

Sa well, good morning, everyone. How are you all? Just generally. Yeah, just an affirmative of yes or like, yeah, wintertime is coming. Can you feel it?

I'm so excited. If you ever get to New York City, and I hope you do at some point in time, it's a cool city, go to the UN building, United Nations building, and there at the UN, you'll see a replica of a very famous document. It's a peace treaty. It's a peace treaty that was written between the Hittites. You might remember them from the Old Testament.

They're mentioned quite a bit there. And the Egyptians, you might also remember them from the Old Testament and, of course, world history. But this peace treaty, one of the oldest documents that we know, written on stone, it was written following a battle called the Battle of Kadesh in 1274 BC before Jesus. And it's commonly regarded as the first peace treaty written nearly 1300 years before the birth of Christ. Which reminds us that conflict goes way beyond this election cycle.

Since Adam threw Eve under the bus, since Cain took out his frustrations on Abel, we can trace a direct line from there to conflict in Ukraine or Gaza, or over to 15th street where I live. Conflict is just part of life, isn't it? We live in a world of conflict. And the church, the very people that should be sort of leading the charge in reducing conflict and bridging the gap between enemies, has oftentimes been a source of conflict. We've added to the tension at times.

Now, there's no denying that there is plenty to disagree with between the church and the world out there. In fact, next week, Alan Burris is going to be preaching, finishing up this series. He's going to be talking about what happens when we are persecuted, when the systems and the authorities in the world come in conflict with the values and the people of the church. We'll talk about that next year, next week. This week we want to remind ourselves of the very high value Jesus places on reducing tension and resolving conflict.

As Noah Saylor said this morning up in Bloomington, in a world of tension, we want to be relief. That's a great way of putting it, because Jesus says, blessed are the peacemakers. Peacemaking is one of the key values of the kingdom of heaven. So how are you doing when it comes to peacemaking? If you've got your Bibles with you this morning, I'm going to encourage you to turn to Matthew, Chapter five.

Matthew is the first book in the New Testament. You'll recognize it when you get to some red letters and you keep moving forward or backward until you get to Matthew. Matthew is the first of the Gospels, and in it we get a picture of what Jesus' ministry on earth was like. One of the most amazing sermons he preached was called the

Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, or the Scriptures that we've been focusing on for the last couple of weeks are the sort of the preamble to that sermon. So if you got your Bibles, go ahead and turn there.

And if you got your Bibles, go ahead and turn to Luke chapter six as well. If you can get two fingers in two places. We're going to spend a little time in Luke as well. So I'm going to pray and then we'll dig in. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the time and place you've positioned us.

You've called us to this time in history, this place in the world for a purpose, to be your sons and daughters. Lord, we want to look like you in the world that you've placed us in. And so help us to be peacemakers. Teach us, instruct us, challenge us, move us this morning into a place where we more closely look like our Father in heaven. We pray this in Jesus name.

Amen. Now, if you were to take a guess at the kind of people Jesus might hold up as the gold standard for those that are going to fit into this kingdom that he is building in the world, you might think he would start with the sort of the extra good people, the morally perfect sort of the polished people. These are the kind of people that he holds up as a standard. If you look at any church promotional material, invariably you see these kind of people. They're smiling, they're youthful, they're energetic, they've got a twinkle in their eye.

They're usually racially diverse. Let's be honest, this is the pretty people. Jesus doesn't necessarily call the pretty people. Here's who he calls. Instead of the spiritual giants, he has a kid at the back who has disrespected his father, squandered his inheritance, been living in a slop pit for a while, who has nothing to bring to anything except a gratitude that he has been welcomed back and given a seat at the table.

That is the kind of people Jesus says, hmm, this is who I want in my kingdom. Instead of celebrating the guy with, like, super faith who just claims it and says, this is what God has declared, he calls people who recognize, as Buechner said, that the world is both beautiful and terrible. And they celebrate the beautiful things and they mourn over the things that are tragic and terrible. These mourners are people that Jesus says, I want you to be part of my kingdom. Instead of celebrating the strong and the confident and the guys who know what they want and they're going to go after it, he instead honors and commends the guy at the back of the room who says, yeah, I'm going to do what Jesus asked me to do in the way that Jesus asked me to do it.

