

**"Blessed Are the Peacemakers"**

**Scripture Passages:** 1) **Matthew 7:24-27**  
2) **James 3:13-18**  
3) **Romans 12:1-2, 9-21**  
4) **Matthew 5:9**

**Repent:** Jesus began his ministry where John the Baptist left off, “Repent for the Kingdom of God has drawn near.” Following Jesus begins with the act of repentance, the act of turning our lives around, the act of going in a new direction. The first disciples Jesus called did exactly that, they left their old lives behind to begin a new life. Our new life with God also begins and remains a life of repentance; a life of turning from our preoccupations, whatever those may be, to God.

**The Rock:** Matthew shares with us one of Jesus’ powerful teaching moments the sermon we now call the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus’ sermon was all about how to turn our lives around. He ended that sermon with the little parable of the two builders, one who builds their house on rock, the other on sand. If we want to build our house on rock we must not only hear Jesus’ teaching, but work Jesus’ teaching into our lives. If we desire to follow Jesus, then we are saying we have a desire to live life as Jesus lived. Living the Jesus way becomes the rock solid foundation of our lives.

**Our Need:** Jesus began his powerful sermon with the Beatitudes a series of short wisdom statements. The first statement is the basis, the foundation stone of Christian theology. Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” If you remember, blessed means, that God is on our side. So this first wisdom statement proclaims that God is on our side when we recognize our complete dependence on God. When we recognize our great need, then we are blessed. Life in God’s Kingdom begins with the recognition of our great need. That is the first foundation stone.

**Helping God:** The next three beatitudes build on this theme of our great need. We will return to those first four beatitudes next Sunday. Because this is World Communion Sunday, and Peacemaking Sunday, however, we thought it would be appropriate to skip ahead to the seventh beatitude which says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” This 7<sup>th</sup> Beatitude is a part of the three response or help Beatitudes. When we recognize our total dependence on God, God’s willingness to provide all that we need, then hopefully we will choose to live our lives in response to that amazing gift. We call that Stewardship.

Stewardship is living our lives in response to God’s care, love, grace, mercy, blessing. Stewardship is recognizing that all we are and all we have is because of God, thus we decide to live our lives in response to that amazing good news, that amazing grace, that amazing gift. The 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> Beatitude teach us that God is on our side when we choose to live lives of response. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Peacemaking is one way we respond to God’s grace.

**Peacemaking:** So what does that word peacemaking mean?

Dale Bruner writes, “We can almost translate the key word here, “peacemakers,” with the word “wholemakers.” Peace, in Scripture, is a situation of comprehensive welfare.” In English, peace either refers to an internal sense of tranquility or externally to an absence of war. “But

Biblical shalom conveys the picture of a circle; it means comprehensive well-being in every direction and relation. . . If we could translate “blessed are the circle makers” and make sense, we would. To bring peace, in Scripture, is to bring community. Peacemakers are reconcilers.”

**James & Paul:** In the passage from James we heard, “Here’s what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It’s the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. . . . Real wisdom, God’s wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.”

In Paul’s letter to the church in Rome we read, “Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. . . Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. . . Get along with each other; don’t be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don’t be the great somebody. . . . Discover beauty in everyone. If you’ve got it in you, get along with everybody. . . Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he’s thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness.”

**Foster Community:** “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Jesus says that when we live as people who foster community, we are on God’s side and God considers us children, a part of the family, a part of the Divine, Holy Community. When we realize our total dependence on God, we realize that every human being is in the same exact situation. All of humankind is a like. We are all in the same boat. We all need God. We all need God’s saving, healing, grace in our lives. God is on our side, when we live as people who bring healing and wholeness to the world community rather than division.

The Message translates this Beatitude, “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.”

How do we respond to God’s saving love? Do we respond by living as peacemakers in our broken, hurting world? Do we treat others, even our enemies, even the people we struggle with the most, even the people who seem so different from us, even the people we disagree with, even the people who we feel have hurt us in some way; do we treat them as God treats us? Do we understand that we become who we truly are when we live as reconcilers, as peacemakers, as whole-makers, as circle-makers?

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

**Whole-makers & Circle-makers:** Who are the peacemakers that have touched your life? Who are the peacemakers on the world stage that we can learn from? Who has helped you feel a part of the circle? Who has God worked through to bring reconciliation and healing and wholeness into your life? How are you going to respond to these amazing gifts of grace?

I have known Deb for 31 years now. Even as a young teenager Deb was a person who always looked around a room, noticed who was left out and went and hung with them. She risked living that way in the school cafeteria and she has never stopped. That is how Deb lives as a peacemaker. That is how Deb lives as a circle-maker. How about you? How about me?

When I think of peacemakers I think of Naomi and Carl Juk. For 50+ years they were peacemakers in this community of faith. They worked tirelessly as reconcilers in this congregation. As James said, “it is hard work getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor”. Naomi and Carl lived that out beautifully in our midst. That was how they lived as peacemakers, as circle-makers. How about you? How about me?

I don't think peacemaking necessarily looks the same for everyone. I think we all have different gifts. I think the place God has particularly gifted me in peacemaking is in bringing Christ's church together. I love helping the different parts of the church to work together, to be a part of the circle together. When I am doing that work, I feel most alive, most a part of God's family. That is when I am living as a peacemaker, a circle-maker. How about you?

**Conclusion:** As I have journeyed with Deb these 30+ years I am continually challenged to grow in my own living as a peacemaker. As I watched Naomi and Carl live their lives in our midst I learned so much about being a peacemaker. God is all about the work of reconciliation. If we are going to live as followers of Jesus, if we are going to live as stewards of the gifts that God has given us, if we are going to live a life of response to God's amazing grace, then we will roll-up our sleeves and join in the hard-work of peacemaking, whole-making, circle-making.

If we are going to build our house on rock, then peacemaking will become a foundation stone for how we live: how we live in our families, in churches, in our schools, in our places of work, in our community, in our world. When we live as peacemakers, God is on our side because we have then chosen to join God's side. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."