The Constitution of the Kingdom

A 33-Session Journey through the Sermon on the Mount & the Sermon on the Plain

SESSION EIGHT — Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Part One: The Blessings of the Kingdom · Texts: Matthew 5:9; Luke 6:27–28

The Texts

> **Matthew 5:9** *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*
>
> **Luke 6:27–28** *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.*

Keepers and Makers

There is a world of difference between keeping the peace and making it, and almost all of us were raised to do the first.

Keep the peace. Don't rock the boat. Don't make a scene. Smooth it over, let it go, keep everybody comfortable. We call that person a "peacemaker" — the one who calms the room, avoids the hard conversation, keeps the quiet. And it is worth noticing that when the world wants to name a weapon, it reaches for the very same word: they called the great cannon a "peacemaker," and the revolver too. Peace through firepower. Peace by force. Peace by silence. Jesus blesses none of that. His word is not "peace-keeper." It is peace-maker — one who makes peace, builds it, forges it out of conflict, the way you make anything worth having: with labor, and cost, and your own two hands in the mess. And to this one alone, in the whole list, he attaches the highest name there is: "they will be called children of God."[1]

Let's search the Scriptures together, and learn the difference.

Peacekeeping Is Not Peacemaking

So let us draw the line clearly, because everything depends on it. A peacekeeper avoids conflict; a peacemaker enters it. The peacekeeper's goal is quiet — no tension, no waves, no uncomfortable truths spoken aloud. The peacemaker's goal is wholeness — the actual mending of what is broken, which almost always requires walking straight into the tension the peacekeeper is fleeing. One manages the symptom; the other heals the cause.

And here is the sharp edge of it, the part we must not miss: a "peace" that is merely the absence of trouble is often no peace at all. Very often it is just the arrangement that keeps the powerful

[1]Unless noted, Scripture is quoted from the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition (NRSVue), the base translation for this course.

comfortable and the wounded quiet. Dr. King named this exactly — he had learned to distrust the "negative peace" that is only the absence of tension, and to seek instead the "positive peace" that is the presence of justice. The prophets had already thundered against the counterfeit: "They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."[2]

Shalom — the Peace Jesus Means

To understand what Jesus is blessing, you have to hear the word underneath it: *shalom*. And shalom is not what we usually mean by "peace." It is not merely the absence of war, or a calm feeling inside. Shalom is wholeness. Flourishing. Every relationship mended — between people, between us and God, between us and the earth. It is the world knit back together the way its Maker intended, nothing missing and nothing broken. Shalom is the world set right. So a peacemaker, in Jesus' mouth, is not someone who keeps things quiet. A peacemaker is someone who labors to mend the world toward that wholeness — a "repairer of the breach," Isaiah calls them; the one in whom, the psalmist sings, righteousness and peace finally kiss. Peace and justice are not rivals in the Bible; they are lovers. You cannot make the one without the other.[3]

The Costly Middle

And this is exactly where Luke rejoins us. The plain has no "peacemakers" beatitude — but it has the engine that drives all peacemaking: "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you." That is peacemaking in its work clothes. It is the refusal to answer hostility with hostility, the decision to absorb the blow rather than pass it on, to break the cycle of harm by letting it stop with you. Do not mistake that for weakness or passivity — we learned better back with the meek. This is the fiercest work there is. The peacemaker steps into the space between enemies and takes the friction into their own body. It is cruciform — it looks like the cross, where God himself absorbed the world's violence and refused to hand it back. That is why the world so rarely does it: real peacemaking almost always costs the peacemaker.[4]

---

[2]Peacemaking is not peacekeeping. Peacekeeping avoids conflict to preserve calm; peacemaking enters conflict to build wholeness. Compare Martin Luther King Jr.'s distinction between "negative peace" (the absence of tension) and "positive peace" (the presence of justice), and Jeremiah 6:14, the false "'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

[3]Shalom is not merely the absence of war or a calm feeling but wholeness and flourishing—every relationship mended, the world set right (Isaiah 58:12, "repairer of the breach"; Psalm 85:10, where righteousness and peace kiss). To make peace is to labor toward shalom; in Scripture peace and justice are inseparable.

[4]This blessing appears only in Matthew, but Luke's love of enemies (6:27–28) is peacemaking enacted: absorbing hostility rather than returning it, letting the cycle of harm stop with you. It is active and costly, not passive. On the cross as the breaking of the cycle of violence, see Walter Wink, Engaging the Powers.

A necessary word of care here: to make peace is never to return to harm, and it is never to tell the abused or the oppressed to stay silent for the sake of someone else's comfort. Sometimes the most peacemaking thing is to tell the truth that breaks a false calm, or to get to safety. Reconciliation is not the same as going back to the thing that is hurting you. Real peace protects the wounded; it never sacrifices them to keep the quiet.

