**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from October 25, 2020
Blessed Are the Peacemakers**

I love this time of year. I truly appreciate the 4 seasons that we have here in Pennsylvania.

As much as people can envy those that are living in Florida or California, Pennsylvania is beautiful. We can enjoy the richness and beauty of the four seasons here and appreciate God’s creation in the diversity of weather that He provides us.

And so this week, as I was preparing to write this message, I felt the need to first go for a long walk and just take it all in. I decided to drive over to Chestnut Park down this street and enjoyed God’s presence in a walk. And it was such a peace I felt as I took in God’s beautiful creation.

\*Friends, as you know, there are many anxieties and tensions in our world. Even this week, it is sad to not have our in-person gathering due to the exposure that took place at our Fall Fest.

But please know that, despite challenging circumstances we can have God’s peace.

The peace that Christ offers us is more powerfully than any circumstance. He gives us peace that passes understanding.

**Trans – And Jesus’ plan is not only for us to experience the peace that He alone can give, He desires for us to be makers of peace in this world as well**.

I love how the Lord always invites us to share in His work and participate in what He is doing in the world. And one of the ways this is done is when His followers choose to be peacemakers.

I invite you now to turn with me again to the Beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5:9

Let’s read these words together:

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

What is Jesus speaking about here? What does He mean when He makes this statement?

Jesus doesn’t specify if this refers to large-scale wars and international conflicts or conflict between individuals, so likely it can apply to any situation where there is hostility or conflict.

Jesus Himself was the perfect peacemaker. He did this first and foremost by choosing to offer His body and His blood as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

All who receive Him and what He did for them are made at peace with God. God chooses to not count our sins against us, because the way of peace has been made through Jesus.

And so Jesus was and is the great peace maker when it comes to healing humanity’s relationship with God.

But Jesus also was at world to promote peace between individuals. One way that He did this was through his choosing of the 12 apostles.

Jesus picked 12 people to be his close followers. For over 3 years they were with him, hearing His teachings and witnessing His miracles. They would be the leaders in the early church after Jesus would return to heaven.

It is interesting when you think about Jesus’ choices. He chose people from different backgrounds. There were fishermen, there was a tax collector, there was a revolutionary zealot and there were others of unknown background.

Consider this for a minute, Jesus could have chosen 12 fisherman or 12 tax collectors or whatever, but he chose to include people with different backgrounds and reputations. These disciples didn’t probably like each other at first, especially with Matthew the tax collector being included among the 12. Tax collectors had very bad reputations for being considered sellouts to the Roman oppressors and by their tendency to exploit people by over collecting, so to speak.

Jesus was seeking to make peace between these men as an example to all of us. ***And the important thing to remember about this beatitude is that Jesus calls us to be peacemakers, rather than peacekeepers.***

\*\*In other words, the blessing is “not to appeasers, but those who actively overcome evil with good.” (Leon Morris p. 100-101)

Being a peacemaker isn’t often easy. As people sought to make peace in relationships, sometimes He stirred the pot, sometimes He stretched people’s preconceptions, but He was always seeking to bring true peace to the hearts of women and men and children.

In contrast to Jesus, the Pharisees didn’t seek to be peacemakers, but peacekeepers. They were more concerned about preventing an uprising against the Romans, then truly opening their hearts to the truth that their Messiah had come. And that was one of the reasons that they sought to get rid of Jesus. And sadly, their rejection of Jesus prevented them from experiencing the true peace that Jesus sought to give them.

So friends, how do we live out this statement of blessing from Jesus?

The most important step in being a peacemaker is knowing the prince of peace. If we do not know Jesus and His peace, it will be very difficult for us to be makers of peace in this very broken world.

When we do not know Jesus, even beautiful days like the day that I went to the park to enjoy God’s creation, even those days will not be truly enjoyed.

Instead, we will be restless and unable to experience peace in our heart.

One of the leaders in the first few hundred years of the church was a man named Augustine. Augustine once wrote **“our hearts are restless, until they rest in You.”**

**(Augustine’s Confessions)** In other words, until we rest in the good news of Jesus and what He accomplished for us, we will not be able to find rest and peace in our soul.

But once we do know Jesus, the Lord invites us to be instruments of His peace in this world.

One way that we can be peacemakers is by sharing the good news of Jesus with others. We are the light of the world. You and I know the Prince of Peace and we are to share Him with others. We do this through acts of kindness and love --- such as our Fall Festival and other outreaches, but we also can do this through building new relationships and strengthening current relationships.

Sometimes this can stretch us a bit and take us out of our comfort zones. We can’t guarantee how people will respond, but love never fails.

If we are loving people and if we are seeking to share the good news of Jesus in some way, then it’s a success.

I love how Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5 – If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Did you catch that? You and I are called to be Christ’s ambassadors. God wants to work through us. We are to point people to the way of peace. And His Name is Jesus Christ. Each of us are called to this as God’s children.

**But besides building relationships with people and sharing the good news of Jesus, God also invites us to be peacemakers in relationships.**

In Philippians chapter 4, Paul urges two leaders in the church to be of one mind. They were both believers, but unfortunately were not seeing eye to eye over something. And Paul was urging them to be reconciled.

Sometimes Christians can become very divided over unessential things. Things like the color of the carpet in the church building or the temperature we choose to keep the church building. But seriously though, people can become contentions with one another over non-essential doctrines, like views of baptism or preferred translation or frequency of receiving Holy Communion.

I love the ecumenical spirit that John Wesley had. He was convinced about his views on various Scriptures, but he celebrated that the Body of Christ is bigger than his views on everything. And I think that is healthy.

Wesley sought to be a peacemaker. He wrote a sermon called *The Catholic Spirit.*

And the sermon is all about how Christians are to be at peace with one another, no matter their denomination. There is something beautiful about that. --- whether one is a Baptist or Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox or nondenominational or whatever.

There is something beautiful about that. We are united in Jesus Christ in His life, death, and resurrection for us.

So as Christians, we are peacemakers when we promote the unity of the global church. We are One in Jesus.

*I am not sure who first said it, someone wrote that the Church should be* ***“in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity”, meaning love.***

Brothers and Sisters, it can be difficult to live out this beatitude today in a country that is so divisive. But remember, our enemies are not flesh and blood. And remember, making peace does not mean that others have to totally agree with us. We can be at peace with others with very different views when we do not define them by their views, but as someone whom Christ loves.

When we live this way, we can be powerful instruments of peace. Christ has given us a peace that is greater than anything the world can give. We are His ambassadors.

Finally, Jesus said that those that live out this beatitude will be called children of God.

**While in one sense, every Christian is a child of God, when Christians are seeking to truly live out this beatitude, we are successfully living out our calling of being a daughter or son of Almighty God.**

In closing, I would like for us to pray a prayer written by a fellow Christian many years ago named Francis. He is known as St. Francis of Assisi and I believe his prayer captures Jesus’ heart well in this statement of blessing.

Let’s pray this together as we commit ourselves to being peacemakers in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

*So have an ecumenical spirit and seek to be a peace maker b/t Christians in the larger body of Christ.*

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992.

Carson, D.A. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: with the New International Version*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995.

Augustine, *The Confessions.*