



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do
Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

Resourcing for Prayer Network **Spiritual Guidelines**

Teaching on the Kingdom **The Sermon on the Mount (viii)**

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”

(Matthew 5.9)

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This is the seventh of the ten Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5. There is no comparable Blessing or Woe in the Sermon on the Plain recorded by Luke 6 but a long discourse follows in this chapter on loving your enemies and not judging others which could be construed as 'keeping the peace' (Luke 6.7-38).

James has the only other mention of Peacemaker in the New Testament '*Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness*' (James 3:18). Proverbs 12:20 says "*Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy*". God is the supreme Peacemaker, and sets an example for us all. Although we are all his children, this message confirms that the peacemakers live up to his expectations of his children so that he can proclaim to the whole world his joy in these children of God.

So what is 'Peacemaking'?

Peacemaking is reconciliation not just between human beings and God but also between humans. It is more than simply avoiding conflict or even attempting to reconcile those with different opinions but has much more of a spiritual element seeing the person as a whole being and therefore promoting the full health of others. It is linked with the Hebrew word '*Shalom*' which means peace, harmony, completeness, prosperity and welfare. The peace-makers are those who love, desire and delight in peace.

Peace

Although there is a limited use of the word 'peacemaker', 'peace' features prominently in Jesus' teaching especially when it is a promise from the Father. We know that he can give us the '*peace that passes understanding*' ultimate peace which we should pursue and for which we should strive: we are encouraged to model ourselves on the example given by Christ and know that as we mature in Jesus by operating in the gifts he gives us we will be able to show more of the Fruit of the Spirit. Peace comes third among the ten elements making up this Fruit recommended in Galatians 5.22. When we were studying these we circulated a spiritual guideline paper in October 2015 - available from the office. We will look at just some of the teaching on peace which relates to how we can become **PeaceMAKERS**.

Peace Comes as Good News

The good news of peace coming to the world was foreseen by Isaiah '*For unto us a child is born.....and he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*' (Is 9.7). The heavenly host at Jesus' birth sang '*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests*' (Luke 2.14). Zechariah, John the Baptist's father on regaining his speech, was able to glorify God by proclaiming the coming of Jesus as good news sent '*to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace*' (Luke 1:79).

When Peter was called to Caesarea by Cornelius he told the expectant Gentiles *'You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all'* (Acts 10:36). This was what everyone had been waiting for - a message of Peace.

The Peace of God

But was it the kind of peace which they were expecting? John foresaw that the peace of the Lord would be better and more long lasting: Jesus said *'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid'* (John 14:27). This was true peace - Peace of God.

There were also many requirements for those who wanted to experience the peace of God. They were *'to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle towards everyone'* (Titus 3:2); they were to *'make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord'* (Heb 12:14). And they were to be thankful as they *'let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace'* (Col 3:15).

The Call to be Peacemakers

God is not a God of disorder but a God of peace (1 Cor 14:33).

Peter writing to the early church who were under such persecution that they felt the end was near and they should be looking forward to God's reign on earth, told them *'to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him'* (2 Pet 3:14). They must *'turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it'* (1 Pet 3:11).

Peacemakers are to hold those in authority *'in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other'* (1 Thess 5:13) and so *'that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness'* (1 Tim 2:2).

'You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven' (Matt 5:43-45). Peacemakers are those who put this into practice

Keeping the Peace

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Rom 15:13).

The Gospel of peace is an essential part of the whole armour of God alongside the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit as the feet are shod with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of Peace (Eph 6:15). But Jesus also warned *'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword'* (Matt 10:34). This is a spiritual battle that must be fought with the sword of the Spirit so that our God can reign in our lives.

Peace in this World?

Jesus' teaching was demonstrated in his life. *'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world'* (John 16:33).

'He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near' (Eph 2:17). He did it *'by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace'* (Eph 2:15); *'and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross'* (Col 1:20).

But just pronouncing peace is not enough: *'If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?'* (James 2:16).

Finally

Since God actively desires 'wholeness' for everyone, he gladly will claim as his own sons and daughters those who share in peacemaking. But will we take it? Jesus mourned over Jerusalem when he said *'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes'* (Luke 19:42). Pray that we will not only be counted as **peacemakers** in the world today but also know that *'the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus'* (Philip 4:7).

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