

MATTHEW 5:9 #10

PEACE AT SOME COSTS 6-19-16

(Matthew 5) We continue today our study of the teaching of Jesus and it is good to remember that the one who speaks to us by way of commandment and precept is the One who loved us so that He died for our redemption. Jesus never assumed that if He just taught us well His job was finished. He knew that we had failed, and would fail and would need more than instruction. We would need the pardon for sin which He purchased by His blood. But the same One who died for us and was raised for us is He who teaches us. We follow the law of One who loves us extravagantly and One whose authority and credentials have been confirmed with the greatest miracle of all time, the Easter-morn resurrection. Today our Savior, our Master and our King gives us this word from Matthew 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.* We have six points to cover today so let's get going, beginning with the call to promote peace. The Bible says we should be peacemakers right? This beatitude is not alone in the word of God. Hebrews 12:14 *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* Romans 12:18 *If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.* This sounds like something you would expect from someone poor in spirit, pure in heart and merciful toward others. Christians are not to be trouble makers, but trouble stoppers. We are to be seekers of the peace - where? In every relationship of life. We are to be peacemakers in our marriages. How are you doing at that husband, wife? Are you a peacemaking spouse? We are to be peacemakers in our families, in how we relate to our parents and our brothers and our sisters. We are regularly to be asking what we might do to promote peace, protect peace, restore peace when it is gone. Is that the way you relate to your family? You kids here - if you claim to be a Christian, do you see what the Lord Jesus wants you doing with your brother and sister? Do you see that your constant fighting is a grief to your Lord, an embarrassment to His name, and a negative testimony to your own soul? We are called to love our enemies, and if you have to see your sisters and brothers that way then do so, but love them, and seek to be at peace with them. Don't grow content in some never-ending state of relational turmoil. Ponder how you can make peace. 9 *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

Now on to the challenge of peacemaking. Judging from all the unrest in the world, all the relational tension out there this is not an easy undertaking. And there is one major reason why peacemaking is such a challenge. It is spelled S-I-N. Sin is everywhere, selfishness is everywhere,

pride is everywhere; it is the very essence of our sickness as fallen creatures. In chapter 3 of Genesis man disobeyed God, lost his original righteousness, fell out of communion with His maker and what happened at the very beginning of Genesis 4? A man, named Cain, killed his own brother. Estrangement from God led to estrangement from men. James 4 puts it as plainly as you can, I think. James 4:1-2 (NIV) *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.* Sin and self is the source of all our conflicts. Therefore, if anyone is going to be able to be a peacemaker, what must he be first? Matthew 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* To be a peacemaker you need your own heart washed clean of all this moral pollution. You need a new disposition toward others that only God can give. You need to be merciful so you don't look at others and only see their faults, but also see their needs. You need to be poor in spirit so you can get low enough to serve as a bridge for one or two who are being snakes. Most often the challenge to peacemaking involves ourselves as one of the parties and the call to peace is a call away from self-pride, self-rights, self-interests. All of this requires a work of holy grace in your soul. You can't do this on your own. Oh, you can be a peace-faker on your own. You can be a smoother-over on your own. Many are like that. Do you hate conflict so much you run away from it? Are you always pretending or trying to forget? Jeremiah referred to those who cried, "Peace, peace" when there was no peace. He said these guys were covering over the cancers with a band aid and then pronouncing cures. Ever heard of cheap grace? There is also something we can call cheap peace. Cheap peace or peace-faking. It is built on imagination. When I was in high-school some friends and I were looking for a way to get into our gymnasium when a car full of, uh, undesirables, hoodlum types, came rolling by and they shouted out an obscenity in our direction that defamed our proud high school. Well, some of you remember the old song, "Be true to your school" and I was, so I shouted back a really clever retort to these fellas, expecting, I guess that they would all be real impressed with my quick wit. What happened next tested much more than my wit. I heard the brakes in their old Cadillac start to squeal. They backed up toward our parking lot and quickly came down the driveway after us. Knowing human nature as I did, I surmised that they were not coming to congratulate me on my cleverness, so I jumped into my 1966 Plymouth Fury and took off out of the parking lot with this carload of thugs in hot pursuit. I soon realized that when I drove off my best friend had remained on the trunk where he was resting. He managed to hang on until I stopped long enough to let him off. The ruffians

