

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 3 Oct 2021

Sermon Title : Peacemakers

Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho

Text : Matthew 5:9

INTRODUCTION

The Beatitudes consist of truth statements of Jesus which very few people would object or deny including people who do not believe in God. The Beatitudes are not platitudes to impress but are biblical statements steeped in theological truths. The Bible is not just a book telling us what to do or not to do, but God telling us who He is, who we are and what we have missed out and what He wants us to be. To understand the connection between peacemakers and sons of God in Matthew 5:9 we need to understand two biblical concepts - "peace" and "sons of God".

1. Peace

Peace is defined as –

- a) Freedom from disturbance; tranquillity.
- b) A state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended.

Peace means a world without wars, conflicts, or disputes and where everyone lives in harmony. This meaning is correct biblically, but it is a partial one because there is more to it. The full biblical meaning is more than a world without fighting.

Hebrew word for 'peace' in the Old Testament – "*shalom*"

'*Shalom*' first appears in Genesis 15 where God made a covenant with Abraham. Abraham would have many descendants but they would be enslaved and mistreated in a foreign land. Here, God uses '*shalom*' to:

- tell Abraham he would live to an old age and die or rest in peace. (v.15)
- mean finished or complete - the bad blood between Abraham and the Amorites is not finished but would continue when his descendants return. (v.16)

Biblical '*shalom*' means –

- no disturbance, no conflict or peace (Genesis 15:15)
- complete (Genesis 15:16)
- without any lack (Job 5:24)
- perfect (Joshua 8:31)

The imagery of '*shalom*' in the Bible is a picture of the world that God created, which perfectly reflects the heaven above it – complete and perfect. In the beginning, God created the world from nothing and he looked at everything He had made and said, "...behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). The creation was complete, finished,

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perfect, '*shalom*' and so, God rested. '*Shalom*' is the perfect place that God created in the beginning, with no disease, disaster, death, sickness, no sorrow and no sin.

'Shalom' broken

Then something terrible happened. God put man (Adam and Eve) to be in charge of His creation but man betrayed and disobeyed God. God told them that they could eat of any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But they disobeyed God, took the fruit and as a result, '*shalom*' was broken. Sin destroyed the '*shalom*' world and it is no longer a paradise but a dark world. Instead of protecting the poor, the rich tend to oppress the poor. Instead of taking care of the weak, the big tend to bully the small. Instead of keeping our words, we tend to break our promises in relationships, marriages and in businesses and politics. Betrayal, divorce, war, we humans are accustomed to stealing, killing and destroying.

In the Old Testament, to bring '*shalom*' means to restore something to its original or to make something whole or complete again.

Greek word for 'peace' in the New Testament – 'eirene'

Root meaning of '*eirene*' – take two things that have been separated and join/bind them together again; to re-unite or restore a broken thing to its original state.

The biblical meaning of peace-making is to restore or reconcile a broken relationship; to make something broken whole again.

- This is what God has been doing since the fall of man. The Bible from Genesis chapter 3 to the last chapter of Revelation is a story of how God is bringing '*shalom*' back to the broken world, making peace with His creation. God is the great peacemaker, working throughout history to reconcile sinful man back to Himself to restore a relationship with Him.

How does God restore the sick world back to '*shalom*'?

Analogy : Covid-19 is caused by a virus from outside which invades our body while a cancer cell is our own cell disobeying and rebelling against our body. It fights with our healthy cells for food and multiplies to occupy the whole body depriving our healthy cells of nutrients. We need to destroy these disobedient cells and the usual way is to kill or remove them from our body. Hence, cancer can be fatal and needs treatment. Only after removing and killing these cells can our body be nursed back to health; that '*shalom*' can be restored to our body. The peace-making process is to kill the disobedient cells. Sin is like cancer, corrupting the whole of creation. If God were to treat sin like the way a doctor treats cancer, He would have to kill all of sinful mankind. But God has a very radical cancer treatment. Instead of taking the lives of His disobedient cancer cells of the world, He sent His Son to give His life to the cancer cells. When the cancer cells repent, He injects new life into them and changes them so that they are no longer with cancer.

