

Matthew
The Peacemakers
Matthew 5:9
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Matthew, chapter 5. This morning we come to a Beatitude that reminds us that who we are in Christ is in complete contradiction to the world in which we live. You see, our world is characterized by constant and even catastrophic conflict. Today's wars in Gaza and the Ukraine, sadly those are not an anomaly, but rather they're the norm.

Historian Will Durant writes in his book, *The Lessons of History*, "War is one of the constants of history, and has not diminished with civilization and democracy." In the last 3,400 years of recorded history, only 268 have seen no war. Since the time of Christ, historians tell us there have been some 15,000 wars in which they estimate somewhere between half-a-billion and three-and-a-half-billion people have died. In the 20th century alone, historians estimate one-hundred-fifty-million people died in war. This morning, as you sit here, in Southlake and in peace, eleven wars are raging around this planet—wars that are causing more than a thousand deaths a year in each of them. If you consider armed conflicts where fewer than a thousand deaths a year occur, there are one-hundred-and-ten such conflicts raging on this planet this morning.

But human conflict is not just found on the battlefield. There is conflict in every kind of human relationship. We see this constantly, even in our news. Right now, there is a bitter political conflict in our country between the two parties and even within each party. There's corporate conflict between workers and the companies for which they work. The most common of all, of course, is the personal conflict that occurs within relationships. One of the most frequent calls

that police receive is because of conflict in the home between spouses. Our world desperately needs peace, and it needs those who are committed to making peace.

In the Seventh Beatitude, Jesus says that's exactly what the people who truly belong to His kingdom are like. Let's look at it together, Matthew, chapter 5, verse 9. This is the verse we'll consider together this morning. Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Jesus says that those who belong to His spiritual kingdom right now, such people don't create or continue in conflict, but instead, they actively pursue peace.

Now in this Beatitude, we learn several important truths about peacemakers that I want us to unpack together this morning. Let's begin with the most important issue, and that is "The Meaning of Peace." What is Jesus talking about? Well, before we consider what it means, I want, as we often do, to consider "What Jesus Does Not Mean." Sadly, this Beatitude has been misused and abused through two-thousand years of church history to make it say things that are not in keeping with the rest of the teaching of Scripture. Here's what Jesus does not mean.

Number one, Jesus does not mean that "All conflict is wrong." Jesus, in fact, said that loyalty to Him would produce conflict with those who aren't. Secondly, He doesn't mean that "Self-Defense Is Wrong." I'll address this, by the way, when we get to Jesus' statement to "turn the other cheek." Thirdly, He doesn't mean that "War is always wrong, and that Christians must be pacifists." We know that all war isn't wrong because the wars God commanded as well as the future war that He and His Son will eventually carry out against those on this planet. As far as what constitutes a just war, that's a different message for a different time. But He's not saying that war is always wrong. Number four, He's not saying, "Blessed are those with a naturally peaceful disposition." You know, some people are just prone that way. He's not talking about that. He's not talking about the 'peaceful,' but the 'peacemakers.' Fifthly, Jesus is not saying

that “Nations should seek to avoid war by appeasement.” As Europe learned with Hitler in World War II, appeasement only postpones the conflict and makes it more violent when it eventually comes. And number six, Jesus is not saying, “Blessed are those who simply don't like conflict and do everything they can to avoid it.” There are people like that. Let me just say, by the way, that if you like conflict, you have a sick soul. No, I mean that; it's funny, but it's not. If you like conflict, there's something wrong with you; that's not normal. But the fact that you hate conflict because you just don't like it, you just want peace, and you avoid conflict at all costs, that's not necessarily good. In fact, that's bad, as we'll see. That's not what Jesus is talking about.

