

A. Matthew 5:1-12 (NRSV) When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. {2} Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: {3} "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {4} "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. {5} "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. {6} "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. {7} "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. {8} "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. {9} "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. {10} "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {11} "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. {12} Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

II. The Peace Challenge

A. One night when Hannah was in middle school, she was working on a social project.

1. Out of curiosity I asked her what she was doing.
2. She answered, "I'm writing a report on the condition of the world and how to achieve world peace."
3. I responded, "Isn't that a pretty big challenge?"
4. "No," she answered, "don't worry. There are three of us in the class working on it!"
5. That really didn't happen, but it reminds us that peace seems like an easy state to achieve when you are young, but the older you get the more cynical you become and only politicians and beauty queens seem to know how to achieve peace, and the rest of us have given up.

B. Do you remember when you had that young idealism about peace?

C. My father was an aerospace engineer who spent most of his career working for a major corporation in their defense company.

1. As a child I wanted to follow in his foot steps, and even in the early years of college I still had a passion for engineering and particularly the aerospace industry, but as the war in Viet Nam was in the news daily, I began to feel conflicted about my decisions. My dad and I often argued, I mean argued about the war, and I felt very conflicted as many of my friends took antiwar positions, while I knew my college tuition was being paid by government contracts to missile systems largely designed to defend our country, but partly used for offensive strikes.
2. Even my church youth group was divided. Half would support movements of pacifism and the other half rallied around the family of one of our members whose husband was missing in action for several months and would be a POW until the end of the Viet Nam war.

D. Even though Jesus speaks of peace in the Sermon on the Mount, He is quick to point out that there is a lack of it in the world and that it is a part of the human condition.

1. *Luke 19:37-46 (NRSV) As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, {38} saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" {39} Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." {40} He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." {41} As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, {42} saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. {43} Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. {44} They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God." {45} Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; {46} and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers."*

E. General Douglas MacArthur aboard the USS Missouri at the Japan surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay September 2, 1945

"Today the guns are silent... the skies no longer rain death... the seas bear only commerce... men everywhere walk upright in the sunlight. The entire world is quietly at peace...." A new era is upon us. Even the lesson of victory itself brings with it profound concern both for our future security and the survival of civilization. The destructiveness of the war potential, through progressive advances in scientific discovery, has in fact now reached a point which revises the traditional concept of war.... "Men since the beginning of time have sought peace, (but) military alliances, balance of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war.

"Military alliance, balances of power, League of Nations all in turn failed. . . . We have had our last chance. If we do not now devise some greater and more equitable system Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advance in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh."

F. Peace is obviously important to Jesus, that is why he tells us {9} *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."*

III. Jesus Peace: Not just the absence of conflict but a state of well being

A. *John 14:27 (NRSV) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*

B. *John 16:33 (NRSV) I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!"*

C. The Word for You Today, June July August 2007 Pg. 19 "Peace is an inner 'knowing' that your actions are approved by God."

D. We have a member who is going through chemotherapy and in an email this week she shared this: I have had an unpleasant week-end from the chemo, but things are a little better today. I know for sure they could be a whole lot worse. I also know I will be better tomorrow. I feel sad for those who don't have the peace I have.

E. *Colossians 3:15-17 (NRSV) And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. {16} Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. {17} And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

IV. Jesus Peace: Not passive, but active. Not peace loving, not even peace keeping, but peace making.

A. *Romans 14:17-19 (NRSV) For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. {18} The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. {19} Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.*

B. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported that firefighters in Genoa, Texas, were accused of deliberately setting more than forty destructive fires. When caught, they stated, "We had nothing to do. We just wanted to get the red lights flashing and the bells clanging." The job of firefighters is to put out fires, not start them. The job of Christians is to help resolve conflict not start more of it. -- Gerald Cornelius, Azle, Texas, Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 1.

C. Fred Smith, Peacemaking is an action that springs out of an attitude., Leadership, Vol. 5, no. 1.

D. The Word for You Today, June July August 2007 Pg. 25 "...peacemakers are big picture thinkers; they're governed by grace, not petty opinion or temporary conditions.

E. Civil Rights: Thomas Gilmore

F. Civil Disobedience: Dietrich Bonhoeffer

G. Memorial Day Video

1. The first Memorial Day was observed in 1865 by liberated slaves at the historic race track in Charleston. The site was a former Confederate prison camp as well as a mass grave for Union soldiers who had died while captive. A parade with thousands of freed blacks and Union soldiers was followed by patriotic singing and a picnic.
2. Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, National Commander of the Army, and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all of the northern states.

The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war.

It was first called "Decoration" Day and though the phrase "Memorial Day" was first used in 1882 it was not declared the official name until 1967

H. As a part of our observance, I would like those here today who are on active duty or have family members serving to come forward and to be recognized.

I. Also I want to invite those who have had a family member die while serving or has suffered any injury.

J. Finally I would like all those who have served come and lay hands on them and these people and to lead us in prayer for them.

V. Heavenly Father, as we remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom, we think of how they have followed in the footsteps of your son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Please hold our service men and women in your strong arms. Cover them with your sheltering grace and presence as they stand in the gap for our protection.

We also remember the families of our troops, and ask for your unique blessings to fill their homes and your peace, provision and strength to fill their lives.

May the members of our armed forces be filled with courage to face each day and may they trust in the Lord's mighty power to accomplish each task. Let our military brothers and sisters feel our love and support. In the name of Jesus. Amen. By Mary Fairchild, About.com

VI. Jesus Peace: Access to God brings Reconciliation

A. *Romans 5:1-2 (NRSV) Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, {2} through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.*

B. *Colossians 1:19-20 (NRSV) For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, {20} and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*

C. *Ephesians 2:17-22 (NRSV) So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; {18} for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. {19} So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, {20} built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. {21} In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; {22} in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.*

D. Near and Far

E. Jews and Gentiles

F. God and Humanity

VII. Peacemakers do the work of God!

- A. William Barclay writes Hebrew is not rich in adjectives, and often when Hebrew wishes to describe something, it uses, not an adjective, but the phrase son of (or child of)...plus an abstract noun. Hence a man may be called a son of peace instead of a peaceful man... This Beatitude says: {9} *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God;* what it means is: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are doing a God-like work. The *one* who makes peace is engaged on the very work which the God of peace is doing.
- B. The work of Peacemaking is on us. In times like these we struggle as followers of Christ to make sense of the world in which we live.
- C. Jesus warned His followers about the tedious nature of the world and the challenges of picking up the Cross and following Him.
- D. *Mark 13:7-8 (NRSV) When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. {8} For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.*
- E. The world in which we live is not peaceful. It is turbulent and treacherous.
- F. We are not called to sit by cross legged and meditate, we are called to be Peacemakers. It is the natural outgrowth of our relationship with God as our Father.
- G. *Romans 8:19-23 (NRSV) For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; {20} for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope {21} that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. {22} We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; {23} and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.*
- H. Our Outreach team has decided to send \$5,000 to help with our United Methodist Relief Team in Myanmar (Burma).
- I. Offering for Relief to Myanmar and China Earthquake