

Uncommon Virtues

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

We are called to value the words of Jesus. His words are lifegiving. In the sermon on the mount, He picks out specific characteristics and virtues and highlights that those who walk in them are blessed. One of these is being a peacemaker. It is important for us and behoves us to study what this really means so that we may walk in this blessing. The word "maker" here comes from a word meaning to manufacture, construct or cause. You walk into some homes, and you can feel the peace. You have some people who walk into a room and the peace leaves the moment they open their mouth. It needs to be stated that **you can't be a peace maker if you are not at peace within yourself.** The Bible states that we should let the peace of God be the umpire in all your decisions. Let the peace of God guard your heart and mind. Let your beauty be the inward beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Being at peace within yourself helps you in decision making. People absorb you. If you are not accustomed to the peace of God you won't know when you have lost it. This is another message for another day.

The word "blessed" is Makarios which means "to be envied, fortunate, one who has God's favour extended in their lives. God's benefits are made long and large in their lives." **There are virtues that are just good for you. There are others that are good for you and result in you walking in favour.** Humility is one of them. Peace-making is another. The word peace means to tie together as a whole or wholeness, when the essential parts are tied together, rest and quietness. It has connotations of unity. So when someone gossips and causes division they are doing the opposite of this. When I speak to you words that refresh and quiet your soul I am being a peacemaker. Peace here is God's gift of wholeness. Being a peacemaker is a core characteristic of a child of God. Elsewhere Jesus teaches that if we walk in love for each other, they will know we are His disciples. Here He is saying that if we are peacemakers, we will be called children of God. By whom I wonder. I believe that people will recognize Christ in us, but heaven will also identify us. When you are a child of someone it means you have their DNA. You are like them. When we are called children of God because we are peacemakers it means that God is that too. We are that because He is. This must always be our starting point. God is described as the God of Peace. Jesus is described as the Prince of Peace.

Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

This scripture shows me that **peace-making and passivity are not the same thing.** Sometimes we have to go through war and confrontation to come to a place of peace. Jesus was actually rebuking Martha when He told her that she was anxious about many things. He was confronting her lack of peace and bringing peace. But He had to confront it. There is a difference between peacekeeping at all costs and being a peacemaker. We will go into this later.

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

This does not sound weak to me.

When you are a son of peace or promoter of peace it seems to attract blessing from God and from people.

Luke 10:3-6 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4Carry no purse or bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone along the road. 5Whatever house you enter, begin by saying, 'Peace to this house.' 6If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.

Those who do not promote this peace do not receive this type of blessing. **Do you qualify to have universal flourishing bestowed upon you? Do people speak blessings over you and the blessings bounce off because you are not a son of peace?**

Peacemakers do not engage in ministry whilst overlooking the importance of reconciliation.

(CJB – Complete Jewish Bible) Matt 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift at the Temple altar and you remember there that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift where it is by the altar, and go, make peace with your brother. Then come back and offer your gift.

A peacemaker is not the same as someone who is a peacekeeper as all costs.

A peacekeeper tends to sit on the fence and ends up being seen as two-faced. They say one thing to you and something else to another person. They will often placate people instead of confronting them. They try to maintain harmony unhealthily because they think that transparency might permanently alter the relationship. This is a serious cognitive distortion. On the other hand, peacemakers actively work towards resolving conflicts and finding win-win solutions that result in lasting peace for all parties involved.

Sometimes being a peacemaker involves a form of separation.

Gen 13:8-9 So Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.”

You are not called to work closely with everyone. You are not called to be in business with everyone in your church. You might be good as small group members together but not as business partners.

Asserting boundaries results in peace.

Just because you are husband and wife does not mean you must work on top of each other in all your businesses. Your marriage is more important.

Prov 25:17 NIV Seldom set foot in your neighbor’s house-- too much of you, and they will hate you.

Prov 25:17 NASB Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor’s house, Or he will become weary of you and hate you.

Being a peacemaker will bring joy to your life.

Prov 12:20 Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy.

When you are deceitful and plot evil it is the opposite of being a peacemaker.

There are things you can say and do that will create peace.