"Children of God"

Now the promise — and it is the highest in the entire list. Not "they will feel peaceful." Not even "they will have peace." "They will be called children of God."

A child bears the family likeness. And this beatitude tells us that when you make peace, you look most like your Father — because God is the great peacemaker, the reconciler of the whole world. "In Christ," Paul says, "God was reconciling the world to himself." Jesus "is our peace," the one who broke down the dividing wall between enemies. So to make peace is to be caught up in the family business of God, and the resemblance shows. Back in the mercy session we heard Luke say, "be merciful, as your Father is merciful" — here is the same truth from another angle: make peace, and the whole world will see whose child you are.[5]

When True Peace Disturbs a False One

One more hard, honest thing, because it guards everything else. The same Jesus who blessed the peacemakers also said, startlingly, that he had not come to bring peace but a sword — that he would set people at odds. How can both be true? Because making a real peace almost always disturbs a false one. When you name an injustice everyone had agreed to ignore, when you pull a hidden wound into the light so it can finally heal, when you stand with the silenced — you will be accused of "dividing" and "causing trouble" and "not keeping the peace." Hear this clearly: sometimes the peacemaker's first job is to break the counterfeit peace so that a true one can be built. That is not a failure of peacemaking. It is the beginning of it.

Freedom for Others

Put it to our thread, and it lands almost on its own — because peacemaking is freedom for others in its most demanding form. It is the labor of building someone else's wholeness, usually at a cost to your own comfort. So ask with me: what broken relationship, what avoided conflict, what quiet-that-isn't-really-peace am I being called to step into and help mend? And what neutrality, what safe distance, what comfortable silence must I lay down to stand in the

[5] "Children of God": to make peace is to bear the family likeness, for God is the great reconciler—"in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:18–19); Christ "is our peace," who broke down the dividing wall (Ephesians 2:14). Compare Session Six's imitatio Dei, "be merciful, as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

costly middle? *Freedom for others may cost us our comfort and our reputation for being "easy to get along with" — what can we lay down?*

Around the Table — For Discussion

- Where were you taught to be a peace-keeper — to smooth things over and keep the quiet? How is that different from making peace?
- Shalom means wholeness, not just the absence of trouble. Where is there quiet without wholeness — a "peace" that keeps someone comfortable at another's expense?
- Luke says peacemaking looks like loving enemies and blessing those who curse you. Where is that being asked of you — and what would it cost?
- Jesus said making real peace can look like bringing "a sword." Where might faithful peacemaking need to disturb a false peace?
- Freedom for others may cost us something. What costly middle are you being invited to step into this week?

This Week — A Practice

Two movements. First, stop keeping and start making. Name one conflict you have been avoiding — one broken relationship you have been managing with distance and politeness — and take one costly step toward actually mending it: go to the person, name the thing, seek the wholeness, not just the quiet. (And hear the care in this: if the relationship is one that harms you, peacemaking may mean truth and safety, not return. Wisdom is not the enemy of peace.) Second, pray, by name, for one "enter of yours" — as Luke says, bless the one who has cursed you — and watch what it begins to do in you. Then bring back what you found. This Kingdom, like all the rest, is learned in the doing.

Looking Ahead

Next session we come to the last of the blessings, and the strangest — the one that circles all the way back to the first. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We'll ask why the Sermon's opening list ends here, on a hard word about being hated for doing right — and why Jesus brackets the whole thing, first blessing and last, with the same breathtaking promise: the Kingdom is already, right now, theirs. That session closes Part One — the Blessings of the Kingdom.

Benediction

So go this week and make peace — real peace, the costly kind. Refuse the false calm that only keeps the comfortable comfortable. Step into the breach. Love the enemy, bless the one who curses, take the friction into yourself and let the cycle of harm stop with you. And when they accuse you of causing trouble for pulling a wound into the light, remember whose child you are — because the God who reconciled the whole world will know the family resemblance when he sees it. Blessed are the peacemakers — not the peace-keepers, but the peace-makers — for they shall be called the children of God.

Love, practiced — not just professed — reveals the Kingdom among us.

SESSION EIGHT

Introduction Video Script

Single presenter, to camera · target 5–6 minutes · warm, steady, unhurried

[Begin still.]

Welcome back to the table. Today, one word — and there's a world of difference hiding inside it. The word is peacemaker. And almost all of us were raised to be something that sounds the same but isn't: a peace-keeper.

Keep the peace. Don't rock the boat. Don't make a scene. Smooth it over, keep everybody comfortable. We even call that person a "peacemaker." And notice — when the world wants to name a weapon, it grabs the same word. They called the cannon a "peacemaker." The revolver, too. Peace by firepower. Peace by force. Peace by silence.

