

## PEACEMAKER OR TROUBLEMAKER?

Matthew 5:9

September 7, 2008 a.m.

### INTRODUCTION

- A. When tempers flare and a fight breaks out during a baseball game, it is a tradition that players and coaches rally to support their teammates. So what do you do if you are a Christian ballplayer?

One Christian who played for the Seattle Mariners a few years ago explained how he dealt with such bench-clearing brawls. When his intuition indicated a fight was imminent, he would scan the opponents' bench for a friend, possibly a former teammate. With the eruption of a fight, he would bolt from the dugout and race toward his selected friend, quickly grabbing him by the jersey and saying, "If you don't hurt me, I won't hurt you." The two would then clench, fall to the ground, and do their best acting job of fighting. In the end, they appeared manly, supported their team members, and avoided hurting anyone.

1. Somehow I doubt this is what Jesus had in mind when he said, "Blessed are the Peacemakers".
  2. Are you a peacemaker or a troublemaker?
- B. We live in a world filled with troublemakers and violence.
1. The 20th century was the bloodiest in human history. In *Humanity: A Moral History of the 20th Century*, Jonathan Glover estimates that 86,000,000 people died in wars fought from 1900 to 1989. That means 2,500 people every day, or 100 people every hour, for 90 years.  
In addition to those killed in war, government-sponsored genocide and mass murder killed approximately 120,000,000 people in the 20th century—perhaps more than 80,000,000 in the two Communist countries of China and the Soviet Union alone, according to R. J. Rummel's *Statistics of Democide--Christianity Today, © 2007*.
  2. In the first century, the Jews were living under the strong and merciless hands of the Roman Empire.
  3. Against this cruel backdrop, Jesus' call to become peacemakers must have been puzzling.

### I. WHAT IS PEACE?

- A. Someone said peace is that moment in history when everyone stops to reload.
- B. What kind of peace is Jesus talking about?
1. Peace isn't just the absence of conflict. Cemeteries are peaceful places but no one wants to live there. It's naïve to think the world will ever be a place devoid of conflict.
  2. Neither is peace just agreeing with everyone. "Peace at any price" is often too willing to compromise truth and convictions.
  3. Peace isn't the absence of anything. It's the presence of God in human lives and circumstances.
  4. The only real solution to conflict isn't more money or education. It's the rule and reign of God which first changes lives then culture.

### II. WHY DO WE NEED PEACE?

- A. First, we need peace because unresolved conflict hinders our fellowship with God.  
**1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.**
- B. Second, we need peace because unresolved conflict hinders our prayers.  
**1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.**

C. Third, we need peace because unresolved conflict hinders are happiness.

**Job 18:4 You ....tear yourself to pieces in your anger....**

### III. HOW CAN WE BECOME PEACEMAKERS?

A. A riot raged in the La Mesa Prison in Tijuana, Mexico. Thousands of inmates battled the guards with bottles and rocks, while the guards shot back with machine guns—until a small American woman in her 70s walked into the middle of the war, raised her hands, and signaled for quiet. Remarkably, calm fell on the prison.

That woman was Mary Brenner, who was raised in Beverly Hills. There she lived what she called "a glamorous life," until she found Christ and followed him in a whole new direction.

Now she's known as Sister Antonia. She dresses in a nun's habit and lives in a sparse 10-foot cell inside the prison. She moved there 25 years ago to live among murderers, thieves, and drug dealers. Sister Antonia has poured out her life for these prisoners, nursing their wounds, getting them eyeglasses and medicine, caring for their families, and washing their bodies for burial.

Loving them doesn't mean she ignores their crimes. In her words, "There isn't anyone who hasn't heard my lecture. They have to accept that they're wrong. They have to see the consequences. They have to feel the agony...but I do love them dearly." She refers to each prisoner as her son.

Although she lives in a prison, the prison does not live inside of her. Her friends and the inmates all describe her incredible energy, joy, and hopefulness. She describes it as simply living out her calling. In a recent interview she said, "I wouldn't trade this cell for any place in the world."

*"Antonia's Mission," Readers Digest (June 2004).*

B. How can we become peacemakers like Mary Brenner?

1. It begins with being sure we have made peace with God ourselves.

**Ephesians 2:13-14** <sup>13</sup> **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.** <sup>14</sup> **For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.**

2. The next step is to help other people make peace with God too.

**2 Corinthians 5:18** **All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.**

3. Third, hold a peace conference.

**Matthew 5:23-24** <sup>23</sup> **"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,** <sup>24</sup> **leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.**

4. Fourth, bite your tongue.

**Proverbs 15:1** **A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.**

5. Fifth, do your best.

**Romans 12:18** **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.**

### IV. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CALLED GOD'S SON?

A. It's a reminder that God is a peacemaker himself.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23** **May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

B. When we become peacemakers we are participating in a work that God himself is involved in.

1. Jesus says when we do this we will be called "the sons of God" which means we remind people of God.

2. Someone may say about another person, "I can see your father in you." This means they remind them of their father. This is what happens when we become peacemakers.
- C. Max Lucado writes about a big, muscle-bound man named Daniel who was swindled by his own brother. He vowed that if he ever saw him again, he would break his neck. A few months later, Daniel became a Christian. Even so, he couldn't forgive his brother. One day, the inevitable encounter took place on a busy avenue. This is how Daniel described what happened:

I saw him, but he didn't see me. I felt my fists clench and my face get hot. My initial impulse was to grab him around the throat and choke the life out of him. But as I looked into his face, my anger began to melt. For as I saw him, I saw the image of my father. I saw my father's eyes. I saw my father's look. I saw my father's expression. And as I saw my father in his face, my enemy once again became my brother.

The brother found himself wrapped in those big arms—but in a hug. The two stood in the middle of the river of people and wept. Daniel's words bear repeating: "When I saw the image of my father in his face, my enemy became my brother."

*Max Lucado, The Applause of Heaven (Word, 1990), pp. 114-116.*

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. Are you a peacemaker or troublemaker?  
B. Jesus calls us to be peacemakers.