Prov 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

It is important to pre-decide how you will show up in a hostile environment. Don’t lower your standards in reaction to the other person. There is a whole body of knowledge around managing hostility. For example, practising empathy when you have an irate customer, identifying common ground, understanding where their hostility is coming from e.g. they may be feeling that everyone is ganging up against them.

Being a peacemaker requires effort.

Rom 14:19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

What does this effort look like? Sometimes in times of change it might mean having one on ones with people to get their buy in before rushing ahead with something. It might mean you have to think through the potential impact of your decisions on people around you and demonstrate understanding of why they are struggling with it. Peacemakers are patient with slower people and people who perhaps need more time to process certain things.

Think of recent interactions and decisions you have made. Have they led to more peace and edification or have they led elsewhere?

Have you made every effort to do what leads to peace and to other’s edification not just your own? Edification must be mutual.

Heb 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

The word used here for becoming holy is sanctification which is the process of becoming holy. I believe that becoming more of a peacemaker is a sign of sanctification.

Rom 12:18 – 20 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 On

the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

We need to focus on what is within our control. You can't control people's perceptions of you or their reactions to you. Often when you try to do this it takes away your peace. Your responsibility is to walk in love.

Taking revenge is one of the reasons we don't promote peace. There are some things that need to be left in God's hands. When resentment builds up, you end up wishing ill on people. There are different ways of taking revenge. Sometimes it is very calculated. Other times it is a type of cruel emotional withdrawal. Sometimes we take revenge through subtle forms of slander.

God's wisdom is peace-loving. If your wisdom is not embedded in peace-making then it is not from God.

James 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

True wisdom from God has these characteristics. Upon close examination you see that they are all interlinked. The peacemaker is full of these qualities; impartial, sincere, merciful, considerate and pure. The word "Peaceable" is used in some translations but is the same word *Eirene*. In this context it speaks of gentle yielding. Some people like to display wisdom but struggle to concede if they are wrong. **There are many people who are good at confronting others but they are not peacemakers because they don't do it in humility, gentleness, compassion and patience.**

A Biblical case study of a peacemaker

1 Sam 25 we see how Abigail is a classic peacemaker. She was an intelligent beautiful woman who was married to Nabal a wealthy man with lots of livestock (not the greatest of people though). David's men had spent time in the area and been full of peace towards Nabal's men. David's men had actually become a wall that would protect Nabal's men and flock. When David sent his men to somewhat make the relationship more mutually beneficial he was severely insulted by Nabal. This incensed David and resulted in him vowing to kill all the males from Nabal's group. This is the same David who had spared Saul's life a couple of times. David himself was a peacemaker who was now becoming somewhat hardened. **Some of you were once peacemakers but events in your life have hardened you.** It took the intervention of Abigail as a peacemaker to step in. I will highlight certain qualities of a peacemaker based on this narrative.

1 Sam 25 Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran. [a] 2 A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. 3 His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.

4 While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. 5 So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. 6 Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!'

7 "Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. 8 Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them."

9 When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited. 10 Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. 11 Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"

12 David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. 13 David said to his men, "Each of you strap on your sword!" So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.

14 One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. 15 Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. 16 Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. 17 Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

18 **Abigail acted quickly.** She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs[b] of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. 19 Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." **But she did not tell her husband Nabal.**

20 As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. 21 David had just said, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. 22 May God deal with David,[c] be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"

23 When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and **bowed down before David** with her face to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said: "**Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say.** 25 **Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal.** He is just like his name—his name means Fool, **and folly goes with him.** And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. 26 And now, my lord, as surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from **avenging yourself with your own hands,** may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. 27 **And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.**

28 **"Please forgive your servant's presumption. The Lord your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the Lord's battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live.** 29 Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. 30 When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, 31 my lord **will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself.** And when the Lord your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant."

32 David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. 33 May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. 34 Otherwise, as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak."

35 Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, "**Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.**"

36 When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until daybreak. 37 Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone. 38 About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died. 39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Praise be to the Lord, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. **He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head.**" Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to **become his wife.** 40 His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, "David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife."

41 She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, "I am your servant and am ready to serve you and wash the feet of my lord's servants." 42 Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, attended by her five female servants, went with David's messengers and became his wife.