Now, all of this raises an important question that we need to answer before we move on, and that is, “Is it ever right to be in conflict with others?” It may surprise you that the Bible says, “Yes, it is right at times to be in conflict.” But “Conflict is only biblical if three conditions are met.” Number one, if “The reason for the conflict is biblical.” You say, well, what are biblical reasons for conflict? There are primarily, maybe even it would be proper to say, only “Two reasons, biblically, for conflict.” Number one is “Confronting sin,” confronting sin. Matthew 18:15-17 says that if you're aware that your brother in Christ has sinned, you're to go to that person, and you're to graciously, humbly, gently confront him/her with their sin. That's conflict, and that's commanded by God. A second reason for biblical conflict is when you're “Defending truth.” Now, I'm not talking about your own conscience issues, you know, “I don't think we should celebrate this holiday” or whatever; we're not talking about that. We're talking about clear-cut chapter and verse. This is what the Bible teaches, defending truth. In Galatians 2:5, Paul does that. He publicly confronted Peter to his face—that's conflict. But it was about the truth. Same thing is true in 1 Timothy 1:18; Paul tells Timothy to “fight the good fight” of faith. As elders, there are times to fight over the truth. All of us, Jude 3, are commanded to “contend

earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down (delivered) to the saints.” So conflict, when we're defending the truth, is right and biblical. So, conflict is biblical if the reason is biblical, if it's confronting sin or defending truth.

Secondly, if “The motive is biblical.” You see, even if the reason is biblical, if what drives you to do that, to enter that conflict, is a wrong motive, then it's still not biblical, even if the reason is right. You say, “What are the right motives?” Well, Paul reveals some of his motives in Galatians 2 when he confronted Peter. And he said, “I love the brothers too much to let them be swept away by error” (Paraphrase). There was a motive of love for others. That's a proper motive for there to be conflict. You love the one you're confronting, or a desire to be true to Christ and His Gospel. You also see that in what Paul says in Galatians 2. If your desire is to bring glory to God, those are some of the motives that make conflict acceptable biblically.

But there's a third, and all three of these must be true for the conflict to be biblical, “The reason is biblical,” “The motive is biblical,” and thirdly, “The attitude and communication are biblical.” You see, even conflict for a biblical reason must not be characterized by the sins that usually accompany sinful arguments. Turn over to Ephesians, chapter 4; Ephesians 4:29-32, if there's going to be conflict, even that conflict has to look like this, verse 29, “Let no unwholesome (literally, in Greek, rotten) word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” You don't confront others just to bare your soul and to share what you think. No, it's for their benefit. And if you don't do that, verse 30, you “grieve the Holy Spirit.” And here's what communication should look like, verse 31, “Let all bitterness and (Then he uses two words for anger.) wrath and anger.” One of those in Greek is blowing up—this is an outburst of anger. The other is clamming up, what we used to call ‘pouting.’ Both of them are anger. One blows up and

one clams up, but they're both forbidden in communication. “And clamor,” it's not a word we use very often; it means ‘yelling.’ In conflict, yelling is never acceptable. Raising your voice is not an acceptable way to communicate. “And slander,” a better way to translate that in the context here is ‘name-calling,’ no name-calling. You don't start labeling that person with words intended to hurt them and tear them down. “Put (these all)...away from you,” he says,” along with all malice,” all desire to hurt the other person. But instead, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.” So that's how conflict is supposed to be carried out.

Even biblical conflict must never be carried out in contradiction of those clear commands about our attitudes and our communication with one another. You see, a wise and mature Christian will initiate conflict, if biblically necessary, but a wise and mature Christian never enjoys conflict. Instead, Christians are, according to James 3:17, they are by nature “peaceable.” They're characterized by “the wisdom from above that is first pure, then peaceable.” So understand this, conflict is only biblical if the reason, the motive, and the attitude and communication are all biblical. You know what that means, folks? Ninety-nine percent of our conflicts are what? Selfish and sinful! And that means that in ninety-nine percent of our conflicts, God wants us to make peace!