I'm going to be gentle and kind with those who are in my care, the

meek. And he smiles and calls friend, the young man who has been forgiven an amazing, amazing debt and says, I'm going to forgive others as I have been forgiven. I'm going to show mercy. And he calls people around him with as many sins and issues as the rest of us. But he calls these people and he says, listen, you are mine.

If you continue to go back to the well of forgiveness and mercy, repentance, yeah, you're going to mess up. Yeah, you're going to screw it up big time. But you're not going to let those things keep you from coming back to me and asking for forgiveness and receiving it with joy and humility and confidence. Says, man, these are the kind of people that I want, the ones who, even though they mess up, maintain because of this willingness to continue to come back to me, they retain their innocence. They retain their purity of heart.

And then Jesus says this in Matthew 5, he says, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. It's not the generals who go out and win wars and are welcomed back with ticker tapes and just tons of medals on their jackets that gets Jesus attention. But instead, it's the ones who live again in this beautiful, terrible world, have found peace for themselves and now are working really hard to help others find it, too. Peacemakers. I love how Jesus calls them peacemakers because it implies that there's something that they do, something that they craft, something that they make, that they create.

And that thing is peace. Just by their presence, they create this thing called peace. Peace is an interesting word. The other night at our Trunk or Treat, I dressed up like a Jewish rabbi, a holdover from the Fiddler on the Roof play. It was a lot of fun.

We had a blast. Anyone who all participated in that, it was a great night, had a great fun. We gave away a lot of candy, and more importantly, I got a bunch that I can continue to use at home next on Halloween night. But that word for peace, I was tempted to wear that costume this morning because this Jewish word for peace is pretty well known. Anyone know what that Jewish word is?

Shalom. Shalom. It's an interesting word because it doesn't necessarily mean peace like we think of it. It doesn't necessarily mean, like, peace and quiet. It doesn't mean sitting on the porch, which I love to do, and drinking a cup of coffee early in the morning with a little breeze.

That's not exactly what that word peace means. The first time that we see this word peace in the Bible is way back in the Old Testament, in Exodus. And this is a point where Moses is instructing the children of Israel that have come out of slavery in Egypt. And he's instructing them on how they should live with each other. And he's giving instructions to people about what to do when someone steals something

from them or causes damage to someone else's personal property.

And he says when that happens, the owner, the original owner of the property, has experienced loss. He's experienced brokenness. And the owner is considered somehow lacking or incomplete because something they have is no longer there. He says, now the person who caused that brokenness, who caused that lack, who caused that incompleteness, has an obligation to make it right, make it whole, make it complete again. In fact, in Exodus, chapter 22, verse 1, here's how this lays out.

In one example, he says, whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. Now, what's interesting is that word there in that scripture. Leave it up there for just a second. That word payback must pay back is actually the word shalom. So whoever slaughters it and sells it must shalom.

Five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. In other words, shalom means doing what must be done to restore what was broken, to make it whole again. So again, peace isn't sitting on your porch enjoying the breeze. Peace. This shalom is the work of restoration, the work of bringing wholeness out of brokenness.

Peacemaking. Now, what does that look like? Luke's Gospel gives us just a very short snapshot. So that's why I asked you to put your finger there. You've got your Bible in Luke.

Turn to Luke, chapter six. I'm just going to read a portion of this passage, but there's so much good stuff in here. And here's the snapshot that Luke gives us. It says, love your enemies. Think about that.

We're not going to race through this scripture. Love your enemies.

Do Good to those who hate you.

Bless those who curse you.

Pray for those who abuse you.

Anyone else feeling a little tension right now?

To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. What?

And from the one who steals your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

Give to everyone who begs from you. Oh, my word. Are you serious?

From the one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. I've

got stuff in my garage right now that is breathing a sigh of relief.

We're going to stop there. But this points to this very challenging reality that Jesus calls us to something that is hard. No one said the work of making peace was going to be easy. But he says, if we do it, we will be called children of God. Wednesday night, I was walking through and I looked in the nursery, and there was little Waylon Maher.

Now, if you know Danny and, well, if you know Alex and Sarah, you know little Danny. Danny's a cutie pie. His brother Waylon is on his heels to look exactly like him. Exactly like him. And I said that to Sarah.

I said, man, those two look like. And they said. And they. And she said, and they both look like their dad. Like.