started after him but changed their mind. It was my head they wanted. So, I drove out of the school parking lot and caught an immediate red light behind some other cars. My pursuers were now very close and there must have been 7 of them in that car. Thinking quickly if not clearly I turned and did this, the universal sign for peace. They jumped out of their car with weapons in hand, and there I was flashing my peace symbol. Peace, peace when there was no peace. At that moment I was a peace-hoper, maybe a peace-faker, but not a peacemaker. Peace-fakers are often the last ones willing to do the hard, dirty and sometimes dangerous work of peacemaking. To make peace you can't always flee conflict, you have to stick your neck out, take some risks and value peace more than comfort for the glory of God. Peacemaking is a challenge that we can only meet by the grace and power of God operative in our lives.

Next point, #3 for today is the way of peace. As I get into this I want to promote the book by Ken Sande entitled *The Peacemaker*. This was the basis of our Winter Sunday School class on the Peacemaking Church. An abundance of wisdom is in here about pursuing relational peace. There are so many things you can do to promote peace in your relationships but I will mention just four today. First, you want to learn when to speak and when to stay silent. Something I clearly had not mastered as a high-school student. I don't think I have quite mastered it today – but please know I used to be worse. This grace of knowing when to speak and when to shush requires us to develop the unusual habit of thinking before we speak in order to decide. James 1:19 is a great word for us to learn **19** (NIV) *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.* And when you are listening carefully and not speaking quickly you have time to decide what needs to be said and what doesn't. I find that the more I think the less of what I'm thinking do I end up saying. That habit makes life easier in many ways and promotes peace.

Secondly, we promote peace by not repeating bad reports. Proverbs speaks much about this 11:**13** (NIV) *A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.* 17:**9** (ESV) *Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.* Have you ever been with someone who spends most of his time talking about all the terrible things others have done? Some people are paid to do this. We call them newscasters, but a lot of folks do this for free. And it often leads to division and quarrels in families and companies and churches. This is the exact opposite of what the Lord calls us to. I read of a wise Christian man, a peacemaker, who knew of a conflict between two members in his church and decided to do something about it. So he went to Brother Moore and said, "Brother Moore, what do you think of Johnson?" "Why," Moore

said, "I honestly detest the man, he is contemptible in my sight." "But," Mr. Peacemaker said, "you must admit he is kind to his family." "Yes, that's true" said Moore, "They're about the only ones that he is kind to them." So, Peacemaker then goes to Johnson and says, "Do you know what Moore said about you?" Johnson said, "I can only imagine what kind of lies he told." Peacemaker said, "Why, he said you are very kind to your family." "He did?" "He did." Now what do you think of Mr. Moore? "Well, Johnson said, "He's an idiot and a jerk." But, said Peacemaker, "you have to admit that Moore is a hard-worker." "Yea, he works hard, for all that's worth." So Peacemaker goes next to Moore and says, "Hey, I was talking to Johnson and he commented on what a hard worker you are, Moore." You get the idea? This is sort of reverse gossip. We seek peace by what we say and don't say, by what we repeat and don't repeat.

Thirdly, we promote peace thru apologies and the seeking of forgiveness. Offenses are going to occur. We are sinners. You offend people. People offend you. We can decrease this but not eliminate it, so we must have a system to clean up our messes. That's what apologies and pardons are all about. Peacemakers care enough about peace to humble themselves in this way. They care enough about peace to put up with the pain apologizing often involves. You know why we hate to ask forgiveness? Because when we do we face our own sin and have to look at it. That's no fun. We also open ourselves up to a repeat attack from the one we offended and that can be awful to go thru, as we listen to our sins being magnified in the retelling. Thus we come in contact with the sin of another who may or may not respond kindly, who may or may not apologize for their offense even though their offense was much greater than our own as we would see it. Apologizing can be messy, painful business, but it is the way of peace.