So, let's consider then “What Jesus Means by Peace.” Back to our text, we've considered what He doesn't mean. What does Jesus mean? Well, the Greek word for ‘peacemaker,’ just like the English word, is a compound word—two words put together to form a new word. I want to consider right now just the first half of that word, the word ‘peace.’ This word doesn't describe a sense of calm in the heart, but rather it's an objective state. It's the ‘absence of conflict,’ or more often, ‘the cessation, the ending of conflict,’ ‘the end of active fighting.’ In fact, the *Theological*

Dictionary of the New Testament, a massive ten-volume set that I have on my shelf at home, says this about this word ‘peace:’ “For the Greeks, peace primarily denotes a state. It’s the opposite of war. It is linked with treaties of peace or the conclusion of peace.” So then, understand this word ‘peace’ in Greek is not something I feel; no, and it’s not merely a temporary truce or a brief ceasefire. In fact, the root word from which the Greek word peace comes means, ‘to bind or join together that which is broken or divided.’ So peace, then, describes not merely the end of conflict, but instead a whole, completely harmonious relationship. Ultimately, the Greek word for ‘peace’ is based on the Hebrew word ‘*shalom*,’ which means ‘wholeness’ or ‘well-being.’ It’s even translated that way in Isaiah 53. So, the peace that Jesus has in mind here is not only bringing conflict to an end but establishing an objective state of relational wholeness and well-being. Now, that’s the peace that He’s talking about.

That brings us to a second truth about peace in our text that we need to understand, and that is “The Need for Peace.” Look at verse 9, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.” Beneath the surface of this Beatitude is a terrible reality about humanity. By nature, we humans are characterized by conflict that touches and destroys every relationship. Specifically, our conflict expresses itself in two ways. First of all, “By nature, every person is at war with God.” Romans, chapter 8, verse 7, makes this remarkable statement; it says that unbelievers are by nature “hostile toward God,” every unbeliever. A far greater problem, however, is that in Romans, chapter 5, verse 10, Paul says that God is hostile toward us. He thinks of us as His “enemies.” You say, “Well, wait a minute, Tom, I’m not a follower of Jesus Christ, and I don’t buy into everything you’re saying, but I don’t feel like God and I are enemies; I feel even close to Him.” Well, I have to say to you, friend, “It doesn’t really matter what you

feel. The question is, ‘What does God think?’” And what God says in Romans 5:10, He says of all those who are now believers, have now trusted in His Son, that means He's talking about all unbelievers. He said, “We were God's enemies,” that's how God thought of us. And that's demonstrated often in the Scriptures.

Take 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verse 7, it says, “the Lord Jesus (at the end of time) will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” These, that is unbelievers, will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. God declares Himself to be your enemy if you have not obeyed the Gospel of His Son. And that's how He will respond to you when He brings human history to its conclusion. In fact, Isaiah 42, verse 13, puts it like this, “The Lord will go forth,” talking about the end times, talking about at the Second Coming when Jesus returns; “The Lord will go forth like a warrior. He will arouse *His* zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies.” Now, listen to what God said, this is God talking about what's happening right now in human history and what will happen at the end. God says, “I have kept silent for a long time, I have kept still and restrained Myself.” That's what's happening right now. God is keeping still, He's restraining Himself. But he says, “*Now* (then) like a woman in labor, I will groan, I will both gasp and pant.” In other words, “I will bring forth in labor the destruction of my enemies.” It's coming. The reality is God is at war with every unbeliever. And if you're here this morning and you're not in Christ, that includes you, regardless of what you think or feel. But our ongoing problem with conflict doesn't just affect our relationship with God.

Secondly, “By nature, every person is also at war with others.” We are born with a propensity for personal conflict. You say, “Tom, that sounds cynical and jaded.” Listen, if you doubt me, let me just give you a little assignment this morning. Before you leave, I want you to go to our toddler nursery. No, I'm serious. And go and watch those cute, innocent little children battle to the death over a plastic toy that doesn't belong to either of them—and even has slobber all over it! Tragically, our propensity for conflict doesn't remain humorous, and it doesn't go away as we grow up. But sadly, it becomes even more pronounced. Outside of Christ, the sin within our hearts leaks out and infects and destroys all human relationships—even those relationships most precious to us.

