

**REAL PEACE
AGAINST THE GRAIN - Part 8
Dan Burrell**

Good morning Life Fellowship. I was blessed this morning by the way you engaged with the songs, as that is part of what worship should be about. It was a great opportunity to begin our worship. One of the things that we want to kind of emphasize, and we are trying to do it strategically as we will talk more about it in a couple of weeks, is we want you to be committed to hearing from God when you come to church. I really believe that way too many people who are going to church on Sunday mornings, and I am not talking just about Life Fellowship but culturally, is we are going to church and just checking off a box.

I should go to church (*check*), I will feel guilty if I don't, (*check*), I miss my friends, (*check*), but it is really not thoughtful. It is just that (*check*) we are trying to get. I believe if we are intentional in our thinking, participating, and engaging when we go through this hour that it will mean something to us more than just being here, and far more than just getting the (*check*).

What I want to do as we begin this morning is I am going to lead in prayer. And by the way when we use the term 'lead in prayer,' leading always assumes someone is following if they are not doing the leading. Without someone leading you are just by yourself because no one is following. So I want to lead you in prayer, but I want to ask you to please follow. When I am praying I am not talking to you anyway, right? I am talking to God so you don't need to worry about what I say, but would you in your seat just take this moment between you and God and ask Him to make sure that you hear what He wants you to hear this morning.

You know the cool thing is I don't feel any pressure about what it is you are supposed to take away this morning, because that is not my job. My job is just to preach the word and then what you receive is between you and the Holy Spirit, and He does a far better job of that than I could ever do. He usually makes points that I don't make and they are a lot better. So I am not stressed about that because I trust the Holy Spirit, but what I would ask you to do is to listen to the Holy Spirit. So I am going to pray and I am going to do my business with God and I will ask you to do yours, and then we are going to go to the next Beatitude this morning.

Father, we love you. Thank you so much for redeeming us. Thank you so much for giving us your Word. Thank you, Father, for giving us family here on earth that we can enjoy that supersedes biology and DNA, but will last forever. Father, I pray that as we gather together as your family, your children, that you would indeed use your Word now to mold and move us. Father, I pray that while you speak through me today, you will speak to me, and also to any who would hear you. Holy Spirit, please be active in your Word this morning. Help us to hear from you and help us not to be checking off a box this morning. Help us to diligently seek you and hear from you and then to not walk out unchanged, but walk out committed to letting the fruit of the Holy Spirit live out in our lives this week. Father, I pray that you will meet with us this hour for it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

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Today we are back in The Beatitudes in our series, 'Against the Grain,' trying to live The Beatitudes the way Jesus asked us to. And today we are talking about verse 9, ***“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.” “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.”*** Today I want to speak to you for a few moments on the topic of what is real peace. What does that mean? What does it mean when we talk about being peacemakers?

I think if we are honest we would say that in the midst of our current culture, our world, our generation, we have a huge need for peace. A lot of people talk about peace, we seek peace, and yet we are at record levels of conflict. Am I right? I mean we can talk about the big picture like with wars, we have ISIS reemerging, we have North Korea acting crazy, we have military buildup in China, and we are responding to all of that. We spend trillions of dollars on weapons, and yet peace always seems to be one step beyond our grasp. There is always the potential for wars, and there is always the presence of rumors of wars.

It is what exists, but that isn't unique to us. That isn't unique to our generation, this has been going on since Adam and Eve fell in the Garden. It went on when Cain and Abel were scrapping. It went on in the days of Noah, and Israel, and then with Jesus and the Apostles who lost their lives. It went on through the Middle Ages and then the Reformation brought about tons of conflict. And then there have been countries fighting against countries, families against families and churches against churches. And we haven't even talked about politics even though our country is still reeling from conflict.

And this is the way it was when Jesus was delivering His message there to the assembly that gathered with Him on that hillside that day. He was saying, *‘Do you want to go against the grain? Do you want to go against the flow? Do you want to rub the cat backwards, so to speak? Let me just tell you this, peacemakers, you have a unique opportunity to be called the children of God.’*

There Jesus was out in a pastoral field with sheep on the hillside and fans in front of Him. Is that what He was addressing? No, that is not what He was addressing. He was addressing a culture that had thousands of years of war and bondage, slavery, fighting, annihilation, being at war, being attacked, being aggressive, and being chased across the wilderness. And now they and most of the rest of civilization at that time were under the heavy heel of the Roman Empire, who was raping and pillaging across the land, taking whatever they wanted.

