

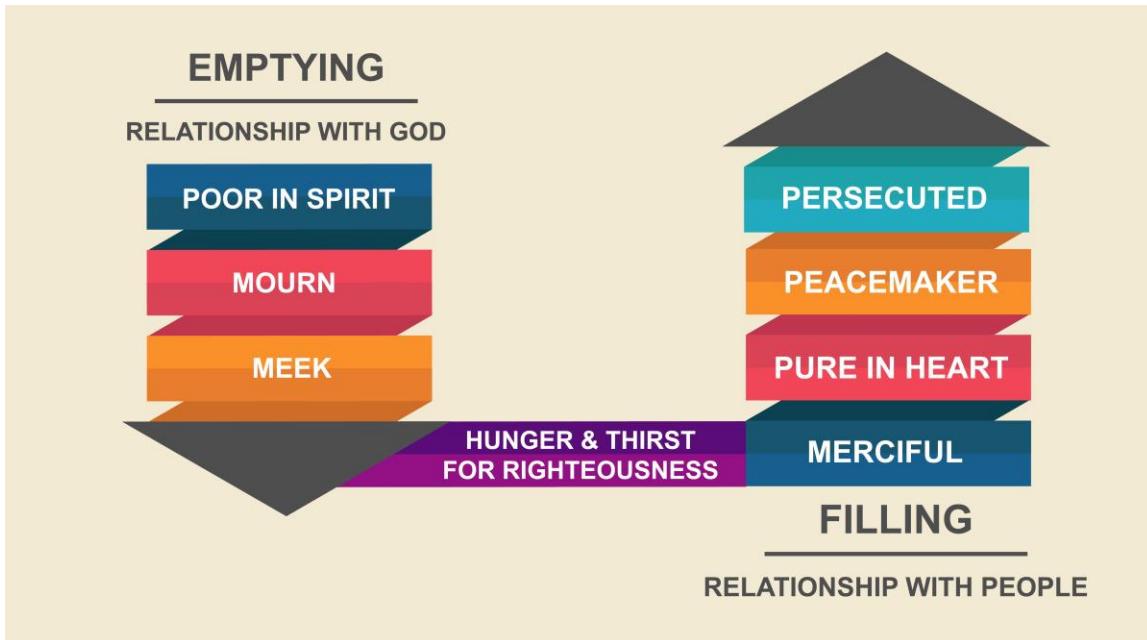
Blessed Are the Peacemakers

I. INTRO

- A. Imagine picking your car up from the shop after a routine servicing and your trusted mechanic for the last few years says, "This car is in great shape, there is not a thing wrong with it."
 - 1. Later that day, the engine light goes on and your engine freezes and you have to spend some serious money on repairs.
 - 2. You go back to the shop, and you say, "Why didn't you tell me?" Your mechanic replies, "Well, I didn't want you to feel bad. Plus, to be honest, I was afraid you might get upset with me. I want my shop to be a safe place where you feel loved and accepted."
 - 3. You'd be furious! Right? You'd say, "When it comes to my car, I want the truth."
- B. Or imagine going to the doctor's office for a check-up. The doctor says to you, "You are in amazing health – you have the heart and lungs of a serious athlete. You are to be congratulated."
 - 1. Later that day you're hurrying across the street to make a light and you get dizzy and pass out and the paramedics come and rush you to the hospital.
 - 2. You're in ICU and your doctor comes by and you say, "Why didn't you tell me the truth?" The doctor says, "Well, I knew your heart was in pretty bad shape, but if I tell people stuff like that, they get kind of offended – and it's bad for business. I want my office to be a safe place where people feel loved and accepted."
 - 3. You'd be furious! You'd say to the doctor, "When it comes to my health, I want the truth!"
- C. Today we will begin to look at the difference between being a peacekeeper and a peacemaker. Let's look at Matthew 5:9. I will read it and then pray and ask God to help us to better understand what it means to be a peacemaker: "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*" -- Matthew 5:9 [pray]

II. BODY

- A. Billy Graham described the Beatitudes as the "*Beautiful Attitudes*" that describe a true believer's life. As we've noted the last several weeks the essential point to grasp is that these *beautiful attitudes* cannot be obtained in our own strength and power. They are not acts of the will but they are the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in our life doing IN us and THROUGH us what we cannot do on our own.
- B. Our portion is to be honest about our limitations and to humble ourselves as we move intentionally through the Beatitudes:



- First, we acknowledge that we are not only “poor in spirit,” but we are bankrupt, and then we mourn over our fallen state, which empties us and strengthens our relationship with God, transforms us into a humble learners (meek).
 - When we have been emptied, a deep hunger and thirst stirs in us a new desire to honor, serve, and please God; who then begins to fill us with mercy, purity, and peace, which transforms our relationships. (Remember, this happens by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.)
- C. As we shall see, becoming a peacemaker is an essential aspect of our life purpose and direction as intentional followers of Jesus.
- As we will see over the next 2 weeks this does not mean taking everything on the chin and not making any waves.
 - First and foremost, this means we are no longer at war with God. We stop being hostile toward God.
- D. Today we'll be asking two questions:
- What is a “peace-maker”?
 - Who are the “sons of God”?
- Both of these questions are pertinent for CCC at this moment...
- E. We'll look at them one at a time...
- What is a peace-maker? (First, we'll look at the word *PEACE* and then *MAKER*)
 - What is Peace?