Fourthly, we promote peace by putting others first. Peacemakers focus on the needs of others and the responsibilities of self. The needs of others and the responsibilities of self - not the other way around. Often, in helping people work through conflict, this is the greatest challenge because we like to focus on what we need to receive and the other guy needs to give. God wants us to reverse our thinking, to put ourselves in the shoes of another, to feel what they feel, to get in touch with their needs, while at the same time we are alert to how we are carrying out our jobs, not how the other person is doing with theirs. Peacemakers focus on the needs of others and the responsibilities of self.

On to our next major heading, the limits on peacemakers. Hebrews 12:14a *Strive for peace with everyone*. It doesn't say we must be at peace with all, just that we are to pursue it. Does the Lord

expect us to be perpetually at peace with our fellow men? Absolutely not. Look at the next two verses in Matthew 5 which speak of the persecution of believers. Jesus assumes they will have conflict and plenty of it. Even though they are to be peacemakers he assumed opposition was ahead for them because it happened to Him. That's why our text doesn't say, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall have peace." We have no such promise for this life. What man of God in Scripture was there who lived in perfect accord with all others? They all were men in conflict and strife. Jesus even said that devotion to him would set us against others. And by no means are we to compromise our obedience to Christ in order to keep peace with godless people. Peace is important but it is not the greatest value. James 4:**4** *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* If you have a *peace-at-all-costs* mentality you will invariably compromise your relationship with the Lord. God doesn't require us to be at peace with all men. What does He require? That we pursue peace. Romans 12 is a good word on this 12:**18** *If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.* That is, don't give anyone a reason for conflict rooted in your own misdeeds. If they hate you for righteousness, that's fine, but let's strive to make righteousness the only reason we give folks to hate us. And when we fail, let's own that and confess that. What is the limit on peacemakers? The limit is the law of God. The end of peace does not justify any means. Mr. Peacemaker, in our earlier story, could not help Moore and Johnson by telling lies. Lies are often used to keep the peace aren't they? Aren't they? But that is not a tool we are allowed to use. Compromise of Biblical principle is also frequently used to keep the peace, but again, that is off limits for us. We must seek the peace but only within the commandments of our King, which sadly, will sometimes lead us into conflict.

Major heading #5 is the reward of peacemaking. And that is to be called the sons of God, to be owned by the Lord as his children. Now that is awesome! Men and women compete for all kinds of titles don't they? Man of the Year, Doctor, President, World Champion. Here is one greater than all of them and it goes to the peacemaker. Now, from our position, having the light of New Testament revelation, we hear that term, *son or child of God* and we can fill it up with all the Bible's teaching about the privileges of being adopted into God's family. But for the Jew listening to Jesus this term meant that the peacemaker would be like God. To be someone's son meant to be like him. And so the peacemaker is given the title "Godlike" because in promoting peace he is doing something God does. Hebrews 13:20, Romans 15:33 Romans 16:20 and II Corinthians 13:21 all refer to God as the

God of peace and who is the greatest Peacemaker of all? Was it not Jesus, our big brother and the incarnation of God? At his birth what did the angel declare? *Peace on earth.* Colossians 1:**19-22a** *For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death.* Peacemaking is the very work Jesus came to perform. It is the work He accomplished at Calvary as He tore down the wall of sin that divided man from God. In Ephesians 2:**13-14a** *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace.* **14** *For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.* Paul teaches in Ephesians that thru His death Jesus broke down the walls between God and man and between Jew and Gentile. Envision, if you can, a scene on the battlefield. The military chaplain is sitting with a wounded soldier, and he asks him, "Son, have you made your peace with God?" I'm not sure that's a good question for a Christian to ask. The gospel announces to us that God has come in Christ to make peace with us. All that is left for us is to accept it and embrace it. God is the Great Peacemaker and once we have been reconciled to Him we are to imitate Him in our relationships, pursuing peace with others, and obtaining from our gracious King the title "Son or daughter of God."