These people lived in constant fear that their boys would be taken away to be sent to a war in another land, and that their girls would be taken to be concubines to service the men that were at war. These people were in constant fear that their taxes would be raised yet again and they would be getting deeper and deeper in debt every year unable to feed even their own children because the Roman Empire demanded ever more. And if that wasn't enough, even in their culture they had a system of religious piety where the

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leaders thereof looked at them with disdain and condescension, always wagging their fingers at them saying, *'You are not good enough for God. You need to work a little harder.'*

Their entire lives were filled with stress, conflict, turmoil and fear, and Jesus stood in the midst of all these people who were craving some relief, craving some message of hope, craving some sense that peace was within their grasp, and He looked at them and said, *'You be the peacemakers. You be the ones that make the difference. And you will be called the children of God.'*

This verse is interesting when you look at verse 9 of Matthew Chapter 5 because it is the only time we see this word 'peacemakers' used when you look at it in the original Greek. It is the only time that it is used as a noun in the New Testament. Now there is the idea of peacemaking. In fact in Colossians Chapter 1 it speaks of Jesus making peace by His blood on the cross, and that is the ultimate peace if we are going to talk about peace in that light. But it was a verb in its context there.

But in this case it is an assignment; it is a title. It is a role we are to play. And it is unique in Scripture and it is unique in this passage in that it is assigning to us a responsibility to be proactive purveyors of peace on this planet. There is an emphasis here as there are in other places where this general term is used that this begins with a spiritual mission. It is not speaking of one who simply avoids conflict, or someone who negotiates for a resolution. But rather it is speaking of someone who proactively works toward a long, eternal state of peace. And when we understand that it completely changes how we are to respond to it.

Let's talk about peace for just a moment, because peace is rarely an accident. I mean if you have kids, or if you are married, you know that peace does not spontaneously break out. Many times I have been in my car with my four little ones when they were still living at home, and all of a sudden something would happen, some distraction would occur, and it would go completely silent in the car, making me wonder, *'Did my kids all just die at the same time?'* I would immediately look in the mirror to see if they were still there. But for just a few moments there would be this absolute quiet and peace when no one was poking each other, no one was accusing each other of being on their side of the seat, no one was whining about needing to go to the bathroom. Just for a few moments there would be blessed peace which was oh so sweet. But it usually didn't last for very long before chaos would break out again.

We crave peace. We crave those moments when the conflict has evaporated. But for peace to exist it is more complicated than just not to have conflict. There has to be principles in place. Where there is real peace agreements are arranged, negotiations are often conducted, commitments have to be made, responsibilities are defined, and roles are assigned. Long term peace does not just spontaneously break out; there has to be a

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journey toward it. It requires initiative and it requires obedience. It can be very difficult to attain, particularly if it is to be lasting peace.

Many people address conflicts without seeking peace. It is possible in some cases to just kind of patch up many conflicts sufficiently so that a longer term peace quits being a priority. If you are married you have had to go through this. Right? Maybe you are thinking, *'Pastor Dan you have been married for 36 years, so your marriage is just all unicorns and rainbows. Right?'* Every once in a while I will meet someone who says, *'I have been married 25 years and my wife and I have never had a fight.'* Have you ever met anyone like that? When I meet someone like that, I just wonder if they lie about everything or just about their marriage. Is that really how it works for you?

Someone will send me an email and say, *'My wife and I have never truly fought,'* and I think, *'God bless you.'* If that is you, I don't know how that works, because my wife and I can be rather spirited at times. And if you have ever kind of been in that mode you also know that sometimes you can get into kind of a spat, not really a fight, just a little disagreement with your spouse, and then all of a sudden you realize it isn't really worth it. Maybe you were just having a bad day, or something had gone wrong at work or wherever, or maybe you just don't have time for this. So you just put a Band-Aid on your conflict, and everyone kind of agrees to go to their separate corners. And you are good – but just for the moment.

But later on the Band-Aid comes off. And often after the Band-Aid comes off you have to deal with that problem and the new problem. And it gets a little worse; it gets a little more strenuous with a little more conflict. Why? It is because we never really dealt with the issue, we just superficially resolved it. There are a lot of people who are living in a state of false peace today because they get just enough relief that they no longer are interested in resolving the real issue at the root. I see several counselors in this room who are professionally trained, and God bless you. I have never made it a secret that counseling is one of the hardest parts of pastoring for me. I like coaching people, I like offering consultations, but the hard work of counseling that some of you do I am just impressed by it.

