



## **Foundations: The Seventh Blessing**

**Matthew 5:9 (AFBC 10/21/18)**

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

At the heart of the Gospel is reconciliation. Love is the “greatest of these,” as we all know.

But what is love but the primary motivation for reconciliation to happen. This is true in our relationship with God, and it’s also true in our relationships with one another.

For me, the definitive text for this is found in **II Corinthians 5:17-20 (RSV):**

**<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. <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> So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

That’s powerful; but before Paul explained Christ’s mission and ours in this way, Jesus had already pointed to this purpose for our lives with His seventh beatitude: **Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9).**

To reconcile, you see, is to “make peace.” Jesus says that those who make peace are the children of God. So, friends, whose child are you?

When I was growing up, people would often tell me that I was Roy Thomason’s boy. I already knew that, of course; but what they were saying is that I looked like and acted like my father. That never bothered me—I took it as a compliment.

I have been caught off guard a couple of times in recent years, though, when on first glancing into a mirror, I thought I was seeing dear old Dad. But I guess I’m okay with that too—I don’t really have much of a choice!

Have you ever been told “You’ve got your Daddy’s eyes... or your Momma’s nose... or maybe Uncle Bob’s chin?” I heard my mother tell the story more than a few times about the woman who walked up to her in a grocery store, looked at little two-year-old Jimmy (yours truly), and said, “Lady, I don’t know who you are, but that’s Roy Thomason’s boy.”

There seems to be a strong family resemblance. At least in my case, Dad marked me for life!

Evidently, though, the Thomason genes are pretty strong. I know it’s true because in years past I’ve heard Pam say to our children: “You’re just like your father!” On occasion, given the way she said it, I wasn’t entirely sure she thought that was a good thing!

To be fair, though, I’ve occasionally accused her of being like her mother in some unflattering way. The more I’ve realized that the heart of the Gospel is reconciliation and peacemaking, however, the less I’ve made that particular mistake!

Jesus said again, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.” Now, the Bible tells us that Jesus looked JUST LIKE... HIS Daddy. He lived among us as the exact representation—the spitting image--of the Heavenly Father.

Now, such a perfect resemblance to God is not something that we can achieve; but our Lord does make it clear that if we are God’s children, there will be a family resemblance. And that resemblance will be striking enough for somebody to notice it and to actually call the likes of you and me... “children of God.”

Does it please you to be recognized as God’s child? It should. So how is it that people like you and me can look enough like our Heavenly Father for others to take note of the resemblance?

Jesus tells us how this happens. It’s when we are “peacemakers.” It’s peacemakers who receive the blessing of being called “the children of God.”

When we make peace, we look like the Heavenly Father—because that’s what He’s up to in the world. He’s making peace, reconciling the world unto Himself! So, who do we look like?

Curious thing about peace—it's sort of like "love" in that almost everyone believes it to be a good thing. Even the blondest of beauty contestants try to fit "world peace" into their answers. But isn't it strange, given this overwhelming affirmation of the importance of peace, there's so little of it in our world.

The evening news is filled with phrases like "escalating violence," "renewed nuclear testing," "increased military funding," "proliferation of terrorist activities," and the like.

This is not what our Heavenly Father wants us to look like, friends. He desires peace among His people. Do you realize the importance God places on peace? If you know His Book, you do.

Psalm 34:14 says "Turn from evil and do good;" and then, to tell us how to go about this turning and doing, it says, "seek peace and pursue it." "Blessed are the peaceMAKERS"—PURSUE peace.

All through the writings of the prophet Isaiah, we find the message of peace. Listen to just a few examples: **Isaiah 2:4-- "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."**

**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.**

**Isaiah 26:3—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."**

**Isaiah 53:5—"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."**

As Christians, these passages point us straight to the Lord--His life and ministry among us, and His sacrifice for us. Jesus came to BRING peace, His message was ABOUT peace, He died on the cross to PURCHASE our peace.

At His birth, the angels announced, "**Peace, good will to men.**" Jesus forgave sinners and said to them, "**Go in peace.**" In his last moments with his disciples before facing the cross, He said,

**“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you...”** After the resurrection, He greeted them with **“Peace be unto you.”**

In **Romans 10:15**, the message of Jesus Christ is called the **“Gospel of peace”** and accepting it brings to our lives **“the peace of God that passes all understanding.” (Philippians 4:7)** Are you seeing a pattern here—God’s pattern for our lives?

Look in the hearts of the children of God and you’ll find peace. Look at what the children of God are doing and you’ll find them making peace. And if you’re seeing these peacemakers with spiritual eyes, you’ll also be able see their resemblance to the Heavenly Father.

**1.** There is so much related to this beatitude, but I’ve boiled it down to just two things--and I’ll try to state them as simply as I know how. The first is this: **PEACEMAKERS RESEMBLE THE HEAVENLY FATHER. TROUBLEMAKERS DON’T**

We’ve talked about some of the challenges we face in trying to live by the teachings of Jesus. Here’s another big challenge. As Christians, we’re called to be peacemakers in a world that’s filled with troublemakers! This is our calling, but some Christians have never gotten the message!

