



Series: The Upside Down Kingdom

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Text: Matthew 5:9

Title: Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Introduction:

Hello Mercy Church!

I have not met you yet, my name is Mike Herman and I serve as campus pastor for our Union County Campus.

(STARTING POINT slide)

And if you are new with us, I would love to invite you to Starting Point. This is about a 15-minute class where you can come learn more about how to get involved at

Mercy. You can get to know our staff and there's time to ask a few questions about who we are. We do one class right after each service. Just go down the hall off the right lobby and you will see the signs.

Today, we are going to continue in our series called “The Upside Down Kingdom”. In this series, we are going through the Beatitudes. These Beatitudes are the intro to Jesus’ most famous sermon called the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus describes what it looks like to be “blessed”. And the reason we call it the “Upside-down Kingdom”, is because so many of our intuitions of what it means to be blessed are actually the inversion of what Christ calls Blessed.

Today we will be in the 7th Beatitude which is in Matthew Chapter 5:9 if you want to go ahead a flip there.

While you are flipping there, I will pray over our time.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. -- Matthew 5:3-9 (CSB)

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

I have to say, guys, this was an incredibly fun passage to study. There is so much packed into this little phrase.





And Peacemaking such a compelling idea, right? Peace is something I think we would all say that we desire, but very few of us can say that we consistently have it.

Peace is something we are all searching for...

But do you have it? Would you say that you have peace and that you can make it?

We look at the world and even our own hearts. Or when we hear about situations like what happened this week in Charlotte with the shootings, it all screams, "We need peace!"

Christians typically have an idea that peace is something that we should have, but what exactly is peace and how do we get it? And when we get it, how do we make it?

Here is our roadmap of how we are going to answer these questions.

We are going to break this phrase down into chunks, try to understand it, and then talk about ways we can apply it. So, here's how it is going to work:

- **What is Peace?**
- **What Does it Mean that we are Sons of God?**
- **How do we make peace?**

What is Peace?

Before we unpack everything that I think Christ wants us to understand in this word peace,

I want to ask you guys a question. And it is not a rhetorical question, I seriously want you to think through this in your mind.

What comes to your mind when you hear peace? Take a second to think about what all comes up.

Whatever it is that comes to your mind, what we have to do is look at the Bible and retrain our minds to understand the word peace in the way that the Bible uses it.

You see, Peace is a word that gets thrown around a lot in our culture.

- "Peace be with you."
- "Peace out"
- Hand gesture. 🙌
- cartoon aliens!
- Usher - Peace up, A Town Down
- Peace and Love Mantra from Hippies of the 70s.
- emoji, right? It's everywhere.
- Miss congeniality -World Peace



My point in bringing all this up is that there are so many ways that our culture uses this word and so we have so many assumptions about what it means.

Based on all the references, the way our world defines peace as a lack of conflict or a sense of rest.

While that is an aspect of Biblical peace, the Bible describes peace in such a rich way that Biblical Peace actually looks upside down compared to the world's definition.

So, what I want to do is take a step back and discuss the biblical concept of peace so that we can understand what Christ means when he says the make peace.

The Biblical definition of Peace is actually quite simple:

Biblical peace at its core simply means to be complete or to be whole.

Peace is how God created the world. Peace represents how God designed the world to be.

So, to fully understand what Jesus means when he uses the word Peace, we have to go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Because The Garden is a picture of true Peace.

- Adam and Eve were completely exposed to each other and God.
- There was no shame and no sin.
- They labored together and communed with God.
- There was no injustice or oppression.
- They were known by God and loved by God.
- They were in paradise.
- They were at Peace.
- They were completely living the way God designed us to live.

Whether we recognize it or not, the reason that the word peace has permeated so much of our culture.

and the reason we have this innate desire for peace.

The reason there are over 200,000 books on how to find peace on Amazon peace on Amazon.

is because we are all longing for the peace that Adam and Eve walked in.

The lack of Peace that we witness, and experience is this interaction with a broken world and broken people that have fractured the completeness that was God's original design.

The good news is that this brokenness is what Christ came to restore. The redemptive work of Christ, the



“Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6) is all about restoring things back to the way they should be.

Bring it all together:

Biblical Peace was how God created the world. It was whole and complete. Creation is at peace when it is fully unified with its Creator. Sin has broken this peace. And Christ completely restores this peace between God for people who have faith in Him and for all of creation when returns.