As little counseling as I strategically do, and as much as some of you do, I think we all know this – there are some people who will only get engaged in counseling for as long as it takes for them to get a little bit of relief. And then they quit. They may go two or three sessions and they think they can undo twenty years of bad habits in two or three sessions, and then they wonder why they need to come back in three months or four months. They have a cycle that keeps going over and over again because they have just put a Band-Aid on the conflict. And this world is filled with people that are more committed to putting a Band-Aid on their problems than in solving the cause of the problems.

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So when Jesus is talking about peace here, He is not talking about, ‘*Don’t yell at your neighbor.*’ He is not simply talking about just trying to get along in the house and not fighting when you are trying to figure out what to have for dinner, or even nations resolving with other nations. The kind of peace that Jesus came to provide for the world was far deeper than simply what goes on under our roof, or at work, or even between countries. This was a bigger peace Jesus was talking about and we need to make sure we spend some time on it this morning.

The peacemaker has to be one who will take the initiative to pursue and produce real peace. It is a spiritual mission because no real peace, no lasting peace is possible apart from a foundation that begins and really ends with our personal relationship with God. Attaining a real peace with God involves proactive intervention and that requires confrontation. The pursuit of peace is not simply a pursuit of the end of conflict because genuine peace literally begins with conflict.

Jesus Himself said this in Matthew Chapter 10 verse 34: ***“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*** Not stop and think about that, because many times we portray Jesus as the great peacemaker, the great negotiator. He cared about the sick, He cared about the poor and so forth. And all of that is true but that was not His mission. His mission was to resolve a conflict far greater than whether or not we get along here on earth, but whether or not we are in alignment with our creator.

The conflict that was occurring was a spiritual one between Satan and God, between evil and good, between death and life, between despair and hope. The battle that Jesus came to proclaim and win begins with our relationship with God and no peace on this planet, no peace in any human relationship, no strategic placement of peace between countries is possible, or eternal, or substantive apart from making peace with the Prince of Peace. This is the primary message He had, and if you don’t carry anything else away from this message today, don’t miss this – when we talk about making peace the first and most foundational element of peace that you and I will have is the peace we make with God. Because you will never have the peace of which God is speaking, of which Jesus is teaching, you will never have the peace of God until you have first made peace with God.

And that was the message of Christ, and that was the mission of Christ. And when He said He came with a sword He was dividing right and wrong, darkness from light, death from life, Satan from God, and He was that focal point on which all of eternity, all of hope and all of life for mankind was focused. That was a lot of stress. World peace will eventually be His accomplishment, by the way. Understand that because Scripture tells us that there will come a time when the conflicts will be resolved and genuine peace will happen by God, and Satan will be vanquished, but it is not going to be during this time right now. It is important to know that.

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And by the way that's not a flaw of God that there is conflict right now; it is the consequences of sin. This is an apologetic moment but make sure you understand this. There are a lot of people today who want to make accusations against the character and nature of God every time they see the consequences of sin. You have heard it. I hear it all the time. *'If God is good and God is loving, why did my child die?'* *'If God is good and God is all loving, and God is all powerful, why doesn't He stop cancer?'* *'If God is good and God is all powerful and God is eternal and God is all loving, why do we still have wars?'* And they make accusations against the character and nature of God.

Now let me say this to you. The fact that we still have cancer and death and wars is not an indication that God is not powerful, all knowing and all loving. In fact all of those things will disappear, and we know that because Scripture tells us so. They are missing a key word – and the word is 'yet.' War will end, disease will end, death will end, it has just not ended yet, and that 'yet' is where you and I have hope. We can be making peace with God now, because when the 'yet' occurs and all that is wiped out, then the story is over. The chapter is finished, and the book is closed. And either you have accepted Christ and made peace with God or you haven't, but there will be no more chances. And once the chances are gone, you are without hope, and the consequences are eternal.

So by God's delaying the finish, the last sentence of the story, He is showing us mercy, He is showing us grace. The death, the despair, the conflict are the consequence of sin. The mercy that is available, the grace that is available, the hope that is available are the character of God that says, *'I am not willing that any should perish. I want the whole world to know.'* And He is willing to tolerate this situation a little longer so that you and I might know what it means to have peace with God.

