



Series: The Upside Down Kingdom

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Speaker: Brett Bouldin, Students Pastor

Text: Matthew 5:9

Title: Blessed Are the Peacemakers

OPEN & INTRO

Good morning, Mercy Church!

It is a joy to be preaching the word this morning. My name is Brett and I serve as our student pastor here.

Just as you saw in the video, we are having Starting Point today after each of our services. If you're new to Mercy or maybe you've been around for a while and you're wanting to get more plugged in, this is your next step to take. It's about

a 15-minute informational where you can learn more about who we are as a church and what it would look like for you to become a part of our family. It'll happen just right around the corner in the room near the bathrooms. Please make plans to join us!

This morning we're back in our series called "The Upside Down Kingdom" where we've been walking through a passage in the book of Matthew called The Beatitudes. As a reminder, the word Beatitude just means "blessed/happy", and these beatitudes show us what it looks like to live the blessed life in God's kingdom. The reason the series is called the Upside Down Kingdom is because the blessed life in God's kingdom is different than we would imagine it. I said this the last time I preached – but it's not the "Hashtag Blessed" that Bruno Mars talks about.

That's gonna be true of what we see in the verse we're going to read.

If you're new to the Bible, I want to let you know just a few things before we jump in this morning.

- First, we as the church believe that the **Bible is God's breathed-out word**, given to us for us to know who God is and how we are to live in this world He created. It's where we believe truth can be found. So, when you

come to Mercy Church, you're going to hear the Bible preached because we believe it's the most important thing you could ever learn about.

- Second, as I mentioned, the passage we're looking at this morning is in the book of **Matthew**. Matthew was a close follower of Jesus, and he recorded the things that he saw Jesus do and say during his three-year ministry on earth. So, the Book of Matthew is a collection of Matthew's recordings.
- Third, the verse that we are about to read is a part of **The Sermon on the Mount**, which is the first sermon that we have on record from Jesus, so it's a big deal to us!

If you don't have a Bible, we would love to give you one – all you have to do is swing by our resource table. That's our gift to you.

Here's our text for today – it's Matthew 5:9, and this is what it says: **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.**

Let me pray for us before we jump in.

¹ <https://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/taylor-swift-says-living-a-happy-successful-meaningful-life-comes-down-to-5-simple-things.html>

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What would you say your purpose in life is?

Everyone has some sort of an answer to this question. The answer to that question can be deep or it can be shallow depending on who you're talking to.

The answer that you have to this question is a huge part of why you live your life the way you do. For instance, if you think that your purpose is to be a doctor, then you are going to make decisions and live in such a way that that purpose can be realized. You'll try to make good grades in school, you'll watch TV shows about being a doctor, read books about doctor things. Eventually, you'll apply to medical school, and you'll do a residency. And if you work hard enough, you can be a doctor.

Taylor Swift has something that she believes is her purpose. She once spoke on her purpose in life, and this is what she said: "I have this really high priority on happiness and finding something to be happy about. My ultimate goal is to end up being happy, most of the time."¹

Interesting. Well, if you look at Taylor Swift's life, you can see this pattern taking shape. She does

things and makes decisions every day to live out her purpose, her ultimate goal of being happy – and to be honest, based on the lyrics in her new album it seems like it's not happening.

This is sad, but it points to the reality that the quest to determine what your purpose in life is is often hard & if you get it wrong, it can be devastating.

But what I want to show you this morning is that I believe that God has a purpose for your life that's been written clearly – it's all throughout the scriptures.

And the text that we're looking at today shows us what a **piece of that purpose is**. And here's the best news about it: You living according to this purpose WILL result in you being blessed by God Himself. You won't have to write a sad album or wonder if you're going to be able to become a doctor one day. There is a guaranteed blessing offered by God to those who live according to this purpose.

Here's the big idea from our text this morning:
God is calling you to be a peacemaker.

Jesus gives a life purpose to anyone who is listening: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

So, here's what we're about to do. This sermon has two parts: We're going to define what peacemaking is & then we're going to see what the promise is for peacemakers.

Sound good?

WHAT IS PEACEMAKING?

If this is a piece of God's purpose for our lives, then we need to define what peacemaking is. Like the easiest puzzle in the world, I believe there are three "peacemaking puzzle pieces" that'll make up our definition of peacemaking. Thankfully this isn't one of those 1,000-piece puzzles. Those things are the worst!

So, let's take it piece by piece.

Puzzle Piece #1 of Peacemaking: Have the Peace of God

Y'all, in order to be a peacemaker, you have to be a peace-haver. You can't give something that you don't have. You can't be generous with money if you don't have a dollar to your name. You can't be sweet to someone if you don't have a sweet bone in your body. In the same way, you can't be a peacemaker unless you have that peace inside of you.

But the question is – where in the world do we find true peace?