Finally, we see the cost of peace. Peace with us cost the son of God His very life. He had to suffer for the sake of reconciliation and you can expect the same thing to some extent in your relationships. Peace is not cheap. We have spoken against the "peace at all cost" mentality. We are not to pursue peace to the expense of truth and righteousness. We are not to forfeit the approval of God for the approval of men, but though we don't believe in peace at all cost we do believe in peace at some cost. Without some pain and sacrifice you will not be a peacemaker. Two weeks ago after my sermon on showing mercy I was approached by one of our members about a situation he was involved in. It seems that a man he had helped financially, who owed him quite a bit of money, was cheating him and refusing to honor the debt. This brother was quite agitated over the situation, was angry at the man over the injustice. But God spoke to him in that sermon and he came for counsel. As I heard the story I realized that my brother had no peace either with this man or himself. And with some fear of my own I advised him to forgive the debt and drop his legal pursuit of the money that was rightfully his. Sometimes, not always, sometimes pursuing peace means

taking those kinds of steps. They can be costly. But this brother did it and testified to me after of how much peace the Lord had given him through that decision.

Sometimes peacemaking demands that we give up financial claims. Sometimes it demands that we give up moral claims. Sometimes, often, usually it demands that we give up certain personal rights, that we give up our pride and take on the humility of Christ. Humility is key to peacemaking. Proud people cannot do it. The cost of peacemaking is almost always your pride, your precious pride. But, having peace is so much better than having pride and God promises to reward the one who pays the price of peace.

Don Richardson is a well known missionary and writer. He tells amazing stories of his ministry in the jungles of New Guinea - no story more amazing than the one about the warring tribes of the Sawi Indians. The Sawi lived in fear of neighboring tribes that prided themselves on their murderous cunning. Continual hostility marked two groups of them. Until one day, on the brink of yet more carnage, a Sawi warrior ran to his tent and took his only son, a six month old boy. Running to escape from his weeping wife, the warrior named Kaiyo carried his baby to the front lines of the enemy. Spotting there an enemy warrior named Mahor he called out, "Mahor, will you plead for peace between us?" Mahor responded, "Eehaa, I will surely plead for peace between us." Kaiyo then handed over to Mahor his son and bestowed on him his name. Mahor turned to his people and shouted, "Those who accept this child as a basis for peace, come and lay hands on him." Young and old alike filed past the baby, touching him and pledging themselves to peace. Meanwhile, our missionary, watched in wonder and in fear what had occurred. He inquired with a Sawi friend about what he saw and was told, "Kaiyo has given his son as a tarop tim, a peace child." Richardson asked, "Why was this necessary?" His friend said, "Teacher, you have been urging us to make peace - don't you know it's impossible to have peace without a peace child?" A story, in some ways odd, but strangely familiar. It wasn't long ago we sang, "Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king. Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." God and sinners reconciled - how? By means of a peace child, whose name is Jesus. Ephesians 2:14a *For He Himself is our peace.* So goes the gospel of God. Romans 5:1 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Peace with God thru the Peacemaker, the one called the prince of peace, whose very name is Peace. It was by the giving of something precious that the Father made peace with us. So we are most like God when we give

something precious in order to make peace, keep peace, promote peace. We give our dignity, our things, our rights and we get back something much more precious.

Where is God calling you to be a peacemaker? In a friendship? In your family? With your spouse? What will it cost you to do it God's way? I urge you to move ahead in faith knowing of what Jesus promised. Blessed, blessed, happy are the peacemakers. They will be called the sons of God. Let's pray.