And folks, let me just say this to you. If you have peace with God this morning you have the foundation for everything in your life going for you. It is a good place to be. Politics can fall apart, you can experience great loss in your life, you can be in despair, difficulty, pain and tragedy, but in the end you know your victory is secure. In a hundred years none of us are going to care about this kind of stuff. Now we are in the anteroom, the waiting room, the vestibule of eternity and we already hold our ticket. We are just waiting for the doors to open, and we have a seat.

But there are a lot of people out there who are living in hopelessness and tragedy and pain and they don't know peace, and they won't know peace until they know the Prince of Peace. This was the message that Jesus was delivering above all else. Does that mean we shouldn't be trying to get along? Absolutely not, that is the consequence. And I am going to talk about that in just a second, but the fundamental issue that I don't want you to walk away from is this – if you are living without hope, if you are living in turmoil, and if you are living in despair right now, I have good news for you. The Prince of Peace has come and made it possible for you to be reconciled with the one who loves you. He loves you enough that in order to give you the only kind of peace that will last

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He was willing to allow His son to be murdered. Literally God allowed His Son to be murdered so that we could get that ticket, so that we could get that assurance, so that we could have that adoption certificate that says, *'I am at peace with my creator.'* That is a great promise.

So let's look at what the Scripture says. I want us to read out loud a couple of verse because sometimes I think when we read out loud it kind of makes us declare it and makes it real for us. So first please turn to Psalms Chapter 133 and verse 1 where it says this: ***"Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity,"*** when we get along with each other. Now primarily I think of this in terms of spiritual terms when we are getting along with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and quite frankly that is sometimes tricky. I have to tell you that sometimes even in the body of Christ there is conflict. I have seen a lot of it in 2020 and 2021. *'Mask.'* *'No mask.'* *'Meet.'* *'Don't meet.'* *'Politics.'* You name it we can have it going.

But one thing hopefully we can all agree on if we are followers of Christ is that the Word of God matters, Jesus saves, we were sinners that were lost and have now been found, and we are going to spend eternity together. That gives us a basis to move forward. Now let's look at Proverbs Chapter 6 and let's read it together. Before we do I want to point this out to you because this is kind of like a theological moment, a little hermeneutical moment. There are several times in the Psalms and Proverbs where you will see a list. Maybe it will be a list of three or a list of four, maybe a list of six or even seven verily if you read the old King James. Do you ever wonder why they didn't seem to be able to make up their mind, was it six or was it seven, is it three or is it four? What is going on here? Why did they do that?

It is a literary device that was used by God through the authors and it was basically to call attention to something. It would be like me saying, *'I am going to give you six points, but I tell you what, number seven is a doozy, so really pay attention to number seven.'* So it is emphasizing the final one and I want you to keep that in mind as we read this passage beginning in Proverbs 6 and beginning in verse 16. Here we go.

"There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers." Now what was number seven again? Look at that one – ***"And one who sows discord among brothers."***

Get a load of this; this is a gossip, right? This is the one who is always stirring stuff. And here is what Scripture is saying. There are a lot of things that God hates, but that big one right there, is the one who sows discords among brothers, and that one ranks right up there with murderers and pride filled people and liars and people with wicked hearts. Ouch! Ouch! Because we all know that sometimes we just like to stir stuff, don't

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we? We just like to cause a little conflict. We just like to cause a little discord. We are just being a little ornery. And these things are short of what God desires for us.

So let's look at some prerequisites of the peacemaker. And this first one – again I am being repetitive on purpose because I don't want you to miss this. The number one prerequisite is if you are going to be a peacemaker you have to be at peace with God. You have to be at peace with God. That is why all the negotiations of all the diplomats in all the world never last. They just don't last.

When I was growing up the Vietnam War was going on. And every night when we turned on Walter Cronkite there would be two things that always came on the news during the 70s. Number one they would give a tally of how many people had been killed that week and number two they would say these words, '*At the Paris Peace Talks,*' because there was a big conflagration that went on for years in Paris trying to negotiate a set of rules for peace and engagements over in Vietnam. They never really worked; they never really failed, in the end it just didn't work out. But every night they would talk about the Paris Peace Talks.