This is what Paul describes. Turn over to Romans, chapter 3. He's talking about human depravity that is universally true—there are no exceptions. And Paul identifies the reasons for this conflict in our lives, in all human life. Verse 15, “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD.” In other words, all human beings, by nature, have a predisposition to violent anger. Verse 16, “DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS.” In other words, we're born with propensity for and a pattern of destroying relationships. See what he says? They're “in their paths.” That's a really picturesque expression. It says, “Okay,” Paul says, “Listen, if you follow a fallen human being around and you just inspect their life, you will find the debris of broken, devastated relationships.” You'll find marriages that have ended in bitter separation or divorce. You'll find other marriages where they've stayed together, but they're both miserable, living in the same house like roommates at best, or even enemies at worst. You'll find families where there's no contact between parents and children or between siblings. You'll find courts filled with lawsuits between former neighbors, partners, and even family members. You'll find business partnerships destroyed, neighbors who refuse to speak to one another, friendships that have been severed

forever. And in today's world, you can go online, and you can find complete strangers, who over the comments, become bitter, even violent enemies. It's because of verse 16, “DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS.”

There's a third reason in verse 17, “THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.” In other words, human beings are so bad off, we don't even know how to find the path that leads to peace in our relationships. Why? Why is there a pattern of broken relationships? Why is this so pervasive in all of the lives of those who don't know Christ? Why? Turn over to Galatians 5; Paul answers that. Here's the reason, Galatians 5, verse 19, “Now the deeds of the flesh,” in other words, here are the actions of those who are unredeemed, those who are still living in their fallenness. “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident,” this is how they live, and he starts with sexual sin, idolatry, other things. But then in verse 20, he gets to the relational problems; these are the deeds of the flesh, this is how fallen humanity acts; it's characterized by:

...enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things (in other words, those who are characterized in their life by these sins) will not inherit the kingdom of God.

They're not believers. So understand this then, the deeds of the flesh, that is, the things that fallen people do naturally, destroy relationships. On the other hand, look at verse 22 and verse 23, “The fruit of the Spirit,” the Spirit produces in us all the necessary qualities to ensure lasting, enduring relationships, such as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...” That's what the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of believers, and that's why we have the possibility of peace. So, Galatians 5 then, insists that, by

nature, we are all born with a propensity for personal conflict. Fortunately, God uses parents, government, even peer pressure, to keep conflict somewhat in check, but it's always seething just below the surface. That's why Titus 3:3 says, "We also," as unbelievers, "were...spending our life in malice (a desire to hurt other people) and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

Where does this propensity for conflict come from? James 4:2, it comes from our "lust," it comes from our cravings. We want something, and when somebody crosses that, when we can't get our way and what we want, it produces conflict. And the only solution, he goes on to say, verse 6, is "grace," God's grace at work in our lives. So, we desperately need peace because we are by nature in a settled state of "war with God" and "with the people around us." So we've seen the meaning of and the need for peace.

Let's consider thirdly, back in our text, where this peace comes from, "The Foundation of Peace." In verse 9, Jesus says, there are "peacemakers." In other words, He says, there are some people in this world who are no longer marked by conflict; they've experienced peace with God, and now they make peace with others. What makes it possible for us who are, by nature, entrenched in conflict to become peacemakers? Well, peace in our lives is possible for three reasons. First of all, because of "The Character of God." This is who God is, by nature, God is characterized by peace and is its author in the lives of others. This is true of "The Father." Five times, the New Testament refers to God as "The God of peace," Romans 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Hebrews 13:20. "The God who is the source of all peace," and "who produces peace in the lives of others" (Summary Paraphrase).

"The Son," in Isaiah 9:6, says He's prophesied to come as the Messiah. The Messiah there, we're told, will be called (What?) the "Prince of Peace." That's who He is by nature, peaceable, and He produces peace where He goes.

And thirdly, “The Spirit,” the Spirit is also marked by peace. Galatians 5:22, the presence of the Spirit produces “peace” in the hearts of believers because He is marked by peace. So you and I have a hope for peace because that marks who God is.