Jesus blesses none of that. His word isn't peace-keeper. It's peace-maker — someone who makes peace, builds it, forges it out of conflict, the way you make anything worth having: with labor and cost and your own two hands in the mess. And to this person alone, in the whole list, he gives the highest name there is: "they will be called children of God."

[The distinction — lean in.]

So here's the line, and everything depends on it. A peace-keeper avoids conflict. A peace-maker enters it. The keeper wants quiet — no tension, no hard truths out loud. The maker wants wholeness — the actual mending of what's broken, which almost always means walking straight into the tension the keeper is fleeing. One manages the symptom. The other heals the cause.

And here's the sharp edge: a "peace" that's just the absence of trouble is often no peace at all. Very often it's just the arrangement that keeps the powerful comfortable and the wounded quiet. Dr. King learned to distrust what he called the "negative peace" that's only the absence of tension, and to seek the "positive peace" that's the presence of justice. The prophets said it

first: “they have healed my people’s wound lightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

[Shalom.]

To hear what Jesus is blessing, you have to hear the word underneath it — shalom. And shalom isn’t what we usually mean by peace. Not the absence of war. Not a calm feeling. Shalom is wholeness — flourishing — every relationship mended, between people, with God, with the earth. The world knit back together the way its Maker meant it: nothing missing, nothing broken. The world set right. So a peacemaker isn’t someone who keeps things quiet. A peacemaker labors to mend the world toward that wholeness — a “repairer of the breach,” Isaiah says. In the Bible, peace and justice aren’t rivals. They’re lovers. You can’t make one without the other.

[Luke and the cost.]

And this is where Luke rejoins us. The plain has no “peacemakers” beatitude — but it has the engine that drives all of it: “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you.” That’s peacemaking in its work clothes — the refusal to answer hostility with hostility, the choice to absorb the blow instead of passing it on, to let the cycle of harm stop with you. That’s not weakness — we learned that with the meek. It’s the fiercest work there is. The peacemaker steps between enemies and takes the friction into their own body. It’s cruciform — it looks like the cross, where God absorbed the world’s violence and refused to hand it back. That’s why the world so rarely does it. Real peacemaking costs the peacemaker.

And one word of care, because it matters: making peace is never returning to harm, and never telling the hurt or the oppressed to go quiet for someone else’s comfort. Sometimes the most peacemaking thing is the truth that breaks a false calm — or getting to safety. Reconciliation is not going back to the thing that’s wounding you. Real peace protects the wounded; it never sacrifices them to keep the quiet.

[The promise.]

Now the promise — the highest in the whole list. Not “they’ll feel peaceful.” “They will be called children of God.” A child bears the family likeness. So when you make peace, you look most like your Father — because God is the great peacemaker, the reconciler of the whole world. “In Christ, God was reconciling the world.” Jesus is our peace, who broke down the wall between enemies. Make peace, and the whole world sees whose child you are.

[The hard turn.]

And one last hard thing, because it guards all the rest. The same Jesus who blessed the peacemakers also said — startlingly — that he came not to bring peace but a sword. How are

both true? Because making a real peace almost always disturbs a false one. When you name the injustice everyone agreed to ignore, when you drag a hidden wound into the light so it can heal, when you stand with the silenced — you'll be accused of dividing, of causing trouble, of not keeping the peace. Hear me: sometimes the peacemaker's first job is to break the counterfeit peace so a true one can be built. That's not a failure of peacemaking. It's the start of it.

[The thread and practice.]

So here's our question this week — freedom for others: what broken relationship, what avoided conflict, what quiet-that-isn't-really-peace am I being called to step into and mend? And what safe distance, what comfortable silence, do I need to lay down to stand in the costly middle?

Two things to practice. First, stop keeping and start making: name one conflict you've been avoiding and take one costly step toward actually mending it — the wholeness, not just the quiet. And if the relationship harms you, peacemaking may mean truth and safety, not return — wisdom is not the enemy of peace. Second, pray by name for one enemy — bless the one who's cursed you — and watch what it starts to do in you.

Next time, the last of the blessings, and the strangest — "blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake" — the one that circles all the way back to the first, and closes Part One.

[Slow. Land it.]

For now, go and make peace — the real, costly kind. Refuse the false calm that only keeps the comfortable comfortable. Step into the breach. Take the friction into yourself and let the harm stop with you. And when they accuse you of causing trouble for pulling a wound into the light — remember whose child you are. The God who reconciled the whole world will know the family resemblance when he sees it.

Love, practiced — not just professed — reveals the Kingdom among us.

Let's search the Scriptures together.

Blessings, Pastor Mick Finch.