And so, for us, to have peace now, it has to start with peace with God, through faith in the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 tells us that

...., since we have been justified by faith, **we have peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. -- Romans 5:1 (CSB)

To take things one step further, Ephesians 2:13 and 14 tells us this way:

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,**

Our Peace is not a lack of conflict with others or a general sense of rest.

Our peace is a person, Jesus Christ.

This is what the world is longing for when we search for peace. In fact, I would argue that every single longing at its core, is a longing for Peace with God.

So, before we talk about what it means to be a Son of God or learn about how to walk in peace. I want to ask you a question.

Are you at peace with God? Have you experienced unity with God through faith in Jesus?

✳️ If you haven't, I beg you to contemplate with that during this message. Put your faith in Christ and experience the peace with God that you are longing for.

For those of us who can say yes, I have experienced this Peace through faith in Jesus, let's talk about the title given to you.

What Does it Mean that we are Sons of God?

To start, let's get clear on the phrase Son of God. This title is not exclusive to males. Some translations will make this clear by saying children of God or sons and daughters of God.



This title displays the inheritance that Christ leaves us. This title is given to *all* Christ followers - male and female- It speaks to our adoption into the family of God.

We are his children, and he is our father.

Every time this truth hits my heart, it's honestly overwhelming.

I know that a lot of you might have broken relationships with your earthy fathers, but this title given to us is meant to make us feel loved, secure, and adored.

It's meant to remind us of the peace we have with God.

And it's also meant to give us peace because of the coming inheritance.

This inheritance coming is eternal life, in heaven, where sin, disease, and suffering are no more.

No more student loan debt, no more cancer, heart disease. No more wayward children, no more divorce, no more cheating, no more addiction. No more wondering about how to pay for groceries or no more paycheck to paycheck hyperinflation.

The title Son of God reminds us of the peace we have now and the inheritance coming.

It also is meant to remind us that we should reflect peace into the world.

This was hard for me to understand originally, but the more I thought about it the more it made sense.

A helpful way to understand it might be this: So, the other day, my wife Whitney was out of town with Waverly and so I was home alone with my youngest daughter Calla for a few days. It was honestly, so much fun. We went to the park and ate ice cream... we had pizza for 5 of the 6 meals we ate together. It was great. But there was this one moment when we were parked in the driveway and I looked back at her and I was like, Calla, I love you, girl, I had so much fun with you today.

Then she gave me the sweetest little smile where her nose scrunched up and her eyes came halfway closed, her chin moved toward me affectionately.

It honestly struck me because I was like, oh my gosh, you are just like your mom. Her sweet little heart, her smile, her nose, it was a reflection of who her mother was.

What Jesus is saying is that this peacemaking will be what identifies us as Sons of God.



So, as we walk in peace in the world, people *and* God will look at us and say, “oh my goodness, they are just like their heavenly father, they reflect the peace of God to the world.”

This title is meant to remind of the peace we have, the final peace that’s coming, and for us to reflect this peace into the world.

If you still feel a little lost on how we can make peace, hopefully, these action steps will make things a little clearer...

How do we make Peace?

Guys, there is so much to consider here, so I tried to give three concrete ways that we can make peace together.

1. Pursue Unity
2. Fight sin
3. Share Christ

Pursue Unity:

If we go back to Ephesians 2 where Christ is identified as our Peace.

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, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. Ephesians 2:13-14

The second part of this declaration about Christ tells us that because Christ is our peace, he unified us together.

The blood of Christ tears down dividing walls of hostility.

To be peacemakers, we must pursue unity the way Christ pursued unity.

Let’s look at Philippians 2:5-8

5 Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,
6 who, existing in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God
as something to be exploited.
7 Instead he emptied himself
by assuming the form of a servant,
taking on the likeness of humanity.
And when he had come as a man,
8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death —
even to death on a cross. -- Philippians 2:5-8 (CSB)

I think one of our temptations when we hear the word peacemaker is to think that this means be passive and avoid conflict.



See, every personality test I take tells me that I am some form of people pleaser. I will avoid conflict at all costs. I will see friction and do whatever I have to reduce and deflate.

But is this really peacemaking? Avoiding conflict usually just pushes the issue down the road until it blows up.

Pushing things down gives some sort of shallow unity, but if we are going to be peacemakers, we must pursue deep and real unity with each other.

Think about it this way, did Christ passively let things play out and hope that humans would figure it out?

No, Christ modeled for us this idea of making every effort to keep the spirit of unity.

He entered into the brokenness of the world and brought unity by emptying himself and humbling himself.