The second reason peace is possible in our lives is “The Mission of the Son. “This is why Jesus came; God sent Jesus to make peace between Himself and sinful people. In Luke, chapter 1, verse 79, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, is talking about the Messiah and he says when the Messiah comes, He will come “to guide our feet into the way of peace,” that's why Jesus is coming. And you remember on the night of His birth, in Luke chapter 2, verse 14, the angels announced, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among men with whom He is pleased,” or on whom He is pleased to grant His favor, is the idea. He came to bring peace. He came to make peace between us and God. Turn over to Ephesians, chapter 2; Ephesians 2, really that's the point of this whole paragraph, beginning in chapter 2, verse 11, running through the end of chapter 2. Here's the theme of it, verse 14, “For He Himself (speaking of Jesus) is our peace.” He is our peace. And notice verse 13, He's made peace between us and God, “But now in the Christ (Messiah) Jesus you who formerly were far off (from God, and from everything connected to God) have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ.” So Christ is our peace in the sense that He makes peace between us and God. But look at verse 14, He also makes peace between us, “For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups* (that is Jews and Gentiles) *into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.” You see, He came to bring peace between us and God, and He came to bring peace between one another, illustrated by what He did with Jews and Gentiles who could never get along, and now they get along as one family the chapter goes on to say. This is why Jesus came. Jesus is history's greatest peacemaker. How did He bring about that peace?

Well, that brings us to the third reason that peace is possible, not only because of the character of God, and the mission of the Son, but also “The Gospel of Peace.” In Ephesians, chapter 6:15, that's what Paul calls the Gospel, it is the “Gospel (which brings, which produces) of peace.” You see, what Jesus accomplished in His sinless life, those thirty-three years of perfection, in His substitutionary death—the hours that the hours that He suffered, and His death on the cross, and then His glorious resurrection. What Jesus accomplished is the only solution to the conflict in our lives. And the message about Jesus brings peace; it brings peace between us and God, and it brings peace between us and others. Because of what Jesus accomplished, God can forgive our sins, and even more than forgive us, He can change us.

The noun ‘peacemaker’ occurs only in our text. The verb form of that occurs in only one text as well. Turn over to Colossians, chapter 1. Here's the verb form of ‘peacemaker.’ Colossians 1, verse 19, “For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness of deity to dwell in Him (Jesus), and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself.” How did God reconcile us to Himself? Verse 20, “having made peace through the blood of His cross.” “Having made peace,” that's the verb form of ‘peacemaker.’ God made peace through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross—peace between us and God through the sacrifice of Jesus. What I want you to understand is this, Christians are peacemakers only because they have first found peace with God, the ultimate Peacemaker. And let me just say friend, until you have peace with God, you will not consistently be able to make peace with others. So the foundation of peace is “The Character of God,” “The Mission of the Son,” and then our believing in the Gospel which produces peace between us and God, and between us and others.

Now where that foundation exists, there can be, fourthly, “The Practice of Peace,” the practice of peace. Look again at our text, Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Now we've

already looked at the first half of that word, 'peace.' Peace refers to not only 'the ending of conflict,' but also 'the establishment of a healthy whole relationship.' The second half of that compound word is 'makers.' That's the normal Greek word for 'making' or 'doing something.' Here obviously it means 'to make peace,' 'to actively seek to resolve conflict,' 'to establish a healthy relationship,' that's a peacemaker. Now, to be a peacemaker, what exactly do you have to be committed to? Well if you are a peacemaker, then three things are true of you.

Number one, "You pursue peace between sinners and God by praying for their salvation." 1 Timothy 2, where Paul says, "I want you to pray for the salvation of all men because God wants them to be reconciled to Himself" (Paraphrase). But you can't stop there, "You also have to share the Gospel message, the Gospel of peace with others." 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, "...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...and He has committed to us the message of reconciliation." That's the Gospel—you can be reconciled to God, and he says, "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." How can God be reconciled to sinners? How can there be peace between us who are sinners and a holy God? The last verse of 2 Corinthians 5, God made Christ, on the cross, "*to be* sin on our behalf." He suffered for the sins of all who would believe in Him, "so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," so that God can credit Jesus' righteousness to us.

Here's the heart of the Gospel, if you've never heard it, you need to understand this is what happened on the cross. God treated Jesus as if He had lived your sinful life; He got everything you deserve so that He could treat you forever as if you had lived Jesus' perfect life. That's the heart of the Gospel. You have to repent and believe that Gospel in order to be reconciled to God. We are peacemakers because we pursue peace between sinners and God by praying for their salvation and by sharing that message of reconciliation with them.