Oh, I sort of see it. They do. Kids look like their parents. For better or for worse. For better or for worse, they look like their parents.

So what does God look like? He's our Father. What does he look like? Well, if we go back and look at Luke, that's what God looks like. When we were his enemies, he loved us.

When we cursed him, he blessed us. When we struck him, he said, not a word. And to any who asks, he gives.

And if you live this way, Jesus says, your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most high. You will look like your dad. Now, here at Sherwood Oaks, we want to look like our Father. So here's what it looks like, just in terms of ministry. It's coming alongside people going through financial hardships and getting the resources they need to dig themselves out and to get stable again.

And we do this with financial counseling, our financial counseling ministry. It also looks like helping people get back on their feet after they experienced some major life upsets. In our Dollar Club two weeks ago, we were able to take our Dollar Club offering and help a family that are working but have been unable to get the necessary money to get both their down payment and their first month's rent. They've been living out of their car and out of hotel rooms, and that's no way to save money. We were able to help them with that and get them into their place.

So a homeless family now has a home. It's helping families in tough spots get the counseling and the support they need as they wade through some of the messier, emotional, relational parts of being a family. I love our mobile food pantry volunteers. They're helping mom and dads with food so kids don't go hungry. I love that it's helping men get their sense of identity and purpose restored and back on their

feet through the work at the men's warming shelter.

Man, what a great ministry. What a great peacekeeping peacemaking ministry. It's all done by people like you and me, who certainly have our own places that are still a little wobbly when it comes to peace. We are certainly not completely whole yet. There's still some brokenness each of us.

But we are surrendering our lives to the Prince of peace, who is shalom making in us, who is making us complete. So here's the question for us individually, where is there still some incompleteness, some unwholeness in our lives? And particularly, is there someone that you need to make peace with? You see, it's no good praying for the peace in our country or around the world while ignoring the brokenness right in front of us. Brokenness that you may have caused in someone's life, certainly brokenness that you can help mend.

And this is important because our God is a peacemaking God. Romans says that we have peace now with God because of Jesus.

God gave his only begotten Son so that we can have peace with God. Through Jesus, we have saving peace through the Holy Spirit, we have inner peace. And someday when Jesus returns again, we will experience global peace. But today he calls us to pursue peace with others, to be peacemakers. Romans 12:18 says, if it is possible, if it is at all possible, as far as it depends on you.

As far as it depends on you. Which means you do everything possible to bring peace between you and others. He says, live at peace with everyone. So again, how are you doing? It's hard.

It's hard to go to someone and confess your part in their brokenness. It's hard to hear someone blame you for their brokenness. But we can't brush it off. We can't ignore it. Because we're all sinners.

We've all done this. We have all hurt and broken people. We all owe a debt that we can't repay except by honestly owning up to our part in it. But if we want to look like our dad, we have to do it. We have to own Our role in peacemaking.

So where do we start? There's a very famous prayer. It's been around for a long time. You're going to know it as soon as I start it, but it's by this guy named Francis of Assisi. Anyone know where I'm heading with this?

Here's how this prayer goes. I'm just going to ask us just to say it, just so we get a feel for what this peacekeeping looks like in the real world. Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Say it with me. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, let me sow pardon. Where there is discord, unity. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is error, truth. Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is sadness, joy. Where there is darkness, light. Let's pray this together. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. This is how we look like our Father. I don't want to lead you wrong. Saying sorry doesn't erase everything. Signing one of those peace treaties doesn't erase all the bad stuff that's happened.

It doesn't. But it's one of the primary steps that we can take to lay a foundation for a new and better relationship with those around us. It's a big step in rebuilding trust and undoing brokenness. So if there's anyone this morning that you need to ask forgiveness for or extend forgiveness to, this is also a part of peacemaking. As we move into a time of communion, I want to remind you that blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Heavenly Father, we want to look like you. We want our lives to in every way mirror yours. We want our heart to mirror your heart. Lord. We want to lay down our lives in order that others might experience peace, forgiveness and brokenness.

We want to take up our cross and take it to places where people need to experience grace and forgiveness. So as we take the bread and the cup this morning, take us there to the foot of the cross, remind us again of your mercy and grace extended to us, and then bring us to those hard places where we become part of that peacemaking mission of yours. Draw all men to yourself and use us, Jesus, to do so. We pray this.

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