

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Week of 7.29.2019

Our current cultural moment displays our desperate need for peacemakers. Regardless of topic - from politics to little league baseball - anger and discord are the order of the day.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. - Matthew 5:9 ESV

Summary of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount

The Beatitudes and the larger discourse of which it is a part make up one of the most misread sections of Scripture. This sermon is not simply a new and more difficult set of rules that go beyond the Old Testament, or a deliberately impossible ideal that highlights our inability and need for salvation, pointing us to Christ. Rather, it is a description of the “already and not yet” Kingdom of God, the Kingdom Jesus has inaugurated (already) and will return to consummate (not yet).

In this kingdom, the “spiritual zeroes”, or downtrodden, are those that are “favored” (what we translate in most English Bibles as “blessed”). The Beatitudes begin by announcing who the kingdom is for and moves to encourage particular behaviors of kingdom citizens.

Kingdom citizens are called to be like their King, the Prince of Peace.

- The sermon described a clear difference between peacekeepers, who remain neutral or sacrifice righteousness in order to avoid conflict, and peacemakers who confront the transgressions that threaten peace and resolve the conflicts that result from them. Often a peacemaker might unknowingly value compromise as a higher virtue than real peace. Have you ever avoided tension or conflict instead of trying to positively resolve it? What are some of the negative outcomes that can happen when we do this, both as an individual and as a community?
- An earthly kingdom like the Roman Empire in Jesus’s time might try to achieve peace by destroying its enemies, but the Sermon on the Mount explains what is required to make peace in the way of God’s Kingdom. When we are wronged, we are not to seek revenge or cruelty against the perpetrators. Matthew 5:44 says that we are to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. What does seeking revenge look like for you? When are you tempted to entertain cruel thoughts or actions in response to an

offense? Pray that God would soften your heart this week and teach you to love people who hurt you as you also pray for their well-being.

- In Christ at the cross we see the most complete example of turning the other cheek and loving our enemies. Colossians 1:20 says that Christ made peace “by the blood of His cross.” How does understanding our own sinfulness and our need for the cross help us to better seek peace with others?