Secondly, “we're peacemakers when we pursue peace between ourselves and others.” Psalm 34:14, “Seek peace and pursue it.” Romans 12:18, Paul puts it like this, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” In other words, there are no exceptions; you can't say, “Well, not him, not her, not that group.” “As far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” Hebrews 12:14, “Pursue peace with all men.” By the way, notice it's active. It doesn't say, “Well I wish there were peace. That'd be nice.” No, “Pursue peace with all men.” Let me ask you this morning, and I really want you to answer this question in your heart as I've had to answer it in my own heart, “Are you currently in a state of conflict with another person?” Are you currently in a state of conflict with another person? Maybe it's a spouse. Maybe it's a family member, a friend, a coworker, a neighbor. Maybe it's a member of this church. Based on what we've already discovered, if that's true, if you're in conflict with someone, there's a 99% chance it is selfish and sinful. The question is, “Are you pursuing peace with that person?”

You say, “Well what does that look like?” Here's what you should do. Biblically, these are your obligations. Number one, “If you are the one who sinned and that's the reason there's conflict, then you need to go to that person and seek to be reconciled.” Look at Matthew, chapter 5, verse 23:

Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar (if you've come to worship) and there you remember that your brother has something against you (in other words, they think you've sinned against them), leave your offering there before the altar and go; first, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (worship).

So, if you have sinned against someone or they think you have sinned against them and that's the reason for the conflict, go and seek to be reconciled.

Second, “If you have been sinned against, go and seek to be reconciled.” Matthew 18 says, “If you believe your brother has sinned, it may be toward you (And this is how I'm using it right now, it may be toward someone else.), but if you believe there's been sin by another person, then you are to go to that person and you're to seek to be reconciled” (Paraphrase). Now, let me just say, “How do you go?” You don't go in arrogance thinking, “This would never happen to me!” You go according to Galatians 6:1 in humility, “looking (considering) to yourself, so that (lest) you too will not be tempted.” You go with an eagerness to forgive, not to sort of punish them for how they've sinned against you. This is how you're to respond. So look at those two responses. You see, there's no middle ground. Biblically, if there's a conflict in your relationships, you are responsible to go and to seek reconciliation, regardless of who's responsible for the conflict. Can you honestly, if Jesus Christ Himself were standing on the stage this morning, could you honestly come up and say to Him, “Lord, I have done everything that I can do, biblically, to resolve this conflict; I have humbly gone to that person; I have sought to be reconciled without compromising the truth; I've tried, I've had a forgiving spirit, I've come in humility, and I've done everything I can?” Can you say that? If not, then you're not acting like a peacemaker.

Thirdly, to be a peacemaker means to “Pursue peace between others in conflict.” You see, the peacemaker refuses to initiate sinful conflict with others. The peacemaker refuses to allow that conflict to remain where it exists, but he pursues reconciliation. But the peacemaker also tries to bring peace between others who are in conflict. Now, don't misunderstand, that doesn't mean you go around inserting yourself into the conflicts of people you don't know. Proverbs 26:17 says, “*Like* one who takes a dog by the ears is he who passes by (That's the key expression.) and meddles with strife not belonging to him.” In other words, you don't get into the strife of people

you don't know. But when it's people in your life, a true Christian will try to bring peace between those in conflict.

Now, let's admit that unbelievers occasionally act as peacemakers, and we're grateful for that. That's part of the residual image of God in them. But it's an aberration. It's not who they truly are, as we saw in Romans 3. They are consistently characterized by conflict. On the other hand, true Christians don't just occasionally broker peace. They're known as those who make peace; they are peacemakers. Now, this isn't something we can sort of drum up within ourselves. We can't pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and become peacemakers. This is something only God's Spirit can produce in us, Galatians 5:22, where the Spirit is, He produces peace, both an inward understanding of peace, but also peace with God and peace with others, objectively. A true Christian is by, nature, a peacemaker, and that means we exhibit that peacemaking desire in those three ways.

