

## Upside Down Kingdom: Blessed are the Peacemakers & Persecuted Matthew 5:9-12<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you this morning. For those of you that are guests, my name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. And whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are certainly glad you are with us today. And on behalf of our church family, we welcome you.

We would love the opportunity to get to connect with you. If you would, simply text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to 94-000. You will then be prompted to click on a link that will provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you. And here's our promise to you... we promise not to bombard your inbox. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you and to pray for you.

### SERIES OVERVIEW:

Today, we wrap up a series of sermons that we have called, "The Upside Down Kingdom." We've taken a look at the Beatitudes that serve as the opening for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5. So, I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to Matthew 5 as we zoom in on verses 9-12.

Now, if you've been following along you might say, "I thought we had two Beatitudes left. Why are we wrapping it up today?" Well, we are going to cover both of those this morning and next Sunday, we will launch a new series of sermons entitled, "The Gifts of Christmas."

I'm just curious, how many of you are already done shopping for Christmas?! You guys are my heroes! Wow! If there is one thing that gets our kids excited about Christmas, it's the gifts. Well, we all should get just as excited around Christmas as we celebrate the gift of God that Christmas is really all about. But in actuality, there were many gifts surrounding Christmas that we given by God. The gift of His word, His promise of a coming messiah that gives us hope. The gifts that were brought by the wise men and given to The Lord Jesus. The gift of the angels announcement to the shepherds that was good news of great joy. And what the Apostle Paul would call the inexpressible gift, the gift of Jesus and salvation that was purchased in His finished work.

So, that starts next Sunday. I hope you will join us for that series and invite a friend to join with you. Did you know that research shows that there are two times a year that people are most open to an invitation to church? Guess when those times are. Easter and Christmas. So, let's take advantage of that and invite your friends, neighbors and co-workers to join with you this Christmas.

But today, we wrap up the Beatitudes. Turn with me, if you haven't already, to Matthew chapter 5. If you do not have a bible with you this morning, there is one in the seat tray of the seat in front of you. And if you do not own a Bible, please feel free to take that one. Those are the bibles were donated to us, and we would love to pass that along to you.

### **OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Examples of Desiring Peace**

When you consider all that is happening in our world and in our lives, who wouldn't want some peace right now? How about peace internationally? Or even peace across our own nation. Maybe you are desiring peace at home or at work. Maybe you are even praying for some peace in your marriage. How many of you have ever said the phrase, "I just need some peace and quiet right now?"

Well, at the center of the seventh Beatitude is the idea of true peace. Let's look at it together. Let read from the first Beatitude in verse 3 through verse 9.

### MESSAGE:

Follow along in your copy of God's Word. Matthew chapter 5, verses 3-8.

<sup>3</sup> *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* <sup>4</sup> *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* <sup>5</sup> *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* <sup>6</sup> *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* <sup>7</sup> *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.* <sup>8</sup> *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* <sup>9</sup> *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*

In our time together this morning, we will work through 3 questions. What is a peacemaker, how can we be peacemakers, and what is the result of living in the upside-down kingdom? First, ...

#### 1) What is a Peacemaker?

Jesus says, <sup>9</sup> *"Blessed [or happy] are the **peacemakers**."* What does Jesus mean here? A couple things that I want to point out here.

The first thing to note is the word used that is translated “peacemakers.” The root word for peace here is only used one other place in the New Testament. I think this gives us a clue as to what Jesus is talking about. Look with me where this word is used. Colossians 1:20.

*20 and through him [meaning through Jesus] to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making **peace** by the blood of his cross.* Interesting that the only other time that the word translated as “peacemakers,” is used, talks about the peace with God that is achieved in the finished work of the cross. Peace that comes as a result of salvation.

Did you know that prior to being saved, you were at war with God? The very next verse in Colossians highlights this fact. *21 And you, who once were alienated and **hostile** in mind, doing evil deeds,* [But verse 22 highlights the change]. *22 he has now reconciled [how?] in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before [God].”*

So, Jesus is drawing an obvious conclusion that in our sin we are opposed to God, in other words, we are not at peace with God. But by way of His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross we now have peace with God. And those that seek to make the same peace are blessed, happy. Jesus’ happiness is wrapped in the giving of His own life that those that place faith and trust in Him might be reconciled to God, have peace with God.

The other thing to note here is how this beatitude marks a turn. Jesus, in the first 6 has talked more about an inward position, a condition of the heart. To be poor in spirit, to mourn over the effects of sin, to be a person that is meek, to pursue righteousness, a merciful attitude, and to be pure in heart. But in the seventh Beatitude, Jesus teaches that an action comes as a result of those heart conditions. To be a peacemaker. The idea is that we are to now move beyond the heart and spirit, now that we’ve laid a foundation of the heart and spirit, and into other people’s lives.

