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Sermon Notes

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The Character Which Advances Christ's Kingdom: The Beatitudes, pt. 4

Matthew 5:9-12

I. Peace in our time? Chamberlain or Christ

When I was a child, I had the opportunity to swim in the azure blue waters of the Florida keys... my dad bought me a diving mask, and I delighted in looking through the mask at all the tiny little fish darting in and out of the rocks near the shore... but I found when I swirled my hand near the bottom, the silt that came up ruined the view for minutes at a time

Isaiah likened the heart of a person apart from the knowledge of God to this same thing:

Isaiah 57:20-21 "But the wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked."

Around the year 390 A.D., one of the greatest Christian minds of all time was created when Augustine gave his life to Christ. In his *Confessions*, he later wrote of that moment: "You have made us for yourself, O God, and the heart of man is restless until it finds its rest in you..." The restless human heart seeks for the one thing the world can never give... Peace. The sinful human heart soon exports its strife to others, and conflicts lead to wars.

On _____, Sir Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of England, declared that his treaty with Adolph Hitler & Nazi Germany had gained "peace in our time." Less than _____ months later, Europe was plunged into the bloodiest and most destructive war in human history. The modern United Nations now succeeds no better than the Post WWI League of Nations does... Kosovo and other hot spots show no lessening to the tensions; even more difficult is the ever increasing tensions in people's private lives... more and more divorces, more and more teen suicides... all testify to the lack of personal peace

Jesus also claims to give us peace... "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 be afraid." Can Jesus actually give us "Peace in our time?"

He says He can... and He's going to use people like you and me to do it!

II. The Beatitudes: Persecuted Peacemakers

A. Blessed are the peacemakers (5:9)

1. Peace at the Alpha & Omega

Started peaceful at Eden, will end peaceful in the New heaven & earth God will set up... BUT in between, nothing but strife

2. Human history: turmoil & strife... the key is the HUMAN HEART

a. Eph. 2:3 Lightning rods for wrath

Ephesians 2:3 "Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

Illus. Benjamin Franklin & lightning rods

b. Isa. 57:21 No peace for wicked

Isaiah 57:20-21 "But the wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked."

c. lived out throughout history

d. lived out in every human relationship

3. Christ: The Prince of Peace

a. Christ **Practiced** Peace: Jn. 14:27

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives."

b. Christ **Preached** Peace: Eph. 2:17

Ephesians 2:17 "He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near."

c. Christ **Purchased** Peace: Rom. 5:1

Rom. 5:1 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

4. Peacemaking: The Essence of the Gospel

a. the commission

Jn. 20:21 “As the Father has sent me, so have I sent you.”

b. ministry of reconciliation

2 Cor. 5:18 “God ... gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

c. beautiful feet

Isa. 52:7 “How beautiful... are the feet of those who proclaim peace”

5. Peacemaking: Lubrication for society

a. the ministry of the “gentle answer”; Prov. 15:1

Proverbs. 15:1 “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

b. the initiative of a peacemaker... St. Francis of Assisi, 13th c.

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.”

c. James 3:18 “a harvest of righteousness”

James 3:18 “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”

6. REWARD: Peacemakers called “Sons of God”

a. partaking in God’s nature

b. unity in the Trinity: peace is relational

c. destiny of unity: Jn. 17

John 17:11 *“Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name... that they may be one as we are one.”*

John 17:20 *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you...”*

B. Blessed are the persecuted (5:10-12)

1. Christ’s honest promise: Mt. 10:34-36

Matthew 10:34-36 *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn ”“a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— ³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’*

2. History’s record of fulfillment

- a. each of the twelve apostles was persecuted and all but John was martyred
- b. early church history records the martyrdom of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna

The governor pressed him: “Swear and I will set you free... curse Christ!” Polycarp replied, “For 86 years I have been his servant, and he has never done me wrong... how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?” “I have wild beasts,” said the proconsul. “Bring them on,” said Polycarp. “If you make light of the beasts, I’ll have you destroyed by fire.” Polycarp answered, “The fire you threatens burns for a short time and is soon extinguished; there is a fire you know nothing about—the fire of the judgment to come and of eternal punishment, which is reserved for the ungodly. But why do you hesitate? Do what you want!” The governor was so outraged that he ordered Polycarp to be burned immediately.

- c. so many martyrs, Tertullian’s famous statement:

“The blood of martyrs is seed for the church.”