Unfortunately, in our society, unity does not happen by accident. Unity is rarely a passive result. It's the result of active effort.

This means that when we see divisions in our life, we can't just avoid them, or look down on them with judgment.

We must enter into divisions with the love of Christ and make every effort to bring unity.

So, when we see divisions in our Church forming - we must actively pursue unity with humility and love.

When we see racial division in our community - we must actively pursue unity with humility and love.

When we see divisions in our homes, schools, or even at work - Christians should be identified as people that actively pursue unity with humility and love.

Pursuing Unity is probably some of the hardest and most labor-intensive work that we are called into. Praise God that Christ was willing to do the work required to bring unity between us and God, now out of response of that, we pursue unity together.

That's why this unity is only possible to have unity with God first. We need to carry with us a divine and transcendent peace or the world's conflicts will just eat us alive.

That's where the idea of a peace that surpasses all understanding comes into play.

✳️ Remember our title as Sons of God, how we make unity reflects Christ into the world.



People should look at us “They have been unified to God through faith in Jesus, so much so they reflect this unifying power into the world”.

This leads to my second action step, fighting sin. Because as we unify, and even in order to unify, we must be fighting sin. Sin is what caused our division with God, and it causes divisions between us.

Fight sin:

If think back to the Biblical definition of peace.

It's how God created the world, and our sin breaks this peace. Jesus has restored this peace, but we must look at our lives and search for anything that is not reflecting that we have been unified with God and do what Hebrews 12 tells us to do and lay aside every hindrance that so easily ensnares us as we run the race.

Because the truth is, you can be united with others, have no conflict in your lives, have some sort of internal rest, but have a secret sin that is poisoning your efforts to make peace with your life.

In other words, you can have a public pursuit of peace, but a private pursuit of hell.

Jesus highlights how important this is in just a few paragraphs down in this sermon where he says this:

29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right-hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. -- Matthew 5:27-30 (CSB)

To be peacemakers, we must fight sin.

Colossians 3:5 says it this way:

5 Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. -- Colossians 3:5 (CSB)

What I observe and what I fear for us is that for so many of us, we do not try to fight sin with the zeal that Jesus is call us to use. We simply try to tame our sins.

This might feel like a shape turn, but I promise there is a point here, but did any of you guys watch the Netflix show: Tiger King? (If you didn't, good for you, but I am curious what you did with those first two weeks of COVID to flatten the curve)

But for those who never saw it, it's about the scandals of this crazy zookeeper who has a fascination with tigers. It goes exactly pretty much exactly how you



think it would go. It is a disaster that ends with people in jail, murders, and the zoo burning down.

But do you remember how insane those people looked as they were causally interacting with these incredibly dangerous cats? You are watching, and thinking it is only a matter of time before one of those bits someone arm off?

Then, like three episodes in, a zookeeper loses his arm and the only people that were surprised are the ones that tried to treat the predators like they were literally designed to eat flesh. They are tigers, that's what they do.

We treat our sin the same way. We don't look and sin, recognize its danger, and flee.

We keep it close and flirt with it, then act surprised when it harms us.

We say, "I won't gossip about people, I'll just "bless them". I'll stop before it turns into gossip.

I won't watch pornography, I'll just flip through Instagram by myself, I'll stop if I start lusting.

I would never cheat on my spouse, it's just innocent flirting at work.

Oh, we are going to wait until marriage to have sex, we will just cuddle and watch TV with the door closed. I won't let things get out of hand.

This mindset is just as insane ...in fact it's infinitely more insane, than zookeepers hand-feeding steak to 500-pound cats and then acting surprised when they lose a limb.

The verbs that the Bible uses to fight sins are flee, gouge, cut off, throw away, and put to death.

If we replace those verbs with tame, control, dismiss, or ignore then we are flirting with things that are dangerous to our soul.

This means that we are constantly searching our hearts for ways that are opposed to his word.

We flee from hints of sin in our lives. Followers of Christ cannot be apathetic to sin in their lives.

We have to go back to our title as Son of God, if people were able to look into your life both private and public, would people say, you reflect the peace of God to the world?

If we are going to fight sin Biblically, we also have to recognize that sin is so much more than things we struggle with. It goes far beyond lust, pride, cheating, lying, or whatever comes to our mind.



The Bible tells us that even our good deeds are filthy rags. Even our morally good acts are soaked with sin.

Sin isn't just bad things that we do, it's part of our nature. When Adam sinned, all of humanity inherited sin.

We are not people who *sometimes* sin, we are sinners.

