

## Making Peace

Peacemaking is a theme most often stressed by the mainline Protestant churches and often ignored by the Evangelical churches, but we discover in the Scriptures that it is an essential of our Christian experience; in fact, it is found right here in the Beatitudes at the opening of the Sermon on the Mount:

### Matthew 5:9

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

His basic teaching is obvious: peacemakers will be blessed by God. It behooves us, therefore, to ask ourselves “what is a peacemaker?” And “what is the nature of this blessing?”

#### What is a peacemaker?

1. One who embraces God's grand vision of peace.

The word “peace” in the Bible is an extremely important one. The Hebrew word “shalom” is mentioned over 250 times in the Old Testament; and the Greek word “Eirene,” is mentioned 92 times in the New Testament. We could describe shalom briefly by calling it “holistic well-being founded upon reconciled relationships.”

In Isaiah 9:6, 7 and 11:6 – 9, we are shown the vision of the messiah's shalom: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb... The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra... The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” This is the vision we must embrace. Furthermore, Jeremiah 29:7 teaches us that we must seek to realize that vision, no matter where we are in the world. The reason we often do not embrace the grand vision is because it is painful for us to look at our broken world by comparison. For example, we now have 28 major wars going on around the world, with many other minor ones, and thousands of lives are being lost. The American government spends \$1.2 trillion on our military program, while it would take only \$65 billion ( 5% of our military expenditures) to feed, clothe, and educate the children of the world.

Meanwhile, in Memphis, Tennessee, about one third of our families with children below the age of five live below the poverty line. Recently 25 to 30 of our local churches spent several years together studying our city to discover what would make for shalom in Memphis. They agreed that for Memphis to have shalom all of our neighborhoods would need to have effective law enforcement, available housing for families and singles, job opportunities, solid education, opportunities in the fine arts, and, most of all, vibrant churches in every neighborhood. Here is what that study group discovered (among other things): we have 127 neighborhoods in Memphis, 27 of which are experiencing shalom in every sector of life. (that's where most of us live). Out of the 100 neighborhoods which are in some deficit, 56 of those neighborhoods are in severe deficit, meaning that every sector of shalom is in arrears.

It is painful to embrace God's grand vision for shalom, because we hurt for our neighbor and are compelled to help.

2. One who understands the root of the problem

While we applaud the mainline church for reminding us of our role as peacemakers, we must say that we often find the liberal protestant church misdiagnosing the root problem. Jesus teaches us that the reason we have arguments, strivings, wars, and arguments is because of our jealousy and selfish ambition, our lusts that are unbridled by the Spirit of God (cf. James 4:1,2); that is, if we want to have peace with our environment, with our neighbors around the world, our church, and our families, we must receive the peace of God. The peace of God begins with peace with God. (Romans 5:1) This is the peculiar perspective of the follower of Christ. Jesus said, “peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I get to you.” (John 14:27)

3. One who dies to himself

We die to ourselves into ways: a) negatively, we cease from provocations; and b) we actively mediate and pursue peace. On the one hand, we must cease and desist from provoking arguments and from rumor mongering that only divides people; and, on the other hand, we must

not merely be appeasers. Appeasement, or simply not causing problems, is not the full role of a peacemaker. Many times peacemakers must engage in conflict in order to promote the general welfare of society. The most important way in which we confront our neighbor is with the gospel of peace itself, calling upon all humanity to repent and believe the gospel in order to have peace with God and with one another.

### **What is the nature of our blessing?**

Ultimately, our blessing consists of the very precious name by which he calls us: "sons of God." One day he will renew the entire heavens and the earth, and we will be the crown of his new creation. Just as Jesus Christ came as Prince of Peace, we, too, will be princes and princesses on the earth. As David said in Psalm eight, we will be "crowned...with glory and honor," with "dominion over the works of (His) hands," with "all things under (our) feet."

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1) Why is it essential that we embrace the grand vision for biblical shalom?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) Explain why peace in the world requires peace with God. How has this peace with God been accomplished?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What are the negative and positive aspects of peacemaking? How did Jesus perform both of these?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) What are the privileges promised to biblical peacemakers? What does it mean for us to bear His name?

### **Suggested resources:**

[The Peacemaker](#)

by Ken Sande

Peacemaker Resources  
Website

<http://www.hispeace.org>