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"Peace-making" is God's therapy and "sons of God" is His strategy.

c) Sons of God

In Jewish culture, to be called 'son of something' does not mean we are biological offspring of that something but we have the character or quality of that something – "like father, like son". Jesus called His disciples John and James 'sons of thunder' because they had a quick and hot temper like thunder. (Luke 9:54).

To be called sons of God means to share or adopt the character of God and do His will. If God is forgiving and life-giving, the sons of God are also forgiving and life-giving. If God is a peacemaker making all effort to restore creation and mankind to God, then the sons of God are also to do the same.

- Jesus Christ is the perfect Son of God (John 10:30) and this 7th Beatitude (Matthew 5:9) is essentially a call for us to be like Jesus – doing the will of God to bring '*shalom*' to a cancerous creation.
- His prescription for cancer is found in Matthew 28:19-20.

First, Jesus brought '*shalom*' to His followers, transforming cancerous people to be His disciples who are called sons and daughters of God. Then He calls His disciples to bring '*shalom*' to other rebellious people by transforming them to be called sons and daughters of God. Then these sons and daughters of God continue to bring '*shalom*' to more people and this peace-making process has been going on for more than 2000 years, transforming disobedient people to be children of God.

Today, this continuing peace-making mission falls on us. Jesus commands us to bring '*shalom*' by sharing the Gospel to transform those who do not know Him to become sons of God. In His time and way, '*shalom*' peace will be restored to all creation – for this reason, peacemakers are called sons of God.

How can we be God's 'cancer treatment' – His peacemakers?

C.S Lewis says if you show hate and do hurtful things to someone, you will grow to hate him more and more, but if you show love and keep doing loving things to someone, you will grow to like him even if you dislike him now. (1 Peter 3:9)

Doing kind deeds to someone you do not like will make your level of dislike for that person decrease; if we persist in our acts of love, animosity will decrease.

CONCLUSION

Jesus, the perfect Son of God, set an example by sacrificing His life for us while we were sinners and His enemies. As sons of God, we are to bear His image as peacemakers, to persevere in kind deeds and acts of love both to those we like and do not like, so we will not only be making peace but bringing '*shalom*' back to this broken and rebellious world.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Matthew 5:9 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, 'This is the Word of the Lord.'

All to respond, "Thanks be to God." Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now."

- a. As God's word was read, what is the key takeaway for you from the sermon "Peacemakers"?

- b. How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. The biblical meaning of peace-making is to restore or reconcile a broken relationship; to make something broken whole again.
- (i) What does this mean to you as a peacemaker?
 - (ii) What can you learn from Jesus, the perfect Son of God who reconciled sinful man back to God to restore a relationship with Him, by giving His life to them?
- 2b. God is the great peacemaker, making all effort to restore creation and mankind to Himself.
- (i) What motivate(s) you to do the same?
 - (ii) What hinder(s) you from doing the same?
- 3a. The Beatitude in Matthew 5:9 is a call for us to be like Jesus, to do the will of God to bring 'shalom' to His creation by going to make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19-20) How have you been responding to God's call?
- 3b. (i) Who is one person you do not particularly like that you can do a kind deed or loving act for so as to make peace and restore 'shalom' to this rebellious world?
- (ii) What do you plan to do for him/her?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3b above so you can be a peacemaker, for the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on either:
 - (i) How God has given you an opportunity to bring 'shalom' to others, or
 - (ii) How someone has brought 'shalom' to you.

OR

Give thanks to God for the privilege to be called "sons or daughters of God" and the opportunity to participate in His peace-making mission.

5. With a prayer partner, take time to pray for the concerns in 3b and 3c asking the Lord to humble your heart so you will be able to overcome hindrances in reaching out in kind deeds and acts of love to someone you do not particularly like.

As a group, discuss how you can, together as children of God, answer God's call to bring God's 'shalom' to this broken world by participating in His peace-making mission.

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