Finally, let's consider one last reality or truth, and that is "The Blessing of Peace." Again, verse 9 says, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for (because) they shall be called sons of God." This is Jesus' promise to peacemakers. Here's why they're spiritually blessed. In Greek, we could translate it like this, this reflects the word flow and the emphasis, "They, and they alone, sons of God, shall be called." The question is, "Who is going to call them sons of God?" This is what theologians call a 'divine passive.' God will call them His sons. Here is Jesus' point. Being a peacemaker is one of the marks of those who truly belong to His spiritual kingdom. Why? Because that's who God is, and if God has given you His life and His Spirit, then you're going to reflect His character and His nature, and you're now going to be given, like He is, to making peace.

And for those who are peacemakers, God already calls us His children. 1 John 3:1, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God; and *such* we are.” He already calls us His children, but that isn't Jesus' point here. He says they “will be,” He points to the future, they “will be called the sons of God.” He's saying that, at the future judgment, God will confirm us to be His sons and daughters publicly. He will declare to all the intelligent beings in the universe that He has adopted us, that we're His son, we're His daughter. And don't miss this, part of the evidence that proves we are His children is that we “are peacemakers.”

Now that's the opposite of those who are not in Jesus' kingdom. You see, those in Satan's kingdom are characterized by conflict. As we've learned, by the way, from Luke 6, when Jesus preached the sermon, in this very same sermon, He not only pronounced blessings on peacemakers, He pronounced woes on those who live in constant conflict. So, can I say to you this morning, “If your relationships are characterized by constant conflict, in your home, in the work, with neighbors, if your relationships are characterized by constant conflict, then Jesus said, ‘You don't truly belong to His kingdom right now.’” It's not me, that's Jesus. It doesn't matter that you prayed a prayer when you were a kid, or walked an aisle, or signed a card, or whatever it was you did; it doesn't matter. Jesus says, “If you're not a peacemaker, you're not in My kingdom.” And when you stand before God at the judgment, He'll never call you His son or His daughter then unless you are willing to repent and follow Christ. You will spend eternity unreconciled to God and unreconciled to others. But friend, let me just plead with you, it doesn't have to stay that way. You can have, today, peace with God and peace with others. God can change you in a moment of time if you will repent and believe in His Son, from a person marked and known for conflict to a person who's known for peace. You can have peace with

God by repenting and believing in the Gospel of peace. And God's Spirit will change you so that instead of being marked by conflict, He'll transform you into a maker of peace. That's my prayer for you today.

If you're here this morning, you can say, "Tom, I'm already a Christian. I already profess to know Jesus Christ, to be His follower." But let me ask you a question, "Do the people in your life," let me say it differently, "Do the people in your life, who know you best, do they think of you as a peacemaker?" If not, there are only two possibilities. One, you may actually not be a Christian at all. If you're constantly characterized by conflict in all your relationships, you're not. But if you've given in and allowed conflict in one of your relationships, then you, at least in that relationship, are not living like your new Father, the ultimate Peacemaker, you are living like your old father. Why is there conflict in the world? It's because of Satan. He's the author of conflict, not God. So, you're acting like your old father and not your new Father. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called (God Himself will call them His.) sons (and His daughters) of God."

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for our time this morning. Oh, God, forgive us as Your people from being influenced by the culture of conflict in which we live. Lord, let us be known as peacemakers in our homes, in our marriages, with our families, at work, at school, online. Father, forgive us for acting like our old father and enjoying and pursuing sinful conflict. Father, instead, help us to be committed to being like You without compromising the truth.

Father, I pray for those here this morning who have to be honest with themselves, who came in thinking they were a Christian, but Lord, if they've looked in the mirror of Your Word today, and they've seen that they simply can't be because their life is like a picture of this text, it's a

debris of devastated relationships, Father, help them, today, to truly repent and believe in Your Son so that they can have peace with You, and You can begin to produce peace with the people around them. We pray that You would do that for the glory of Your Son who deserves the reward of His suffering, and it's in His name that we pray. Amen.