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**Lesson 8 - Real Peace**

***Lesson Notes:***

Welcome to Week 8! I’m so proud of you. I pray this study is having a serious impact on your Kingdom mindset.

This week, we’re studying Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:9--*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God*.

Before we jump into this Beatitude, let’s remind ourselves how we got here:

* Jesus began by teaching us that those who are broken before God over their sin are Kingdom people. He said, “Theirs is the Kingdom.”
* He promised next that whoever grieves and mourns over their sin would be comforted.
* Then Jesus taught that the comfort Kingdom people receive produces meekness and gentleness in them.
* The meekness of God’s people causes them to stop grasping and grabbing for earthly things and instead produces in them a deep hunger for God’s righteousness, which satisfies them.
* The deep satisfaction Kingdom people receive makes them more merciful toward others.
* That mercy produces true purity in how they see others.
* And that purity, taught Jesus, makes God’s Kingdom people makers of peace.

And here we are. Let’s dive in.

***Questions:***

1. Offer some synonyms and definitions for “peace.” What does it mean to be at peace with others?

Now, to thicken the plot, what is peace at any cost? What is egg-shell peace, fragile peace or peace surrounded by landmines? Can anyone define or relate to that?
2. The Greek word for *peace* is *irene* (pronounced i-ree-nay)*.* Our English name Irene comes from it. *Irene* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *shalom,* which you probably know.

To understand what Jesus is teaching in this Beatitude, we need to fully grasp the meaning of *shalom*. The Hebrew blessing of *shalom* wasn’t just that the recipient would be free from evil or conflict, it was also a prayer for them to know and experience all of God’s goodness. *Shalom* was never satisfied with a surface peace or status quo; it sought rather the fullness of life that only God can bring.

The peace that Jesus described here is not fragile or negotiated peace. It’s peace that flows from the presence of and surrender to God’s truth. It prioritizes the truth of God over peace with others. Truth comes first. And in the Kingdom mindset, real peace can’t be known until God’s truth prevails.

Bible scholar and historian William Barclay described *shalom* this way: (Have someone read this out loud.)

*It must be carefully noted what the beatitude is saying. The blessing is on the peacemakers, not necessarily on the peacelovers. It very often happens that if people love peace in the wrong way, they succeed in making trouble and not peace. We may, for instance, allow a threatening and dangerous situation to develop, and our defense is that for peace’s sake we do not want to take any action. There are many people who think that they are loving peace, when in fact they are piling up trouble for the future, because they refuse to face the situation and to take the action which the situation demands. The peace which the Bible calls blessed does not come from the evasion of issues; it comes from facing them, dealing with them and conquering them. What this beatitude demands is not the passive acceptance of things because we are afraid of the trouble of doing anything about them, but the active facing of things, and the making of peace, even when the way to peace is through struggle.* (The New Daily Bible Study: The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, by William Barclay.) Uh, ouch.

Ok, time to get honest. Can you think of some areas in your life or relationships where you have “let things go” for the sake of peace? Have you ever accepted less than God’s best in a situation because you didn’t want to face the conflict that would inevitably come from promoting God’s truth?

Now think about the Church in our country today. Can you see any areas where Christians have remained silent on issues, or worse, sided with falsehood for the sake of “peace?” Question: is that real peace?

1. Now we need to add the word *makers* to *peace.* The Kingdom people that Jesus describes here are those who make or produce peace. They step in where there is no peace and promote peace for all parties. And remember, peace isn’t the absence of conflict, it’s the accepted presence of God’s truth. Our primary tool for peace-making is God’s Word, God’s truth. It isn’t negotiation, compromise or dealmaking. It’s truth-telling.

Jesus knew a little bit about peace-making. Seven-hundred years before Jesus' birth, Isaiah referred to the coming Messiah as the Prince of Peace (See Isaiah 9:6). Thirty years after Jesus' death and resurrection, the Apostle Paul taught that Jesus “himself is our peace . . . His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two\*, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near,” (Ephesians 2:14-17).
\*The “two” mentioned by Paul here are the two opposing ethnicities, Jews and Gentiles.

You can be sure that Jesus' preaching peace in no way included compromise or asking the two groups to meet in the middle. Jesus called both Gentiles and Jews to repent and to adjust to the new reality that he offered, and he did so without apology. That’s peacemaking.

Can you name a time when God asked you to step into a situation where there was no peace and offer it through biblical principles and practices? Can you name a time perhaps when a biblical maker of peace stepped into your world and offered you peace through God’s truth?

Can you think of a current situation that God may be asking you to step in to as a peacemaker? Remember, Kingdom peacemaking isn’t negotiating, it’s truth-telling in love (See Ephesians 4:14-16).

Not surprisingly, Kingdom makers of peace are called the *sons of God.* It’s important to note that Jesus did not call them the *children of God*, although that’s certainly true. He called them sons (and daughters).

A common Hebrew compliment was to call a person the son of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (add your descriptor of choice) as a way of describing them. Joseph of Cyprus was renamed Barnabas (the son of encouragement) by the Apostles in Acts 4 because of his generosity to the church.

Jesus called those who make peace the “sons of God” because peacemaking is a very God-like thing. Paul repeatedly called God the “God of peace,” (See Romans 15:33, 2 Corinthians 13:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 13:20).

At least as far as the Bible is concerned, we are very God-like when we are calling others to Kingdom peace. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21.)

Who are some Kingdom peacemakers you know today? Why would you describe them that way?

1. Application time. How has Jesus' teaching on peacemaking changed your understanding of it? Are you ready to substitute eggshell peace or negotiated peace in your relationships for the real *shalom* that Jesus calls us to? What actions might you need to take, or conversations might you need to have, in light of Jesus' call on us to be peacemakers?

Thanks for sticking with me in this week’s study. I know this is a lot to think about. As you consider your role as a peacemaker, you might want to think about the implications of peacemaking. And to do that, just look at the next and last Beatitude we’ll study next time—Matthew 5:10.

See you next time. No fair skipping!