

Keeping Our Peace

From Brokenness to Blessing #7 - Pastor Gary Combs - September 17, 2023 - Matthew 5:9; John 14:15-27

INTRO: Good morning church! We are continuing our series entitled, “From Brokenness to Blessing.” The series is based on the eight blessings or beatitudes that Jesus declared in His Sermon on the Mount. These eight blessings of Jesus turn worldly wisdom upside down!

This week we’re looking at the 7th beatitude:

Matthew 5:9 (ESV) “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

To be “blessed” means to be supremely happy, completely content. Blessed to the max (*macro*)! In other words, Jesus said that a major aspect of the blessed life is being at peace with God, with yourself and with others. When we live in this peace, we become peacemakers in this world, acting as God’s ambassadors of peace and being recognized as God’s children.

As we look back over the previous beatitudes, we see how we have come to this place:

- “**Blessed are the poor in spirit**” - We admit our brokenness. We admit we are powerless and need help.
- “**Blessed are those who mourn**” - We release our grief to God, believing He has the power to help.
- “**Blessed are the meek**” - We surrender our control to God, committing our way to Christ.
- “**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness**” - We confess our sins and ask God to set us free from our feelings of past guilt, so that we might walk in freedom and victory.
- “**Blessed are the merciful**” - We recognize our continual need for God’s mercy and grace asking God to transform us into people of mercy and forgiveness.
- “**Blessed are the pure in heart**” - We ask God to help us forgive those who’ve hurt us and make amends for harm we’ve done to others that we might have a pure heart fully focused on pleasing God.

Now we’re beginning to move from **receiving** salvation, freedom, forgiveness and peace from God for ourselves to **becoming** those who are God’s peacemakers, His children, offering His peace to this world.

What is this peace that God offers through Jesus? It is more than the absence of hostility. It speaks of a deeper peace, or as the Jews call it, “shalom.” This peace that God offers means a sense of quiet, of harmony with others, a sense of security and well-being, wholeness, prosperity, a tranquil state of the soul without anxiety or fear.

Need: Yet according to the National Institutes of Health, anxiety is on the increase in America, with young adults ages 18-25 showing the most notable reported increases in levels of anxiety and worry. 37%, or two-in-five, adults say they feel more anxious than they were this time last year. This rise in national anxiety corresponds with a rise in substance abuse. According to healthcare specialists at a recovery clinic, “Anxiety is a significant factor in many addictions. The relationship between anxiety and addiction is typically established when people turn to drugs and alcohol to relieve the symptoms of anxiety. Unfortunately, prolonged substance abuse damages the brain and body mechanisms that help relieve the symptoms of anxiety, and as a result, anxiety increases over time.”

Trans: How do we overcome our anxiety, our worries and fears, to receive and thrive in God’s peace?

BODY: In John’s gospel, Jesus prepared His disciples to face His soon departure by giving them His peace and teaching them to how to continually keep themselves thriving in His peace. We can receive the peace of Christ and continually to keep it. How can we receive and keep our peace in Christ? The text gives **three ways** we can receive and keep our peace in Christ?

Read text: John 14:15-27 (ESV) ¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” ²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. ²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

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RECEIVING AND KEEPING THE PEACE OF CHRIST...

1. We continually depend on His life as our source of peace.

EXP: (15-20, 27) First, notice the purpose of Christ's words here. He is preparing them for His departure that they might not be "troubled" (27) or "afraid" (27), but continually live in the "peace" (27) He gives them. How do we do this? It begins by loving Him: "If you love me..." (15). And finding our life in Him: "Because I live, you also live" (19).

"**Love**" (15) (ἀγαπάω, *agapaō*) - to love, beloved, the unconditional love of God

"**Keep**" (15) (τηρέω, *tēreō*) (4x) - to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard, observe, reserve: to hold fast.

"**Another Helper**" (16) (παράκλητος, *paraklētos*) - another of the same kind, Comforter, Advocate, Helper

"**Spirit of truth**" (17) (πνεῦμα, *pneuma*) (ἀλήθεια, *alētheia*) - See John 16:13...

John 16:13 (ESV) When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

"**Dwells with you**" (16-17) (μένω, *menō*) - to remain, abide, not to depart to continue to be present, to be held, kept, continually. Same word used in verse 16, "with you forever." Now, the Spirit is our source.

"**Will see me**" (19) (θεωρέω, *theōreō*) - to be a spectator, look at, behold, to view attentively, take a view of, survey. "The words may indeed have their first fulfillment in the appearances of the forty days (comp. Acts 10:41), but these appearances were themselves steps in the education which was leading the disciples from a trust in the physical to a trust in the spiritual presence." (Ellicott)

"**Because I live** (19) - Christ's resurrected, eternal life is the source of our life and our peace.

"**Will know**" (20) (γινώσκω, *ginōskō*) - to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of. "When you see me raised, you will finally "know" (be convinced) that I AM one with the Father.

ARG: **Christ is our peace!**

Ephesians 2:13-14 (NKJV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace...

ILL: **Jesus says "peace be still" to the storm.**

Mark 4:35-41 (NKJV) 35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

APP: Will you decide to continually depend on Jesus and His abundant life given through the Spirit as the source of true peace? How? By setting aside a daily time to pray asking His Spirit to examine you to see where your heart is troubled or afraid. Wherever you aren't at peace, that's where He wants to direct you to give it to Him in exchange for His peace.