Now, notice what Jesus says about the peacemaker. Why is the peacemaker blessed? Verse 9 again of Matthew 5. *9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be **called sons of God.**”* Daughters of God. Children of God.

It is important to notice here, the word “called.” Jesus does not say they will become sons of God. In other words, we don’t become, we are not saved by

being peacemakers. We do nothing to earn our own salvation. Salvation is only a gift of God’s grace by way of faith in Jesus as the Lord and Savior of our lives. That we recognize our own sinfulness and receive the gift of God in the forgiveness of our sin that was purchased on our behalf at the cross.

So, being a peacemaker does not make one a son or daughter of God, but rather leads one to realize you are a son or daughter of God. In other words, people who have come to faith in Jesus as the ultimate peacemaker between God and sinful humanity, then become peacemakers with others.

So, we have taken a look at what it means to be a peacemaker, with Jesus being the ultimate peacemaker. Now, let’s look at...

## 2) How Can We Be Peacemakers?

What was interesting in my study this week is that every commentary I read all had the same application points as to how we can be peacemakers. That means one of two things, either 1) they are all reading the same source, or 2) these things are the very things the Scripture prescribe for followers of Jesus. I think the latter because they are all reading the same source, the Bible. So, let’s look at 4 ways Scripture encourages us to be peacemakers.<sup>ii</sup>

### A) Make Peace with God.

**It is impossible to be a peacemaker if you have not made peace with The Maker.** We’ve said this before, our vertical relationship with God affects our horizontal relationship with others. When we recognize that our vertical relationship with God has been brought to peace, we then become a people that desire to live in peace with others. And in so doing, we are blessed, happy.

But that first begins by embracing the gospel. The gospel is all about peace. It’s all about resolving the conflict between God and man because of the sinfulness of humanity. Romans 5:1 says it this way, *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Do you have peace with God? If not, you can today. You might ask, “Pastor, how can I have this peace with God?” Simply pray to God and admit that you are a sinner, that you have offended a holy God. But that you have come to realize that Jesus paid the penalty of your sin at the cross. And that you place

your faith in Him and in His resurrection. And Scripture says in Romans 10:9-10, *“<sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”*

Do you have peace with God? If not, the way to become a peacemaker begins with making peace with God. The second way you can be a peacemaker is to...

### **B) Lead Others to Make Peace with God.**

This is the idea of sharing your faith with others that they might experience what you have experienced, peace with God.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 it says, *“<sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself **and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **entrusting to us the message of reconciliation**. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are **ambassadors for Christ**, God making his appeal **through us**. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*

You know, over the years of ministry, I've heard people say, “I'm just not good at evangelism. That's for someone else, not me.” But that's not what the bible says. If you have been reconciled to God, you have been given the ministry of reconciliation. That entails the spreading of the gospel message that all people can have peace with God, a relationship with God. The reason why you might not be good at it might be because you are out of practice.

### **ILLUSTRATION: Basketball**

I've mentioned before that I have the privilege of coaching high school basketball for our local homeschoolers. And one of the things that I've realized that while there is a natural talent that some kids have in basketball, any kid can become proficient in basketball skills if they practice at it. Benjamin Franklin once said, “Practice makes perfect.” Coach Vince Lombardi built on that statement and said, “Perfect practice makes perfect.” The point is that we are called to be heralders of the gospel and it takes practice.

Jesus said that these kinds of peacemakers will be called sons and daughters of God. And sons and daughters want others to be sons and daughters of

God. One of the ways you know that you have been rescued by God's love and grace is that you desire to see others rescued.

Do you have peace with God? Are you leading others to have peace with God? The third way we are peacemakers is that we...

### **C) Make Peace with Others.**

We are peacemakers when we make sure we are right with other people.

Perhaps you are here today and there is a family member that you are at odds with, and Thanksgiving just highlighted that fact. Maybe it's a friend and co-worker. Maybe it's your spouse. Maybe it is someone that has different political views than you. There is most likely someone that comes to our minds that we are at odds with.

The bible urges us in Romans 12:18, *“<sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”* Here's what that means. I value my relationships more than I value being right.<sup>iii</sup> So far as it depends on you, value relationship over being right. If I'm transparent, this is a hard one for me.

Practically this looks like saying things like, “I want to try to see things your way. I want to understand where you are coming from. I want to know why you have come to that position.” Those things are hard to say at times, aren't they?

Now, notice that Paul says, “If possible.” How many of you know that it is just impossible to be at peace with some people? There are some people that do not want peace. You can do everything right and the other person is just not going to have it.

