantly engaging in conflict
whether it was challenging the religious leader’s beliefs,
confronting sin, questioning the disciples,
and the message He preached.**

**However, through this tension,
Jesus was able to set people free,
show them the true Way,
and save their lives by being willing to rock the boat
to give a *lasting* peace.**

**This is why Jesus could say,
⁵¹ Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you,
but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family
divided against each other, 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 daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” Luke 12:51-53

PEACE WITH GOD:

**If I have done my job well enough,
you are now convinced of the difference between
peacekeepers and peacemakers.**

Now, we're ready to tackle HOW to be peacemakers.

**The very first step is to find peace with God.
And that, begins with trust.**

**It takes a lot of trust to look deeply within ourselves
and to *admit* those barriers that separate us from God.**

What is it that separates you from God?

**Not a generic answer like “sin,”
but *specifically* what is it?
What specific, unrepentant act?**

**That's what you must discover
repent and confess to God.**

**It is by discovering what is separating us from God –
- by confessing that and by asking for forgiveness
that we come to a peace with God.**

**Finding peace with God
means that we must measure ourselves to a Godly standard;
rather than reducing God to our limited standards.**

That's going to reveal some rough places that need to be smoothed out.

- past hurts that need to be forgiven and put aside**
- regrets that must be lived beyond**
- seeking full and complete forgiveness**
- willingness to repent**
- willingness to accept a new way of life**

**Through the sacrificial death of Jesus,
our relationship with God has been firmly established.
It is solid.**

**We don't move in and out of it
depending upon how closely we walk with the Lord
hour by hour.**

**The connection is rooted in Christ and therefore constant,
just like a child's relationship in the family.
Even at those times when the child is misbehaving,
the relationship between parent and child
is still locked in place. It is set in stone.**

**However, there are times
when *we* become like misbehaving children.
And the peace we *should* have with God
is disturbed by *our* actions.**

**It is at that time we would do well to remember Pau's advice:
"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by
prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests
to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all
understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in
Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:4-7)**

In other words,

**the more we rejoice, pray, trust, obey, give thanks,
and present various requests to God,
the more the "peace of God" seems to fill our soul.**

**That does not guarantee us a life free from anxiety.
Sometimes anxiety rushes into our heart
even though we have been praying and trusting.**

**Life has a way of throwing us quite a few curve balls.
Challenges come our way all the time.
And we are still human.
We are prone to getting upset and bothered.**

**The Christian life isn't easy, and it isn't natural.
It is natural to worry, and complain,
and try to solve everything ourselves.**

We are a work in progress.

PEACE WITHIN YOURSELF:

The next step is to find peace within ourselves.

**There is a daily battle between that which we know
God is calling us to a higher level of spirituality
and the desire for earthly things
at the expense of internal peace.**

Temptation causes our wisdom becomes confused and clouded.

**And yet, God calls us to be reconciled
with our own internal enemies.**

There is no better example of peace within ourselves than Psalm 23.

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

PEACE WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR:

**Jesus said in His summary of the law,
that we are to “love our neighbors as ourselves.”**

Paul said:

**If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
Romans 12:18**

**If we expect to hold onto the peace we have with God
and the peace we have within ourselves,
then we simply *must* find peace with our neighbors.**

**Not only offering peace – but accepting peace;
accepting the peace offered by a neighbor who has wronged us.**

**And going even further,
being willing to bring feuding neighbors together.**

**The work of Jesus is to bring together those that are divided;
to reconcile the alienated.**

I feel the need to remind you – and myself –

**we are works in progress;
not one of us is capable of being perfect at this task.**

**However, Jesus has called us to love ourselves –
- find peace within ourselves
- and to love our neighbors –
- offer peace to them and accept peace from them.**

WORLD PEACE:

Finally, as Christians, we are called to work towards world peace.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *The Cost of Discipleship* said:
The followers of Jesus have been called to peace. When he called them they found their peace, for he is their peace. But now they are told that they must not only have peace but make [peace]. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult.**

**John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, said:
Now peacemaking is a divine work. For peace means reconciliation, and God is the author of peace and of reconciliation. ... It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the particular blessing which attaches to peacemakers is that "they shall be called [children] of God." For they are seeking to do what their Father has done, loving people with his love.**

**Jesus is the supreme peacemaker;
making peace between God and humanity
and between neighbors.**

CONCLUSION:

It begins with becoming reconciled with/to God.

It continues with finding peace within ourselves.

It spills over into being reconciled with each other.

**And together,
we can all work towards world peace.**

May God bless us all as we work towards these goals.

PRAYER:

God of all Peace, may the peace we have found in You ever increase in us. May we find the courage and the faith to seek an even greater relationship with You. We ask for wisdom and courage to seek peace with ourselves. We ask for strength and persistence to make peace with our neighbors. And may world peace be in all our prayers. Amen.