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“THE PEACEMAKERS”
Matthew 5:9

- ☐ Matthew 5:9 ~ **“Blessed are the peacemakers.”**
- ☹ Humanity does not know what to make of these words. We yearn for peace, yet we distrust it.
 - ☑ We protest the gun violence that snuffs out so many lives. At the same time, we say that **“They will have my gun when they pry it from my cold, dead fingers.”**
 - We yearn for peace, yet we distrust it.
 - ☑ We rally for peace, then on the way out of the parking garage we make obscene gestures at the driver who cut us off, and at home we give our spouse and children a taste of our rage.
 - We yearn for peace, yet we distrust it.
 - ☑ Consider this example from World War I. In 1914 Germany invaded Belgium. Soon both sides were hunkered down in trenches stretching across southern Belgium and northern France. The enemy lines were only 60 to 80 yards apart.
 - On Christmas Eve, 1914, German troops in Ypres, Belgium started singing carols. French and English soldiers joined in.
 - Within minutes both sides set down their weapons, climbed out of their trenches, and met in “No Man’s Land.”
 - Gifts were exchanged. There were soccer games. Friendships were formed. The Germans, French and English held combined funerals for their slain comrades. The ceasefire held for an entire week.
 - Then, word got back to headquarters. Generals on both sides were infuriated! Per their orders, the killing recommenced January 1, 1915.

Some say the peace could not last, regardless of orders. But the authorities were afraid that it would, which is why they took great pains to guarantee its failure.

Besides commanding immediate attacks, the British High Command ordered that {Boyd, MOACN, p 92} **“artillery fire be *increased* each subsequent Christmas”** regardless of need, and both sides began rotating soldiers for the express purpose of preventing a repeat of Christmas 1914.

Eight million more troops and millions of civilians were slaughtered before World War I ended in November, 1918.

We yearn for peace, yet we distrust it.

☹ Our attitude toward *peacemakers* is equally conflicted. Sometimes we applaud them; but ponder the bad stereotypes. There is the peacemaker as...

☞ Naïve fool, personified by the hippie with love beads who believes that singing “Give Peace a Chance” will overcome all the greed and hatred and violence.

☞ Ineffective idealist, personified by Mr. Rogers, whose principles work great in the sheltered nursery but are useless in the rough-and-tumble real world.

☞ Cowardly appeaser, personified by Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister who sanctioned Hitler’s ingestion of Czechoslovakia and then announced: **“I believe it is peace in our time.”**

☞ Evil collaborator, personified by Vidkun Quisling, the Norwegian politician who claimed to work for peace but whom served the Nazis in their rule of Norway.

☐ Yet the Son declares, **“Blessed are the peacemakers.”**

☐ He came {Lk 1:79} **“to guide our feet in the path of peace.”** He said, **“Peace I leave with you;**

my peace I give you.” (Jn 14:27). If you want to understand biblical peacemaking, study what He did.

✦ As for the “What” of peacemaking, Jesus strove to create *Shalom* everywhere He went.

✧ *Shalom* is the Hebrew word translated εἰρήνη in the Greek NT and *peace* in English language Bibles. *Shalom* assumes the absence of conflict but also incorporates: right relationships with God and others; economic, judicial and political justice; practical care for the vulnerable; and salvation, which, since ministry of the Son, is wrapped up in a new kind of relationship with the Father.

□ *Shalom* was the theme of Christ’s first sermon: {LK 4:17b-19} **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

Peacemakers do their utmost to create *Shalom*.

✦ As for the “How” of peacemaking, Jesus: fasted and prayed, battled Satan, announced the advent of his Father’s kingdom, invited people to follow him, called everyone to repentance and holiness, preached God’s truth, healed the sick, touched the lepers, cast out demons, raised the dead, dined with sinners, fed the hungry, cleansed the temple, critiqued the religious establishment, washed feet, forgave people, died on the cross, and rose from the grave.

His diverse activities point to four kingdom qualities that are indispensable to biblical peacemaking.

✧ 1) Conscious dependence on God.

□ In John 8:28 Jesus said, **“I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.”** He devoted hours to prayer. He knew Scripture inside and out.

✧ 2) Active engagement in the world.

Jesus did not remain aloof, distancing himself from the chaos and conflict. He attended weddings and parties and funerals. He met people on their level. He talked to them on the street. Sometimes He got in their face.

✧ 3) Resolute combat.

Everything Jesus did was an act of spiritual warfare. He defeated sin with righteousness, falsehood with truth, prejudice with friendship, physical decay with healings, demons with exorcisms, and death with resurrection.

✧ 4) Courageous self-sacrifice.

{Php 2:6-8}, **“Being in very nature God, [Christ Jesus] ... made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant... And he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”**

We can help to create *Shalom* by embodying these kingdom qualities.

Notice what Jesus did not do.

□ He had opportunity to seize control of all earthly armies and power structures, but He did not (Matthew 4:8-10).

□ He had power to **“call fire down from heaven to”** consume those who rejected him, but He did not (Luke 9:54).

□ He had the authority to command thousands upon thousands of angels to utterly vanquish his enemies, but He did not (Matthew 26:53).

✧ The Lord Jesus never used coercive force to achieve or protect *Shalom*. He who willingly died for peace refused to kill for peace.

I need two volunteers for a demonstration. Let’s see what happens when we try to use violence to make peace. Here is how we will do it:

① One is going to be the aggressor, the other the defender.

② The aggressor begins by hitting the defender.

③ The defender strikes back twice, once to get even and once to deter the aggressor from doing it again.

④ Naturally the aggressor also strikes back, two hits for every one s/he received (making it four). And so on.

Are you ready to rumble? Have at it!

☹ When we return evil for evil, the cycle of violence continues and often escalates, with potentially horrific consequences.

Now, let's see what happens when we choose the way of Jesus. Here's how we will do it:

① The aggressor starts by hitting the other. The aggressor expects a violent response, and intends to strike back twice for every hit received.

② This time, the defender does not react.
Any questions? Let's rumble.

☺ Courageously absorbing the hurt breaks the cycle of violence.

✚ We can help build up God's Kingdom by striving to create Shalom.

☑ Violence can secure and maintain order (which is better than disorder) – but not Shalom. As Albert Einstein observed, "**Peace cannot be kept by force.**" Violence has no place in God's kingdom.

Surely this is not realistic! Isn't it immoral?! The innocent will suffer! Won't evil triumph?! I, too, am wrestling with this. Our concerns deserve more time than we have now. Allow me two points:

✚ 1st, Christ is our model.

The Lord Jesus never used violence. He who willingly died for *Shalom* refused to kill for *Shalom*. Obedience to his principles is essential. We must not seek to fulfill the mission by means that He rejected.

☐ First Peter 2:20-21 ~ "**If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.**"

✚ 2nd, God empowers us to be peacemakers.

☐ Peacemaking isn't just difficult; it is utterly beyond mortal will and ability. The Lord's words in Mt 19:26 apply here: "**With human beings this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**"

☐ Jesus willingly endured the cross and was buried under ground. Yet He conquered death and arose victorious over the grave.

His Spirit dwells within the heart of every Christ Follower. Therefore, as Paul testifies, {Php 4:13} "**I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**" Do we believe this?

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

Matthew 5:9 is the Word of the Lord.