The moment sin entered the world, peace with God was broken for all humanity.

This is not how God created us to be. He created us to live in peace. He created us to live in perfect communion with him. But because of our sin, we have *all* forfeited peace.

So, if we want Peace and want to make peace doesn't come from white-knuckled "I'm going to get it together this time conversations with yourself."

Peace comes, from total surrender to the one that we have sinned against.

Now, I want everyone to look at me. I would be failing you as one of our pastors if I did not make this as clear as I possibly can, as often as I possibly can.

For those of us who are in Christ Jesus:

As we fight sin, we do not fight from a place of weakness and defeat.

We fight from a place of victory because Christ has done everything necessary to conquer sin and death.

As Sons of God the sin and hostility towards God that we inherited from Adam, has been replaced by an inheritance of peace with God through Christ.

Jesus will say this as he is approaching the cross:

33 I have told you these things so that in me you **may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world." -- John 16:33 (CSB)**

If you have put your faith in Christ:

As far as God is concerned, you are as pure as Christ.

Sin has left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow.

Don't you see how Jesus can say that the peacemaker is blessed?!?!?

So, our motivation to **fight sin** is not to earn salvation, but it is a motivation to experience the state of blessing that Jesus is promising here.



It is a motivation that comes from a desire to trust God and live in the way he has designed us to live.

Our obedience to fight sin is simply a response to the love he has for us.

If we are going to be peacemakers, we need to live lives as close to the peace displayed in the garden as we can.

To live fully known by God and others with no shame or guilt.

And as brokenness resurfaces. And we know it will. While we wait for our inheritance, we still experience the effects of a fallen world.

But peace comes as we hope in Christ and long for him to come back and completely restore creation.

We are great sinners, but he is a greater savior.

And as the beauty of peace hits us, the last action step makes total sense. When we experience the peace that Christ has purchased for us, we want to invite others into this peace.

The last action step is to:

Share Christ:

The gospel of Matthew (The gospel account that contains the sermon on the mount) ends this way:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." -- Matthew 28:19-20 (CSB)

I know this is a verse that so many of us have heard a million times. But if we are going to **be peacemakers, we must share Christ with others.**

We have to train ourselves to look at the lack of peace in our world and not choose apathy or isolation.

To a world completely void of peace, there is one solution to this problem.

I think that we all know this to be true. We all know that the peace of Christ that we have experienced can transform our world.

It's not an issue of knowing this is true, but it's an issue of having the boldness and the motivation to do anything about it.

So, my challenge to you as your pastor, and the challenge for me as I prepare this message, is this:



Isn't Christ worth sharing?

Isn't Christ worth the potentially awkward moment with a coworker to ask them to pray and search for opportunities to share the gospel?

Isn't Christ worth the temporary feeling of rejection when you ask someone to come to Church?

The reality is that Christ is worth everything we have, we must be willing to lay down our fears and our insecurities and invite others into the peace that we have experienced.

What I have realized is that 99% of the time, in the context that we live in, the worst thing that could happen is a short period of time where you feel awkward. Literally, that's the worst thing that can happen.

If the Holy Spirit prompts you to have a gospel conversation the best thing that can happen, is the person that God has put in your life will have their eternity changed and you get to experience the blessing that Christ is referring to in this Beatitude.

So, my challenge to you guys is to not let another week pass by where you hush the Holy Spirit as it prompts you and enter into those conversations.

I know that as I am speaking there are people on your mind. We use this phrase all the time, who is the one person who is close to you but far from God?

Some of Christ's last words before ascending into heaven were to go and make disciples.

If we claim to follow Christ but have zero discipleship relationship in our lives, we are kidding ourselves if we think that we are being obedient.

If you have a desire to do this, but don't have any idea how to do it. Find someone a little more experienced than you and ask them to disciple you. Then, as you learn what it looks like, you can begin to disciple others.

If you still struggle to find someone, let me know and we can get you into a community group or some space where you can work this out.

It is one of my highest priorities as one of your pastors to lead a group of people who are living this out.

Concluding statement:

God created us to live in peace, our sin fractured that peace. But Christ came back so that through faith in Him we can have peace restored. And Now as Sons of God, we make peace in our lives by pursuing unity, fighting sin, and sharing Christ.



Respond in Prayer:

To conclude our time, I want to lead us through a time of prayer. I will give you guys a few prompts and then give you several minutes to respond. So, if you would, bow your heads, the worship team will come into place.

Peace with God?

Repent and confess about:

Unity

Sin

Sharing Christ