This is a question that has been asked throughout history. There have been different religions formed which promise true peace. Buddhism's whole premise is that if you live according to a certain path of life, then eventually you will be able to achieve Nirvana or "perfect peace."

Different forms of governments and economies have been made with the promise of peace. Right now, we are in the middle of a presidential election cycle where Democrats and Republicans are going toe to toe to get their person in office because many believe that person is someone who will lead our country to more peace.

Not to get too morbid on you, but think about what we say about people when they pass away. "Rest in _____"? PEACE.

Peace is something that people think about all the time, and I would argue to say that it is the goal of the world. And the world gives a million different routes to peace. Do this thing, read that book, form that habit, follow your heart – and you will find peace.

But I don't know if you've noticed, but it seems like we are farther from peace than we've ever been – at least in my lifetime. It seems like we're more divided, more hostile than we've ever been. Something's not adding up.

That's because the world looks for peace in the wrong place.

The Bible tells us that peace has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Listen to what Isaiah 9:6 says as the prophet Isaiah speaks of Jesus,

For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, **Prince of Peace.**

Jesus Christ is the prince of peace who has come and he is the one in whom we find true peace.

Why is Jesus called the prince of peace? He's the prince of peace because he is the one who has made peace between humanity and God. **This is the good news of the Gospel** – that you and I have both sinned against God and deserve Hell because of it. But John 3:16 says that God so loved the world, that He sent His one and only Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Jesus came and lived a perfect and sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and

took on the full punishment of God that we deserved. And three days later he was raised from the dead & defeated sin and death. And the Gospel promises that if we turn from our sins and place our faith in Jesus, we will be completely forgiven of our sins and saved for all eternity.

We will **have peace** once and for all with God.

Ephesians 2:13 says, **13 But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace...**

Jesus has made peace between God and humanity. Jesus is where we find the peace of God.

And so, for you notetakers, here's a definition of the peace of God: **The peace of God is being reconciled to God through the finished work of Jesus Christ.**

And y'all that's not the only thing – the Bible tells us that when we place our faith in Jesus, God gives to us His very Spirit to come and create new hearts within us. And guess what the Holy Spirit brings into our lives? Galatians 5 tells us – He gives us love, joy, patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control & you guessed it... PEACE.

Philippians 4 calls it a peace that surpasses all understanding.²

So let me ask you a question. I think we can agree that when we look at the world around us, we don't see peace, right? We see chaos and war. We see the heartbreaking news of what happened this past week with the CMPD officers being shot and killed. We see protests happening all over college campuses.

So why do you keep looking to the things of the world to find peace?

Maybe you're in the room and you've never placed your faith in Jesus, I want to invite you to do that today. Turn from your sin and place your faith in Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and you will find the peace of God for your soul that surpasses all understanding.

Maybe you've been following Jesus for a while, but you haven't had peace in your soul for a long time because you've forgotten that Jesus is where you find true peace. The invitation to turn back to him today is there for you, too.

² Philippians 4:7

His mercies are new for you this morning & his peace is available for you this morning.

Have the peace of God. This is the first puzzle piece of what it means to be a peacemaker.

Let's look at the other puzzle pieces. Here's the second one.

Puzzle Piece #2 of Peacemaking: Live Out the Peace of God

This is where the "making" part of peacemaking comes in & this is where the rubber meets the road for many of us today.

In the same way that Jesus has made peace for us, He calls us to go and make peace with others – to live out the peace of God in our world.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:17-21. In this passage, he writes about what it means to be a peacemaker in our world.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. 18, If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Skipping down a few verses it says,

21 Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.

Look at the language of this passage. This is not Paul saying, "Don't go picking fights with people." No, this is a case where someone picking a fight with you. This is someone sinning against you when you did nothing to deserve it. And the call for you is so far as it depends on you, be a peacemaker... with everyone!

I gave this hypothetical example to our students last week... Let's say you love sneakers, and you just got a brand-new pair of low-top Space Jam 11s. For those of you who don't know what those are – they're really nice shoes that are coming out this summer. If you want to buy me a pair, I won't be mad. But let's say you worked all year long to save up for these shoes, you camped out at Footlocker on the release date and waited five hours in line, and then FINALLY you purchased those beloved shoes. They smelled so good & looked so clean. And you were so excited that you couldn't even wait to wear them, so you put them on right there in the store.

Next thing you know, you're walking out of the store in your brand-new J's, some bozo walks up to you with a can of spray paint, and he sprays them all over your shoes, and then he just points and laughs at you in the face.

At this moment, you have a few options. One option is you could fight this person on the spot. And to be honest, this is the option that most of our world would choose, right? We live in a world that says fight people when they wrong you.

