

Pentecost Sunday; June 5, 2022  
+ Matthew 5:8-9 +  
“Pentecost Makes Peacemakers”

**Matthew 5:8–9 (NKJV) *Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.***

All my children old enough to be asked at some point said they wanted to make video games when they grow up. I even had one who said he wanted to be a pastor and make video games. What a combo there! Now I don't discourage things like hopes and dreams, but I do still give a friendly reminder to them that making a video game is probably different than playing a video game for hours on end. It's clearly hard work, and there's actually a lot of bad press lately on game studios for deadline crunch on their employees. So it's a good career to go into and all that but it's not just the fun time of playing a game all day. Making games is different than enjoying games. Now our text today talks about peacemaking. We'd all probably like peace and we can rightfully say, "I haven't started any war," but if we're honest we'd also have to admit we don't always go about *making* peace. And really, making peace as our lesson talks about is different than just enjoying peace, just like making a video game is different from playing a video game. Here's the other thing: when we're not so good at peacemaking, it actually reveals how often we are off on what peace actually is! Today, being Pentecost is closely related to peacemaking, so I hope we walk away from this biblical text understanding how Pentecost makes peacemakers.

So just to clarify how we got to the lesson for today. This is from Jesus' sermon on the mount and he's giving his beatitudes, these sayings where he calls people "blessed." Blessed kind of means "happy" but without vibes of yippy-skippy feelings being necessary or it's kind of like "fortunate" but without the vibes of good luck involved. I say this because it's easy to say words like "blessed" or "blessing" as a Christian cliché not really think through what we're talking about. Ok, so it seems like there's a development in the beatitudes where the earlier blessings teach us how God fills the gaps in what we're lacking as the poor in spirit and mourners who need comfort. The later ones describe the Christian life like this one about peacemaking.

So that leads us to wonder how good we are at peacemaking if that's something we're supposed to be doing. Now just to clear the air on this, we could all say we haven't started a war so we're good or we could say, I as an individual am not in much of a position to stop a war and win a Nobel Prize or something, so this one doesn't apply to me. But the thing is that these beatitudes were spoken to regular people originally not people who were going to make world peace or something. Regular people can be peacemakers.

This then raises the issue of whether we are living a peacemaking sort of lifestyle. I think we like to enjoy peace but usually only the kind of peace that assumes peace is the result of winning or getting what we want. In other words, when we're maybe in an argument, our goal is often to win and be the mayor of I told you so town rather than whether I leave at peace with that other person and concern for their perspective or feelings. Or think about when someone is bullied a bit or spoken ill of.... Then we want the kind of peace where we lay low and don't try to reconcile people or even nudge them in the right direction. But Jesus didn't say blessed are those who lay low. And then there's the passive aggressive peace wherein we outwardly act like we're sorta at peace with someone we're actually subtly upset at and probably subtly trying to get that across still. But having a personal cold war with someone is not exactly the same thing as peacemaking. What drives passive aggression is the same thing that drives all our peacemaking problems—our selfishness, our ego to be right, and our inability to be chill about someone else's mistakes and sins (maybe even one's they don't even know about or remember) to the point that we need a dramatic surrender and begging for forgiveness to end our cold wars. So our sinful problem with peace is

that we want it on our terms and our way and thus selfishly, and that makes true peacemaking out of reach.

Now Jesus puts this big attachment to being peacemakers that they shall be called sons of God. “Called” is a key word. We’re not divine or anything. And even though we are adopted as God’s children, I don’t think that’s what the text is talking about, since peacemaking has nothing to do with adoption. I think the clearest connection would be how in the ancient world, children often did the same career as the parents. For example, Jesus’ disciples James and John were sons of Zebedee who was a professional fisherman and when Jesus made them disciples, they were all fishing together (Mark 1:19–20). So when we go about peacemaking we are doing the family business so to speak, because God is our peacemaker.

That adds a new dimension to peacemaking. God is the model for peacemaking and shows us the way, but then that’s a great comfort because we receive the joy and peace that resulted from *his* peacemaking. Jesus came to earth to bring us true peace, which is why on Christmas angels specifically said he was there for “peace on earth.” We couldn’t restore our own peace with God so Jesus did it for us. He was perfect and without sin so that it would be count for us and mend fences with God. He faced the crushing defeat we should have faced in a war with God but in our place when he went to die on the cross, paying the price for our sins, making it so we are now showered with peace. When he rose again, we find new peace in knowing that death has been conquered by him, peace as we know eternal life is ours as we trust in Jesus for all these blessings, trust that he himself has given us by singlehandedly making things right with us.

This now brings us to Pentecost today. In view of the peace Jesus brought to the apostles, they then preached to the people—some of them it mentions in Acts even helped to kill Jesus—in order to bring them peace too. Also we heard in the Old Testament lesson how the people in their sinfulness worked together to foil God yet then their languages were confused and they were turned against each other. In the Acts account of Pentecost, we see the reversal of this: people from all over are brought together around the peace Jesus brings in the Gospel, as the apostles can communicate to them in their own languages. We too can be peacemakers like the apostles, just as they were peacemakers to all those different people. Like them we have the Holy Spirit who works in the Gospel message to change hearts, though we don’t always know his plans or timing. But in Pentecost we see that God has not left us on the sidelines. Just as he has made peace with us by saving us, he empowers us to be fellow peacemakers, to get involved with the family business of peacemaking, and talk to others with the same message we find such great comfort in. Talking to others can be intimidating but when we focus on how great the message has been for us, we have the beginnings of our talking points. We know the peace Jesus has brought us, so we know how to be peacemakers like at Pentecost.

Jesus I hope has shown us today true peacemaking. We enjoy the results of his peacemaking now and eternally. Enjoying peace is different from peacemaking though too, just as playing video games is different from the work of making them. But just as I think most people who make video games probably play them and enjoy them too, I hope we can have the same both/and when it comes to peacemaking. We both now try to make peace with those around us as we are able, but all the while we enjoy the peace we have in Jesus, his forgiveness, and eternal life. Amen.

**Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, help us follow in your footsteps like true children who seek to make peace as you did for us through Jesus. Grant that we trust your ultimate peacemaking in Jesus’ work and live each day in true peace. Amen.

