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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“THE PEACEMAKERS”~ Matthew 5:9

- **The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
Infants will play near the hole of the cobra;
young children will put their hands into
the viper’s nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge
of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.** (Isaiah 11:6-9)

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{Rev 11:15; 21:4} When **“the kingdom of the world [becomes] the kingdom of”** God **“there will be no more”** strife and carnage. In Christ, holistic peace is our destiny.

{Lk 10:3} Meanwhile, **“the kingdom of the world”** is anything but peaceful. Hatred, domestic abuse, sexual assault, gun violence, terrorism and warfare are common. We are **“like lambs among wolves”** – and in this world wolves are more likely to tear a lamb to pieces than to **“live with”** it.

? What are we to do? How shall we then live?

⊗ It is tempting to withdraw from the world, to hole up in a Christian colony out in the woods and wait for the rapture while the world goes to hell.

⊗ It is tempting to become calloused, to not feel anything until the Big Bad Wolf huffs and puffs and blows down our own house.

⊗ {Jas 1:6} On the other hand it is tempting to let reactive emotions rule us, to be **“blown and tossed”** about by winds of fear and anger and pride.

⊗ It is even tempting to act as wolves ourselves, wielding hatred and violence as weapons against our enemies – all in the cause of peace, of course.

▣ And then the Lord comes along and announces **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God”** (Matthew 5:9).

As a people, North Americans are conflicted about peacemakers. Sometimes we applaud their efforts; but consider all of our disdainful stereotypes.

☑ There is the peacemaker as naïve fool, personified by the hippie with love beads who think that singing “Give Peace a Chance” will transform minds and overcome violence.

☑ There is the peacemaker as ineffective idealist, personified by Mr. Rogers, whose principles work great in the sheltered nursery but are useless in the rough-and-tumble real world.

☑ There is the peacemaker as sanctimonious busybody, personified by Hollywood celebrities who presume their fame qualifies them to stick their nose in everybody’s business.

☑ There is the peacemaker as cowardly appeaser, personified by Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister who sanctioned Hitler's seizure of Czechoslovakia and then announced: **"I believe it is peace in our time."**

☑ There is the peacemaker as 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.

▣ Do these scornful images occupy our minds? There are individuals who fit these stereotypes. Yet the Word made flesh declares, **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."**

Maybe our problem is more with the word "peace" itself. Our cultural bias is to define it negatively, as the absence of overt conflict. Our home is *peaceful* when no one is arguing. A nation is *at peace* when it is not waging war. A *peace treaty* simply ends the fighting, and *peacekeeping* is nothing more than preventing two enemies from killing each other.

People have diverse motives to reach for this. Some are noble; but fear, exhaustion, wishful thinking (and, occasionally, treacherous cunning) are probably the rule more than the exception.

Even then, this kind of peace is preferable to many of the alternatives. Still, its underpinnings are unreliable and too one-dimensional to support healthy relationships or last for long.

It's great if your wife stops screaming. But that isn't a good enough foundation for a strong marriage.

It's great if your husband acts gently for a week. But that's no guarantee he won't beat you again.

It's great if your enemy keeps the truce today. But that doesn't mean they won't launch a blitzkrieg tomorrow.

The absence of blatant conflict is the "peace" we are most used to seeing. No wonder we do not completely trust the word!

📖 That is not the kind of peace the Lord is talking about. Biblical peace is positive, robust and holistic. It consists of harmonious right relationships, wholeness of body and mind, security, shared prosperity and fulfillment and, naturally, the absence of conflict.

All this is wrapped up in the Hebrew *shalōm* and Greek εἰρήνη [eirēnē]. This is the peace God desires for individuals, families, communities, and nations. Not only so, this is the peace Christ Jesus is calling us to bring into our homes, churches, workplaces, public spaces and world. **"Blessed are the peacemakers,"** (literally, the **"peace-doers"** or **"peace-creators"**) those who labor to bring *shalōm* or εἰρήνη to the world, **"for they will be called the children of God."**

? Will we **"be called the children of God"**?

Let's face it: most of us are not highly skilled peacemakers. If you are anything like me, you find it easier to flee or ignore or escalate conflict.

Easier – but not better. Peacemaking is better. That's where the blessing is.

? So, how can we become peacemakers?

The language of the Beatitude itself holds the key: **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."**

◆ Let's take a look at the word **“blessed.”** Contrary to popular assumptions μακαριοι [makarioi] is not the religious equivalent of the word *happy*. It is a synonym for “favored,” favored *by God*.

Jesus is not a prosperity theologian. God's favor is not a promise of physical health, material wealth, and worldly success. He has in mind a different set of benefits: seeing Messiah as he is, sharing in his life, and participating in his mission.

{Is 9:6} Seeing the Son of God as he is means perceiving him as the **“Prince of Shalōm.”**

{Eph 2:14} Sharing the Son's life means partaking of him and his peace, for **“he himself is our εἰρηνη.”**

{Eph 2:17; Col 1:20} Participating in the Son's mission means devoting ourselves to the creation of *shalōm*, for **“he came [preaching] εἰρηνη”** and **“shed” “his blood”** to **“[make] peace”** between us and God and one another.

◆ Now let's come at it from a different angle and reflect on the phrase **“children of God.”**

{Gal 3:26} **“Children of God”** is a title of spiritual status. It applies to those who, by the grace of God, are being saved through faith in Christ Jesus.

{Jn 1:12; Ro 8:17} **“Children of God”** is a title of family relationship. To those who receive him he gives **“the right to become children of God”** – his sons and daughters who are **“co-heirs with Christ.”**

{Ro 8:29} And **“Children of God”** is a title of identity. ‘Like father, like son’ (mother/ daughter); ‘The apple doesn't fall far from the tree’; that child is ‘a chip off the old block.’ God has **“predestined”** us **“to be conformed to**

the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

{1 P 2:21; Gal 4:19} Yes, Christ has given us **“an example, that [we] should”** imitate him and **“follow in his steps.”** But even more profoundly than that, he has given us his spiritual DNA that he might be **“formed in”** us.

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

“Peacemakers” see Messiah as he is, share in his life, and participate in his mission. **“Peacemakers”** live into the identity, relationship, and spiritual status of the title **“children of God.”** They are blessed, indeed!

Allow me to close with a few observations. There is a great deal to say about each one but I will be brief.

✍ Biblical peacemaking begins with reconciliation to God, and from there it progresses to reconciliation between human individuals and groups.

✍ Biblical peacemaking seeks peace of the spirit in relation to God, the soul in relation to self, and the individual in relation to others.

✍ Biblical peacemaking brings holistic peace in body and mind as well as spirit.

✍ Biblical peacemaking addresses causes of discord as well as effects. We are called to ministries of evangelism *and* relief *and* development *and* justice.

✎ Biblical peacemaking is equally means and end, method and goal, journey and destination. Peacemakers are peaceable.

✎ Biblical peacemaking is risky. It might expose us to ridicule, opposition, and violence. But why should we expect to be treated better than Jesus?

We are not greater than our Master, and he went to the cross in order to create peace.

{MT 19:26} Is anyone feeling intimidated? I am! **“With human beings this is impossible”** and I am no exception. **“But with God all things are possible.”**

✎ {Gal 2:20; Php 2:13} Biblical peacemaking is carried out by **“Christ in”** us. He **“works to will and to act,”** and he empowers us to cooperate with him.

▣ Are we **“children of God”**? Is **“children of God”** what we **“will be called”**?

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