Another option is that you could just go quiet and not do anything. Let this person ruin your shoes and squelch everything that you've worked for and get away with it. This is often what people think of when they think of peacemaking. They think that making peace means being a pacifist. But we know that when we do this, we often avoid conflict in the moment, but then turn around and curse the person in our mind or to someone else. That's not actually making peace.

But there's still another option – what if instead of fighting this person or instead of doing nothing, you repaid this person with good?

Maybe you take the shoes off your feet and say, "Here, you can have them." Maybe you give him money so that he can go buy a pair of his own.

I know what you're thinking – that sounds crazy. Who would ever do that?

Y'all, you know who did that? Jesus did that.

Romans 5:8 says that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

When we least deserved it, Jesus didn't repay us with evil, he repaid us with good.

The religious leaders and Pharisees mocked him, spit on him, placed a crown of thorns on his head, dressed him in a robe, and bowed to him only to stand up and strike him in the face. They nailed him to a criminal's cross. And as he was hanging there on that cross, Jesus prayed to the Father, "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:24). Jesus gave up his very life so that those people who were mocking him could be reconciled to God.

This is what He did for you and me. We were the bozos with the spray paint. We deserved to be punched. But Jesus didn't do that. He repaid us with good. He repaid us with his very life. And he calls us to live out that same kind of love for others in our world so that we can point people to him.

But that hypothetical situation is just an example of when a stranger sins against you. Also, I've seen the shoes some of y'all are wearing and there's no chance you're going to be at Footlocker for the release of those Jordans.

But what about the much more realistic situation of when the people you are closest to sin against you? When your spouse sins against you. When your kids sin against you. When there's deep-seeded resentment in your heart towards a friend because of something they did or said.

What does it look like to be a peacemaker with them?

If I'm being honest, I think *these* people are the hardest to be peacemakers with. And some of you are walking through some really hard things right now in this arena and I just want to acknowledge that.

Y'all what we see in our text today is that God's call for us to be peacemakers... even with them.

Pastor Scott put it so beautifully in a sermon planning meeting we had earlier this week, but he said Christians need to be people who bring the peace of God into every space we occupy... who inject the peace of God that they have received into every situation– that means in our relationships, in our homes, in our workplace, in our church, you name it.

And y'all – I can't tell you this morning that I have some silver bullet that's going to make bringing the peace of God into these spaces easy and

simple. It's going to be really hard work. It's going to be messy. And every situation is different. But here's what I think we can learn from the bible about being peacemakers with those we're closest with:

The first thing is that being a peacemaker with those you love means **seeking reconciliation with them.**

And so, if you've just been trying to be a "peacekeeper" instead of a peacemaker – maybe you've been avoiding conflict, turning your eyes when you see that person, beating around the bush in conversation, brushing it under the rug – but you're holding anger or bitterness in your heart... that's not the peacemaking that Jesus is talking about here.

How do I know that? I know that because of the example of Jesus. Jesus made peace with those who he was closest with by seeking reconciliation with them. Think about Peter, Jesus' closest friend. Peter denied him three times as he was going to the cross – this was his moment of greatest need. It was a betrayal that is unfathomable for most of us.

How did Jesus repay him? He didn't hold a grudge; he didn't avoid him. No, when Jesus had risen from the dead, the angel said, "Go and tell

the disciples AND PETER to meet him in Galilee.”³ Jesus reconciled with him. So much so that if you look at the end of the book of John, Jesus makes Peter breakfast and completely forgives him for what he did.

Who do you need to make breakfast for? Who is that person that you need to go and make peace with this week? Who do you need to repay with good instead of evil?

This is puzzle piece #2 of peacemaking. Living out the peace of God to others. Doing good to them when they don't deserve it...

And y'all the only way you can do this is if you have that first puzzle piece... having the peace of God – Knowing what Jesus has done for you and then going to do that for others.

Here's the last puzzle piece.

Puzzle Piece #3 of Peacemaking: Proclaim the Peace of God

So, we just talked about how being a peacemaker involves you in your relationship with others – but it also involves you bringing others to God.

Fundamentally, I believe that if you are going to be a peacemaker, then that also means proclaiming the peace of God to the world.

Listen to what Ephesians 6:13-15 says:

13 For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. **14** Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, **15** and your feet sandaled with **readiness for the gospel of peace.**

In other words, if you are going to be a peacemaker in our world, then you have to **SHARE JESUS!** To be a peacemaker is to share the Gospel of peace with others.

Y'all, we talk about this all the time at Mercy – one of our core values is **We keep the Gospel at the center** – but if we're being honest, this is hard. And maybe you are in a place where you know for certain that you need to share Jesus with whoever that person is, but there's just something in you that keeps you from doing it.

³ Mark 16:7 (reworded)

Maybe you think to yourself, “What they believe about God is none of my business. And I don’t want to be rude to try to make it my business.”

Maybe you’re fearful of offending them.