2. We continually keep His Word as our light for peace.

EXP: (21-24) Do you want to know what true peace looks like? Do you want to continually keep yourself in His peace? Then stay in His Word. Christ says, "Keep my word" (23).

"**Keep**" (15, 21,23,24) (τηρέω, *tēreō*) (4x) - to attend to carefully, to guard, observe, to hold fast to.

"**Manifest**" (21,22) (ἐμφανίζω, *emphanizō*) (2x) - Lit., "to bring to light." Manifest, show, make known. Christ was made manifest at His resurrection. He manifests himself to us by His Word and His Spirit.

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“Make our home with him” (23) - “Our” speaks of the Triune God. The Father, the Son and the Spirit will abide in us as we “love” Christ and “keep” His Word.

ARG: **Loving and keeping God’s Word brings lasting peace.**

Psalm 119:165 (GW) There is lasting peace for those who love your teachings. Nothing can make those people stumble.

God’s Word is a light to our path, showing the way of peace.

Psalm 119:105 (ESV) Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

ILL: God’s Word is like a map or GPS. It shows us how to get back on the road to peace.

APP: You can’t keep God’s Word without knowing it. Do you have a habit of personal Bible reading and study? Keeping His Word, we must know it and we must also do it. When you read, ask the Lord to speak to you and help you apply it to your heart. How much should you read? Until God speaks. Keeping His Word gives you the light to keep His peace in your life.

3. We continually rely on His promise to live in His peace.

EXP: (25-27) What has He promised? His peace? Yes! And even more, His Spirit! Look at v26. He promises that the Father will “send” the Holy Spirit. And He promises us His “peace” (27).

“Holy Spirit” (26) - Jesus finally identifies the “Helper” (16, 26) and the “Spirit of Truth” (17) as the 3rd Person of the Trinity. He will teach and remind us of all things of Jesus.

“My peace” (27) - Not just a wish, but a real impartation of peace to His hearers. When Christ said, “Shalom” it was more than a greeting or goodbye, it was a gift! He gives us His peace! Peace with God. Peace within and peace without. A peace that isn’t easily disturbed, but is quickly returned to.

“Not as the world” (27) - “The Roman Empire achieved its pax Romana of Augustus by the sword, but here Jesus proclaims a peace far different from the way of the world” (Borchert, *John NAC*).

“Let not...troubled...afraid” (27) - to be agitated, troubled, restless, anxious and afraid. Jesus returns to how ch.14 began...

John 14:1-3 (NKJV) ¹ “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

ARG: **Turn your worries into prayers!**

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV) ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

ILL: Anxiety is your body’s natural fear response. This is known as the fight-or-flight response. Your body reacts in physical and mental ways to prepare you to either fight or run from a threatening situation. Shortness of breath is one of those responses. You may feel like you can’t catch your breath, tightness in your chest, or like you’re suffocating or hungry for air.

A practical tip is to focus on slowing down your breathing. Some call this “mindfulness.” An even better tip is to focus on breathing in and out with the Spirit of God, asking Him to give you the peace of Christ.

APP: Put aside your former habits of self-medication or distraction to find peace. Learn to rely on the Spirit of Christ to give you true peace. Develop a new habit of daily prayer, Bible reading, and dependence on the Spirit’s power for living.

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CONCLUSION: Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." Receive His peace and learn to live it out today!

This is where our **Celebrate Recovery** ministry comes in. It's a place where you can spend time with other believers who are learning to RECEIVE AND KEEP THEMSELVES IN THE PEACE OF CHRIST so that they are able to walk in freedom.

In **CR** we lead people through 8 steps to recovery. Here are the first six we've covered thus far:

R.E.C.O.V.E.R.Y.: (8 principles based on the Beatitudes)

R **realize I'm not God.** I admit I'm powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable. *This is the "reality" step. "I've got a problem. I need help."*

E **arnestly believe that God exists.** I believe that I matter to him and that he alone has the power to help me recover. *The "hope" step. "God's the answer."*

C **onsciously choose to commit.** I commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control. *The "commitment" step. "I'm giving my life to Jesus"*

O **penly examine and confess my faults.** I confess my sins to God, to myself, and to someone I trust. *The Housecleaning Step. "I'm casting my sin, my shame, my guilt on my Savior Jesus Christ!"*

V **oluntarily submit to make changes by God's power.** I submit myself to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects. *The Transformation Step. "I'm asking God to transform my character to be like Jesus."*

E **valuate all my relationships.** I will offer forgiveness to those who've hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others except when to do so would harm them or others. *The Reconciliation Step. "I'm asking God to help me be reconciled in all my relationships."*

R **eserve a daily time with God.** I will set aside time every day with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and gain power to do it. *The Maintenance Step. "I'm learning to depend on God's Spirit and His Word daily to maintain my peace and power to live for Him."*

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOU: Will you? And having done so, will you decide to get real with other believers about your own hurts, habits, and hangups in one of our Community Groups or in our Celebrate Recovery ministry?

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR OTHERS: We really need this ministry to thrive in our church and for our community. As I said before, anxiety and addiction are at all time highs in our country and in our city. We need your support for CR. Will you go out and talk to the people at our CR table in the lobby today and consider signing up to serve. We need help with set up, childcare, tech team, coffee service, etc. Will you help us provide this important ministry to our community?

Will you ...

- 1) Depend on Christ as your source for peace?
- 2) Keep His Word as your light, your map for peace?
- 3) Rely on His promised Spirit and presence to live in peace?

Let's pray.