Now, let me tell you what I think Paul is getting at here. He's talking to a very divided Church, the Church in Rome. They were divided theologically and racially. Sound familiar? So, what I think the practical nature of what Paul is driving at is to be known for making peace more than making your point.<sup>iv</sup>

Now, it is important to make clear here that making peace with all does not mean we sacrifice truth. It does not mean that there are zero disagreements. No, we cannot compromise the truth of God's Word. And we work through disagreements. Striving for peace does not mean sacrificing what is true and

pure. But it does mean that we are more known for striving for peace with others than making our point.

One Pastor I read this week said it this way, "God's people are to contend without being contentious, to disagree without being disagreeable, and to confront without being abusive."<sup>v</sup> This kind of life seeks to fulfill Ephesians 4:15, "<sup>15</sup> Rather, **speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.**"

So, make peace with God yourself, lead others to make peace with God, make peace with others, and fourthly, being a peacemaker means we...

#### D) Lead Others to Make Peace with Others.

We are, as peacemakers, to be champions of peace by way of encouraging others to seek peace in their relationships. The reconciliation ministry given to us urges us to foster reconciliation between people.

Let me mention some practical ways we should live this out. We should encourage our friends who are experiencing conflict in their marriage to work out the issues and not be quick to dissolve the marriage.

When a friend comes to you that has been offended by another friend, we should encourage them to apply the principles of Matthew 18 to their relationship. That is a 3-step process to making peace with others. Step 1, go directly to the person that offended you. If that doesn't work, step 2 is to take someone else with you. If that doesn't work, step three is to take it to the church. And if after all that it doesn't work, then you have done all that depends on you.

Another way this plays out is in family dynamics. If a family member voices an offense to you, we should encourage that person to address it with the family member.

If someone comes to you and says, "I think so and so is upset with me." Our encouragement to them should be to go to them and ask if there is anything that they have done that might be offensive. Even if you think you haven't done anything wrong.

I think the point that I am driving at here is that we should not be quick to take sides in conflict between others, instead, we should encourage the resolution of conflict that is brought to our attention. That's what it means to be a peacemaker.

So, we have answered the questions, what does it mean to be a peacemaker and how can we be peacemakers. Now, in the time we have left, let's turn our attention to the final Beatitude and answer the question...

### 3) What is the result of living according to the Upside Down Kingdom?

Throughout our study, I have highlighted the fact that the Beatitudes are not isolated statements, but that they build upon one another. We especially see that as the case with the final beatitude.

If you are a person that is poor in spirit, one that mourns the effects of sin, someone that is meek, a person that hungers and thirsts for righteousness, are a merciful person, one that is pure in heart, and one that seeks to make peace, then you are going to stick out like a sore thumb.

Pastor Skip Heitzig said to this, "Jesus is saying a few things... If you live this way, heaven will notice... people will notice... [and] hell will notice."<sup>vi</sup> Jesus said that when we live this way, we will be salt and light, and people will notice our good deeds and glorify our Father in Heaven. And that will anger the enemy. The result of that anger is the 8<sup>th</sup> and final Beatitude. Let's look at it.

Matthew 5:10-12. <sup>10</sup> "**Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** <sup>11</sup> "**Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.** <sup>12</sup> "**Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

All those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But notice something about this Beatitude. There is a triple blessing. Verse 10 and 11 differ but communicate the same idea. And in each verse there is blessing. And then in verse 12, there is cause to rejoice and be glad in light of the great reward of Heaven. That's the third blessing.

But notice that the persecution is because of a particular disposition. It's persecution for righteousness' sake and for aligning our lives with Christ. So,

the blessing is not reserved for those that do something contrary to the Scriptures and as a result are criticized for it. There is a difference between persecution and rightful consequence.

For example, those that perform sinful acts in the name of and under the guise of the Church ought to receive penalty. There, unfortunately, have been and continue to be leaders that seek to leverage the church for personal gain. There have been leaders that have taken advantage of other people seeking counsel. That is called spiritual abuse and should be penalized. That's not persecution, you see.

Persecution is the result of living a life of holiness that stands in stark contrast to the world, that the world's response to it is that of attack. Each of the Apostles experienced this. Most were martyred for their faith. That's persecution.

Perhaps you have felt the brunt of verbal abuse on account of your faith. Maybe you've been labeled narrow-minded and accused of lower intelligence because of your faith. That is the utterance of all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of your alignment to Jesus.

I wish, Church Family, that I could say that I see an end in sight for that kind of attack against God's people. But the truth is that I only see it increasing. It has existed since the fall of man. I don't say that to sound off some sort of alarm, but I don't want us to be surprised, beloved, when it comes. In fact, we should expect it.

But allow this Beatitude to serve as encouragement to you. Verse 12. ***Rejoice and be glad...*** The word Luke uses for this in his account of the Beatitudes is to literally leap for joy. Get fired up when you experience this.