- 1) As has been the case for a few of the Beatitudes we must first describe what peace is NOT: Our culture – and our world today does not really understand God's concept of peace. We think that **peace is the absence of conflict....**
 - 2) **God's Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the absence of anxiety (or dread) in the midst of inevitable conflict.**
 - 3) Matthew was a Jewish man/disciple and his gospel narrative was written to inform Jewish people about the Messiah.
 - 4) So, our Western concept of peace needs to be considered in the light of the ancient Jewish concept of peace.
 - a) The Jewish word for peace is **SHALOM** – a succinct definition would be: **Undefiled harmony with God.**
 - b) Here's a more comprehensive definition: **Biblical SHALOM means a universal flourishing, wholeness and delight; a rich state of affairs...the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in equity, fulfillment, and delight. SHALOM is the way things ought to be.¹** --Cornelius Plantinga
 - 5) What began in the Garden of Eden as a world of undefiled harmony with God, ended abruptly when Adam and Eve sinned.
 - 6) With their fateful bites, the world was set on a trajectory of fear, greed, shame, isolation, and blame.
 - 7) **Our core problem...is that the human heart, ignoring God, turns in on itself, tries to lift itself, wants to please itself, and ends up debasing itself.²** --Cornelius Plantinga
 - 8) In spite of the effects of sin in our lives and in our world, we can have great hope. The essence of the gospel is that God, out of unfathomable love, became one of us, accomplishing for us what we could not do on our own.
 - 9) Through what Jesus has done, we are given the promise (and a down payment) that one day SHALOM will be restored in full and humanity reunited with the original purpose of our Creator.
 - 10) Christians have the unique privilege today of reflecting **glimpses of life as it ought to be** and that brings us to our second half of the first question...
- b. **What (or, Who) is a peace-MAKER?**

¹ Cornelius Plantinga. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, Eerdmans 1995:10.

² *Ibid*: 62.

- 1) The Greek word for *peacemaker* is an obscure word found only in the New Testament.³
 - a) The word literally signifies: "A founder or promoter of peace."⁴
 - b) Jesus is not referring to arbitration through making compromises.
- 2) We need to see that there is a clear distinction between a ***peacemaker*** and a ***peacekeeper***. Peace-**keeping** creates a **false peace** that will eventually erupt in a plethora of unhealthy ways.
 - a) Many of us live out our lives with this **false peace** and say nothing or do nothing to change it—in churches, homes, work places, marriages.
 - b) A peacemaker is someone who:
 - **Makes personal peace with God** – "*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*" -- Romans 15:13
 - **Helps others make peace with one another** – "*So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.*" --Romans 14:19
 - **Sponsors others in making peace with God** – "*How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation*" --Isaiah 52:7 (and Romans 10:14)

2. Who are the “sons of God”?

- a. At first glance this phrase may sound terribly sexist, it's actually just the opposite. Jesus is elevating the status of women to that of sons in His Kingdom manifesto.
- b. The main idea here is that it was the son, or sons, who were the inheritors of the Father's property and possessions. The daughters were not heirs.
- c. So, Jesus is addressing the ancient patriarchal system that devalued women. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God challenges the cultural mindset that tends to oppress and repress the weakest members of society.
- d. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God systematically undermines and dismantles the ethics that drive that oppressive system. God *loves* the world but *hates* the world system that oppresses, represses, and objectifies women.

³ ειρηνοποιος (Strong's #1518)

⁴ M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. I, MacDonald Publishing, reprint of 2nd ed 1888: 30.

- e. "The actions of Jesus of Nazareth towards women were...revolutionary⁵." -- *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*
- f. Paul affirms this in his letter to the Galatians...
 - 1) "*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*" --Galatians 3:26
 - 2) "*Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.*" --Galatians 4:7
- g. Jesus and Paul (here in Galatians) are both saying something radically revolutionary and subversive. **Jesus and Paul are saying that in God's family everyone is a son, we are all heirs. Male and female were created by God as equal in dignity, value, essence.**
- h. We, as a church, have some work to do theologically...

Complementarian-----

Egalitarian

Complementarian - The theological view that God created male and female as complementary expressions of the image of God. Though both sexes are equal in being and personhood, each does so in a unique and distinct way in the home and the church. (Biblical / theological complementarity does not condone the patriarchal, societal oppression of women.)

Egalitarian – The theological view that God created male and female as equal before God in being and personhood, the redemptive work of Christ restored full parity to both sexes and there are no gender-based limitations regarding functions or roles each can fulfill in the home or the church.

1. Historically, as a church, CCC has held a more complementarian view. In my interactions with various groups of people over the last year I do not expect that to change as we move forward into the next season of effective ministry.
2. There are “hyper” views on both ends of the continuum. There are hyper complementarians and there are hyper egalitarians. Hyper means that on either side of the continuum there can be extreme distortions of the theological view.
3. I have spoken with the staff and the elders about holding an all-church Summit In the Fall to address and do some teaching on this theological continuum – and four others.
4. Here is an adage from church history that is often attributed to Augustine: "**In the essentials of Christian doctrine we must have unity, in the non-essentials there must be liberty, in all things there must be charity.**"

⁵ B.M. Metzger & M.D. Coogan. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Oxford University Press 1993: 806-818.

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III. CONCLUSION

- A. Takeaway: A peacemaker is someone who experiences the peace of God (Philippians 4:7) because s/he is at peace (Romans 5:1) with the God of peace (Philippians 4:9) through the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6), who, indeed, is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), and who therefore seeks to live at peace with all others (Romans 12:18) and proclaims the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15) so that others might have joy and peace in believing (Romans 15:13).
- B. As we move to the communion table I have two important questions for you...
 - 1. Have you made peace with God?
 - 2. Rom 12:18 tells us, "*so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people.*" Is the Holy Spirit putting someone on your heart to go and make peace with?
- C. As those who will be serving communion make their way to the back, let's reflect...