One day in the Peanuts comic strip, Lucy says to Charlie Brown: “I hate everything. I hate everybody. And I hate the whole wide world.” Charlie Brown is concerned: “But I thought you had inner peace.” “I do,” Lucy responds, “but I also have outer obnoxiousness!”

Lucy hasn’t quite discovered the blessing found in the seventh beatitude. She’s more likely to make trouble than peace. She doesn’t remind anyone of God, and nobody mistakes her for being His child. Given the way she acts, there’s no resemblance.

Who knows what motivates people to be troublemakers? Is it a power trip? Insecurity? Maybe it’s a search for significance—even if it means being a significant pain?

Whatever it is, troublemakers are gifted at breaking down relationships and creating division. To do this, they must always put themselves above everyone else that’s being affected.

This has been going on a long time, friends. Listen to how Paul warned the church in Rome about troublemakers: **“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.” (Romans 16:17-18)**

How much trouble arises from people talking ABOUT others instead of simply talking TO them? In a former pastorate, I went to a respected lay leader in that church to ask if he had heard a rumor about another member. It seems it had been making the rounds for a while, but I had just heard it from another member who was genuinely concerned and wanted to help.

I, in turn, went to this respected leader—I’ll call him John—to see if he knew anything about the matter and to ask him to go with me to the person in question. John had not heard the rumor either, which surprised me a bit given his standing in the church.

But when I expressed this, John pointed out something. He said, “Jim, have you ever noticed that it’s always the same people who hear this kind of stuff? They don’t tell me because they know I’ll hold them accountable for whether it’s true or not. I’ll also get to the bottom of it; and, if there’s a problem, I’ll try to fix it—instead of just passing it along, whether it’s true or not.”

John, you see, is a peacemaker—not a troublemaker. We have to be careful with troublemakers, friends. There’s an old proverb that says: “Whoever gossips to you will also gossip about you.” There’s truth in that.

This is why some are reluctant to confront troublemakers—they can turn on you, and often do. Peacemakers, though, find the courage to confront the source of the trouble once they determine that this is what’s needed most—as it so often is.

**2.** This brings me to the second observation—which is really a challenge for us that grows out of this beatitude: **PEACEMAKERS RESEMBLE THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER. SO BE ONE!** Be a peacemaker. As a follower of Jesus, be about the ministry of reconciliation. Be a peacemaker!

If this is our aim, and I trust it is, then how do we get started? Just as troublemaking is a selfish endeavor, peacemaking is an unselfish act. We have to get ourselves out of the way to do it.

Speaking of his new life as a Christian, Paul said, **“I have been crucified with Christ--and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” (Galations 2:20)**

The more we get ourselves out of the way so that Christ can live within us, the better our peacemaking becomes and the more others will be able to see Christ in us.

Or, to put this another way, until we come to Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior, we really don't have that peace of God within us so that we can share it with someone else.

We cannot *be* peacemakers until first we are *at peace* with God. That's when we start resembling our Lord, and people begin to notice whose children we are. So, if we really want to be peacemakers--what will this look like?

Part of peacemaking is passive in nature. We live peacefully by “not causing conflict.” The Apostle James, for instance, tells us to watch our tongues. “Everyone,” he says, “should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry...” (Js. 1:19) Simply following that advice could avoid a lot of conflict.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, Paul tells us to love sincerely, to live in harmony with all, to never repay evil for evil or seek to take revenge. Then he says this: **“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Rom. 12:18)**

Often, this is all that's required—just don't go out looking for trouble or trying to pick a fight, and you'll be okay. There are those times, however, when in spite of your best efforts to avoid it, trouble will still come your way.

This is when holding your tongue and trying not to rock the boat won't be enough. Instead, you have to follow the teachings of Jesus and become a peaceMAKER.

Peacemaking is active. It takes initiative. It's done in love, but it is assertive and even confrontational when this is what's required.

Think about this. When President Reagan stood at the Berlin Wall and said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," was he being a troublemaker or a peacemaker? The point is this:

As followers of Jesus Christ, there are times when we must confront divisiveness and dishonesty and injustice—and even deal with plain old everyday disagreements--in the spirit of peaceMAKING. We have to be proactive. We have to tear down walls. That's peacemaking. It's what God's children *do*.

On a personal level, if you have anything against your brother or sister, or your spouse or child, it's always your responsibility as a Christian to take the initiative in seeking reconciliation. It's your job to get that wall down and restore the peace.

Listen: you'll never be any more Christlike, you'll never resemble your Heavenly Father more closely than when you're taking the initiative and tearing down a wall of division! Hear these words from Ephesians:

**"For he (Christ) himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.... His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near." (Ephesians 2:14-17)**

We can be troublemakers and barrier builders, or we can be peacemakers who tear down the walls that divide. Either way, there's only one way to be a child of God: Love peace. Desire peace. Be at peace with God and one another.

And if anything gets in the way of peace, be the person, the child of God, who lovingly and graciously, but also purposefully and persistently, tears down that wall and makes peace.

This is the seventh blessing: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God." Friends, let's so live that others can see the resemblance!