Why? Two reasons. 1) ***"for your reward is great in heaven,*** [AND 2) you are in good company] ***for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.***

### **CONCLUSION:**

Listen, I told you when we started this series the reason why we worked through this passage. We live in a culture that is so upside down and it is easy for us to get caught up in the upside down thinking of this world. But we are called to be different! We are called to live according to God's Kingdom which

is actually right side up. We are to stand out, live in contrast, to the world's kingdom. Counting the cost of following Jesus, knowing that we will be persecuted for the life we live. But, that's okay. Because this world is not where our citizenship lies. We belong to The King and His Kingdom shall reign forevermore.

As we come to a time of response in our service this morning, I want to ask Jared and the band to come back up and lead us in that time of response. And as they are coming, I want you to consider how The Lord is stirring in your heart.

Are you a citizen of The Kingdom of Heaven? Do you have peace with God? The bible says that we are dead in our trespasses and sin, enemies of God. That's the bad news. But the good news is that we can have forgiveness of our sin and have eternal life through faith in Jesus as Lord. If you have never trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior, today you can and know that you have life eternal.

For those of you here today that have trusted Jesus as Lord, what does your life look like? Does it mirror the teachings of the Beatitudes? Is there an area of your life in which repentance is appropriate?

I want to challenge all of us here on something. This next week, in your personal time with The Lord, go back through the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:3-12. I want you to make note of the beatitudes in which you struggle. For example, if I'm honest, I struggle with each of these in certain areas of my life. But in particular, the hungering and thirsting for righteousness has really been heavy on my heart. Am I so desiring of holiness that matches the intensity of Jesus' words on that particular beatitude?

And remember the balance here. They are called the Beatitudes not the DOatitudes. I don't want us to make a list here to sort of check the box on each of these. But I want us to leverage Jesus' teaching here to highlight an area of our lives in which we need Jesus to have complete control. And when we surrender that to the Lordship of Christ, it will naturally become something we are instead of something we do.

But let's just allow The Lord is stir in our hearts this morning. [Pray]

## ENDNOTES:

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<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation of this sermon: John MacArthur, “*Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*”; David Guzik, “*Study Guide for Matthew 5*,” Blue Letter Bible; David Brown, “*The Gospel According to Matthew Commentary*,” Matthew 5:1-16; Gregory Brown, “*Blessed Are the Peacemakers (Matthew 5:9)*,” article published April 4, 2020, Bible.org; Gregory Brown, “*Blessed Are the Persecuted (Matthew 5:10-12)*,” article published April 4, 2020, Bible.org; Dolores Smyth, “*What Does the Phrase ‘Blessed are the Peacemakers; Mean?’*” article published May 26, 2020, Christianity.com; Got Questions, “*What Does ‘Blessed are the Peacemakers’ Mean?’*” article accessed November 22, 2021, gotquestions.org; Got Questions, “*What Does it Mean that Blessed are Those Who are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake?’*” article accessed November 22, 2021, gotquestions.org; Vance Pitman, *Radical Red Letters: “Blessed Are the Peacemakers,”* message preached November 1, 2020 at Hope Church Las Vegas; Vance Pitman, *Radical Red Letters: “Blessed Are Those Who Have Been Persecuted,”* message preached November 8, 2020 at Hope Church Las Vegas; Michael Gossett, *The Upside Down Life: “A Peaceful Chaos,”* preached October 31, 2021 at Green Acres Baptist Church; Michael Gossett, *The Upside Down Life: “Costly Living,”* preached November 7, 2021 at Green Acres Baptist Church; Skip Heitzig, *Expound, “Matthew 5:5-16,”* Calvary Church Albuquerque, October 19, 2011; J.D. Greear, *The Whole Story: “8 Ways to Be Happy, According to Jesus,”* Summit Church, September 25, 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> Outline is very similar in the following resources I read or listened to: John MacArthur, “*Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*,” Skip Heitzig, *Expound, “Matthew 5:5-16,”* Vance Pitman, *Radical Red Letters: “Blessed Are the Peacemakers,”* and Dolores Smyth, “*What Does the Phrase ‘Blessed are the Peacemakers Mean?’*”

<sup>iii</sup> Got this quip from J.D. Greear’s *The Whole Story: “8 Ways to Be Happy, According to Jesus,”* preached at Summit Church, September 25, 2016.

<sup>iv</sup> Vance Pitman mentioned this measure of peacemaking.

<sup>v</sup> John MacArthur, “*Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*”; page 217.

<sup>vi</sup> Skip Heitzig, *Expound, “Matthew 5:5-16,”* Calvary Church Albuquerque, October 19, 2011.