Maybe you don’t want to seem weird.

I want you to know that even I as one of your pastors struggle with this. Just a few Sundays ago I was leaving church over at Mercy Union County – it was a great day. I had just told a bunch of my students to share Jesus with those around them. And I went out in the parking lot and see that I had a flat tire. Bummer. Well, to make a long story short, it was also raining outside, so I got in my truck and slowly drove to the closest gas station to get some cover so that I could change my tire.

As I’m putting my spare on, a man named Ronnie pulls up and asks if he can help. Ronnie basically ended up doing the whole job for me while I was just sitting there watching him... I was amazed by his kindness.

When he finishes, I say, “I don’t know how to repay you, thank you so much!” Earlier in the conversation, I had told him that I worked at a church, so he said, “Can you pray for me? I am about to go to prison for 30 months and I could just use some prayer.”

So, I prayed for him and thanked him, and off he went.

But as he left, I realized – You know what I didn’t do in that moment? I didn’t share the Gospel of Peace with him. I completely missed it.

It was like God was lobbing me up a softball to be able to tell this man that even though he was going to prison, he has a God who loves Him so much that He sent his one and only son to die for him on the cross & that he could have eternal life and hope and forgiveness in Jesus whether in or out of a prison cell... But for some reason, I didn’t. I missed the opportunity.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding was available for Ronnie **right then and there**, and all I had to do was proclaim it to him and offer it.

How many conversations have we had like this? God gives the opportunity to share Jesus & be a peacemaker, and then just like that, the opportunity is gone.

Church, this morning I want to urge you once again – let’s fight to be peacemakers. Let’s fight to be people who push up against the lie of the enemy that if you share Jesus with someone then

you're rude or weird. Let's fight the lie that says, "If you share Jesus then you will be offensive and that means you shouldn't do it."

Y'all – PEACE WITH GOD is made available to the people you love through you sharing Jesus with them. That is worth fighting for.

My conversation with Ronnie was a wake-up call for me and I think God wanted to use it to show me that if I am going to be a peacemaker, then I have to be on guard and ready to share Jesus at any moment.

Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and I have had to fight to believe that for myself that morning. If you're in a place where you haven't been sharing, that promise is true for you – there's no condemnation for you and God is not angry with you. But I want to fight to be a peacemaker in this world by proclaiming the peace of God to others because of what Jesus has done for me. Because I know that peace. I've experienced it. And I want others to experience it, too. I want Ronnie to experience it.

Listen to what the Prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 52:7:

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the herald, **who proclaims peace**, who brings news of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim peace?

This is the final puzzle piece of what it means to be a peacemaker. This is God's call for you.

- Have the peace of God
- Live out the peace of God
- Proclaim the peace of God

Earlier I said that if you live out this purpose, there's a guaranteed blessing that comes with it, so what is it?

WHAT IS THE PROMISE FOR PEACEMAKERS?

Look back at our verse, it says this:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

There it is. That's the promise. They will be called sons of God. Here's what that means.

It means that having the peace of God, living out the peace of God, and proclaiming the peace of God means that you are a **CHILD OF GOD**.

My daughter Lila is 20 months old and she's in this stage of life where she repeats everything I say and do... Whether good or bad. That's because she's my child and she just wants to imitate her daddy.

In the same way, when you live as a peacemaker in the world, you are imitating your heavenly father and what he did for us.

Ephesians 2:17 says Jesus, “**...came** and **proclaimed** the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.”

He came and lived out the peace of God. And he came and proclaimed the peace of God.

And now we as his sons and daughters, go out and do the same because we just want to be like our heavenly father & we want others to know him too. When we live as peacemakers, we demonstrate the reality that we are children of God.

And what's so cool about it is that when we live as peacemakers in the world, others are going to come to know Jesus. You try it this week. Go and make peace with that person and tell them why

you want to do that. Share with Jesus with someone. And watch what God does. He's gonna use you & your obedience to bring the very peace of God – this peace that all of us so desperately want to see in our world – to bring it here in our world.

But you're going to see next week in our next beatitude that none of this is easy. In fact, it's going to be really difficult. Trying to live out the peace of God may mean swallowing your pride in a way you've never had to. Proclaiming the peace of God may mean persecution.

But here's the promise you can hold onto, the guaranteed blessing. If you're a peacemaker, you're a part of God's family. He's adopted you as a beloved child & you can live confidently, knowing that you have a heavenly father who loves you, who forgives, and who will never cast you out of His family.

As a child of God, you have a heavenly kingdom awaiting you, and Romans 8 says nothing in this world could ever separate you from that. As a peacemaker, you can have **total confidence because God calls you his child**.

You know what that is? That's true peace.

The promise for peacemakers is that they find peace in being children of God.

This is God's upside down kingdom. Do you believe it?

Let's pray!