3. Not persecution for politics, race, obnoxiousness

- a. POLITICS: Christianity and democracy are not synonymous
- b. RACE: many have been persecuted because of race

“burakamin” in Japan... African-americans here... Armenians slaughtered 1.5 million by Turks before WWI... Jews by Hitler in WWII; this persecution is evil, and God will judge it... but it carries no blessing recorded here

c. OBNOXIOUSNESS: zeal without knowledge

Friend witnessing to Uighur Muslims in China... said “Jesus, Jesus” over and over

4. Persecution for “righteousness”... Christlikeness

Jn. 15:18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind it hated me first.”

- a. if you are “good”, the world will admire you
- b. if you are righteous, the world will persecute you
- c. righteousness exposes guilt and sinfulness

5. Reward: “Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

- a. NOTE bracket... first & last Beatitude
- b. beautiful harmony... broken-hearted beggars telling other poor people where to find bread
- c. no self-righteousness, no domination, no pride... just beautiful humility and bold courage
- d. such witnesses conquered the mighty Roman empire, they have conquered hostile stone-age tribe in Irian Jaya, and they can conquer Durham as well

6. Crucial aspect: Christ elaborates (vs. 11-12)

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

a. narrows the audience: “Blessed are YOU...”

Temptation to fear so great, Jesus zeroes right in on his individual hearers

b. highlights the issue: “...because of ME”

NOTE: subtle claim to deity by Christ... also, its suffering in HIS NAME that is blest

c. broadens the scope: insults and slander

NOT JUST major sufferings but also small ones as well

d. sweetens the reward: GREAT is your reward

7. Christ's appeal to rewards: motivation for all Beatitudes (Hebrews 10:32-36)

a. "You want to know true blessedness? This is the way...!!"

b. "Store up treasures in heaven..." Matt. 6:21

c. powerful motivation absolutely required for faith!!

Hebrews 11:6 "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

d. even allows joy in persecution

Hebrews 10:32-36 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. ³³ Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴ You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. ³⁵ So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

8. Chinese Heroes: "My Christ is bigger than Mao..."

a. Chairman Mao Zedong set out to destroy Christianity

b. slaughtered thousands... miraculously stopped

c. decided to humiliate the few that were left... sent them all over the country; gave them menial jobs like GARBAGE-COLLECTOR!!

d. Cultural revolution... doctor refused to deny Christ;

"My Christ is bigger than your Chairman Mao." Forced to stand at attention on a narrow plank; testified that the same God who rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego from the King of Babylon would give him strength. The communist torturers were amazed when the old doctor stood at attention with no apparent fatigue for two hours... then three... then four... they screamed at him to curse Christ and beg Mao's forgiveness, but he kept repeating, "My Christ is bigger..." The hours passed and not a muscle in his body trembled... the worried guards began to murmur to each other... "Where does this man get his strength?" Finally, after 15 hours of this torture, they knocked him off the bench. The Red Guard promised him there would be another day... one week later they hanged him.

According to the Scriptures, that faithful Chinese doctor was welcomed into heaven to receive a reward greater than any of you can even imagine... Christ is not unjust and will not fail to reward His courageous servants who suffer in His Name

III. Application:

PEACEMAKERS:

- 1) Do you have "peace with God through Christ?" Rom. 5:1
 - a. are you like the restless waves of the sea which churn up mud and mire
 - b. is your heart at peace, or are you using earthly means to counterfeit peace
 - c. do you know for certain that your sins have been forgiven through the blood of Christ

IF NOT, COME TO CHRIST TODAY

- 2) Do you "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts?" Col. 3:15
 - a. is your heart easily stirred up to anxiety?
 - b. is your faith shaken when you look at earthly obstacles?
 - c. Is there peace in your home? Or constant strife and conflict?

Colossians 3:15 "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."

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

- 3) Are you a peacemaker... by gospel & by ministry?

- a. when someone is upset with you, do you make peace by humility, and a gentle spirit... or do you continue the strife with a prideful answer?
- b. do you seek to lessen tensions between others... at the workplace, in the neighborhood, in your extended family?
- c. are you active in sharing the gospel with unbelievers?

PERSECUTION:

- 4) Are you afraid of persecution?
 - a. has fear of what people will think caused you to stop sharing the gospel or inviting people to church?
 - b. what is the worst persecution you personally have ever endured? Is that worth being silent?

Meditate on fruitfulness and rewards!