VI. Blessed are those who <u>SEEK TO RECONCILE man to GOD and men to MEN</u>

("Blessed are the peacemakers. . ." v. 8)

"Scripture contains over 400 references to peace. . . The Bible opens with peace in the Garden of eden and closes with peace in eternity" (MacArthur, p. 209)

I saw a bumper sticker yesterday which said: "Imagine world peace"

There will be no true world peace until the prince of peace comes to establish it.

Man's nature since the fall has been opposed to peace (EX: Cain killed Abel).

Because man is basically selfish, conflict generally occurs whenever someone else gets in the way of what we want.

". . . the popular philosophy of the world, bolstered by the teachings of many psychologists and counselors, is to be put self first. But when self is first, peace is last." (MacArthur, p. 210)

Our natural, unregenerate proneness is toward war not peace; conflict not cooperation; violence not serenity; antagonism not unity; racial discrimination not social harmony; bloodshed not protection of life; hate not love.

The opposite of peace is turmoil, discord, confusion, fighting, and war.

Despite the clamor for peace (as evidenced by marches, rallies, protests, demonstrations, and riots), our society really is opposed to true peace.

Our society exalts violence and war. "The model man is not meek but macho. The model hero is not self-giving but self-seeking, not generous but selfish, not gentle but cruel, not submissive but aggressive, not meek but proud."

If you don't believe that man's natural tendency is bent toward violence, then ask why TV and the movies have so much blood and gore. People pay big money to go to a professional boxing match for the sheer enjoyment of seeing two men attempt to knock the brain out of each other. The main attraction of hockey games has become the brawls and fights.

Because so often our world is characterized by fighting and unloading

ammunition at others in a vain quest for sovereignty (power), the scarcity of peace has prompted someone to suggest that "peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload" (cited by MacArthur, p. 209).

In a fallen world where tempers flare easily, where selfish ambition quickly becomes the driving force, where many live looking for a fight, anyone can make war (fight). It takes a real man to make peace.

"Peacemaker" = eirene - peace; poieo - to make

"Peacemaker" - Note: Jesus is not saying: "Blessed are the peaceful"

To be peaceful is not always virtuous, if it is a non-confrontational, passive attitude that never seeks to correct, confront error, expose evil, or lovingly rebuke a straying brother.

Some people are so "peaceful" that they never say anything or do anything that might cause waves or stir up things.

Such passivity was not characteristic of our Lord Jesus, nor is it expected of us. We will cause waves when we beam as light, sting as salt (v. 13-16).

To be a "peacemaker" is simply to be a maker of peace; someone who does more than talk about peace, someone who does more than promote peace; rather, he produces peace.

A peacemaker is a "bridge-builder" - he himself acts as a mediator as he stands in between the two people at odds with each other, stretching out his hands as it were and grasping both parties and pulling them together.

A story is told of a couple at a divorce hearing who were arguing back and forth before the judge, accusing each other and refusing to take any blame themselves. Their little four-year-old boy was terribly distressed and confused. Not knowing what else to do, he took his father's hand and his mother's hand and kept tugging until he finally pulled the hands of his parents together (cited by MacArthur, p. 213).

A "peacemaker" is one who realizes that some fellow Christian is struggling and

is at war with God's will, but because he is controlled by the spirit of God he says just the right words, at the right time, in the right way, and restores the erring brother.

A "peacemaker" knows about a marriage that is going to fall apart, and rather than passively doing nothing, he prays fervently for the husband and wife, then does all that he can to mend the problem.

A "peacemaker" sees a brother get bitter against another and seeks to replace the bitter attitude with a sweet one.

A "peacemaker" senses disunity among the brethren and seeks to unite them around Christ and His cause.

Being a "peacemaker" requires involvement, work, concern, spiritual diplomacy (divine wisdom).

A Godly peacemaker does not pursue peace at the expense of purity! He will not compromise convictions to maintain or restore peace. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable..." (James 3:17)

NOTE: In the Beatitude context, purity in heart precedes being a peacemaker (cp. Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, p. 155)

Peace cannot be divorced from holiness. "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10)

Peace cannot co-exist with wickedness. "There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord" (Is. 48:22)

A "peacemaker" does not believe in "peace at any price" nor protecting the "status quo" if it is sinful.

A true peacemaker: confronts problems and seeks to solve them.

*Follow God's principles for peacemakers:

How can you become a "peacemaker"?

1) You must belong to the Maker of peace

True peace with others begins with peace toward God

(II Cor. 5:18-20)

You can't give what you don't have.

"God is not the author of confusion but of peace."

Being a "peacemaker" is a very noble occupation.

Peacemakers are truly Godly people - Reason: They take after their Heavenly Father, who is called, "The God of peace" (Rom. 15:33; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9).

Because God gave His Son, you can now have peace with God (ILLUS: Peace Child by Don Richardson, cited by MacArthur, p. 213-214)

2) You need to love God and others

"Speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15)

Rom. 14:19 - "Follow after the things which make for peace

Eph. 4:3 - "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace"

Heb. 12:14 - "Follow peace with all men"

3) You must be righteous (you can't sincerely call people to righteousness if you are not)

Basically, if you fulfill the first 5 beatitudes, you qualify for # 6

4) You need courage to get involved

(Willing to confront, not avoid all conflicts)

Beatitude # 7 (persecution) is sometimes the result as you are misunderstood and your work is misinterpreted.

We must follow matthew 18:15-17.

"If it be possible. . . live peaceably with all men" (Ro. 12:18).

It is not always possible (Mt. 10:34; cp. Lk. 12:51). "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

5) Depend upon God for wisdom

Only those who "make peace" will produce righteous fruit

SEE: James 3:13 - 18

Ja. 3:18 - "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

This verse means that the fruit that righteousness produces can only be sown by peacemakers.

"Sown in peace" - the manner in which we speak is just as important as the message we speak.

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

Col. 4:5-6 - "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

> Eph. 4:2-3 - "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
>
> "Right relationships are the soil in which the reward of righteousness alone can grow. . . nothing good can ever grow in an atmosphere where men are at variance with each other" (Barclay, James, p. 62)

The best peacemaker is the Godly mother, who resolves her children's daily quarrels.

--She hears both sides of the story

--She encourages them to admit wrong

--She encourages them to ask God's forgiveness

--She encourages them to ask the person they wronged for forgiveness and make restitution if needed.

You cannot be carnal and be a peacemaker. Carnal people tend to be factious, divisive, clichish (EX: the church of Corinth - I Cor. 1).

"They shall be called the children of God" - The blessing of being a peacemaker is the impression you will make on the watching world. They will know you are different, that you belong to God, by the peace that you make between the brethren.

A peacemaker realizes that when God's people are unjustifiably at odds with each other, they are destroying the work of Christ and the testimony of Christ.

My whole life as a Christian and pastor is to be a "peacemaker."

--To see the lost gain peace with God (Rom. 5:1)

--To see the saved know the peace of God (Phil. 4:7)

--To see those who are at odds with each other gain peace with each other.

The future ministry of Elijah (like that of John the Baptist 0 Lk. 1:17) will be to "turn the heart of the father to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:6)

We need people who are. . .

--Christian "firemen" - they don't start fires, they put them out

--Christian "architects" - they don't plan evil schemes, but plan for God-honoring interpersonal relationships

--Christian "carpenters" - they don't tear apart relationships but build them.

The hymnwriter said it best:

"Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace!
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy. . ."