Why did those not work? It was because fundamentally we are broken, we are wicked, we are messed up and we don't keep the rules. Apart from God we walk in lies, we walk in falsehoods. So until we are at peace with God everything else is suspect. The Scripture says this in Romans Chapter 5 and verse 1: "***Therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***" The only way we get peace with God is when we have a relationship with Christ. And that relationship with Christ begins that moment when we say, '*I can't do this myself. I can't save myself. I am not good enough, devout enough, there is no way I can earn this or attain this. I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no not one. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.*'

The way we get that gift is when we call upon the name of the Lord. "***For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.***" "***With the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***" We have to call out to Christ, repenting of our sins and our ability to save ourselves and trust in Him alone. You don't have to become a member of Life Fellowship, you don't have to be baptized, you don't have to write a check, you don't have to join a congregation or a denomination. What you have to do is establish that personal relationship with Christ. And the moment that you do that, you are adopted into His family with all the rights and privileges of son-ship and daughter-ship. You have been proclaimed His child.

You know that statement, '*We're all God's children,*' that's not true. You are not God's child, you may be God's creation, but you are not God's child until you get adopted. And you don't get adopted until you get that relationship established when you repent of your sins and trust Christ as your Savior. So just because it makes for a good cliché or a saying on a tee shirt doesn't mean it is true, we have to go to the Scripture.

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Now God loves you and He wants to adopt you as His child, but in order to do that you have to respond to His invitation for reconciliation. He is the ultimate peacemaker.

The second thing is this – you have to be controlled by the Spirit of God. And here is where you know we scratch the record or the train falls off of the track, because many of us want this and have this personal relationship with God and Christ, but we are not walking in the Spirit. We are not controlled by the Spirit; we are controlled by other things. In fact in Ephesians Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus and said, *‘You guys have to understand this control thing. You know how you get controlled when you drink too much, don’t get drunk with wine for that is debauchery. But rather be filled with the Spirit.’* And that concept of filled with the Spirit is really important when you study the meaning of it because it means to come under the submission or under the control of.

That same phrase used in other places is in the New Testament even has a ranking to it kind of like a soldier that is under the rank of a general or an authority of some kind. It is the same term. In other words someone gets to tell you what to do and that ought to be the Holy Spirit. Don’t let booze trick you into a sense of false peace. Don’t let drugs, don’t let money, don’t let pride, don’t let talent, and don’t let work make you think that you are good with God. No, the way you are good with God is to be controlled by the Spirit.

Now here is the thing, and this is an important theological point I want to make sure you understand because even some evangelicals get this messed up. When do you get the Holy Spirit? You get the Holy Spirit when you are baptized into the body of Christ, when you accept Christ as your Savior. When He redeems you at that moment you get the Holy Spirit. And when you get the Holy Spirit you get the seal of adoption, you get the seal of approval; you are a part of God’s family. You have that eternal soul that lives forever, make no mistake about it.

But from that point forward you have to decide how much of you the Holy Spirit has. That is the next step. You know you can possess something and not take advantage of it. You can possess something and ignore it. You can possess something and sometimes act like you don’t even know you have it. Can you imagine how weird it would be to have a marriage relationship where you never talked to your spouse, where you sat down at the table but you never discussed anything, you never talk about your day, you never make plans. You are just in each other’s presence, but there is no interaction. That would be weird, right? I can’t imagine a marriage like that.

But yet many of us walk in our relationship with God just like that. The Holy Spirit is sitting at the table but we don’t even acknowledge Him. Oh sometimes we pray to Jesus and we say, *‘Dear God, and In Jesus’ name,’* but we never talk about the Holy Spirit. In fact some of us are kind of scared of the Holy Spirit, we are afraid He will make us raise our hands or do something kind of crazy, right? So we are just scared about Him.

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I grew up Baptist and they just didn't talk about the Holy Spirit because they didn't want anyone to think they were Pentecostal. So they went from one extreme to the other. The bottom line is this – the Holy Spirit lives within us and the battle that you and I face every day is how much of Him do I give myself. And the answer to that needs to be one hundred percent because if that happens then number three happens. And number three is this – you will produce the fruit of that Spirit and that is peace and control.

Galatians Chapter 5 and verse 22 says this: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness.*” There is a whole list of things that ought to be evident in our lives when we have the Holy Spirit giving fruit in our lives. Now I grew up evangelical, I grew up in Sunday school and church, in Bible school, in a Christian school and all that, right? So every year at some point there would be a coloring sheet or a bulletin board that would have a cornucopia on it. And on the cornucopia would be the fruits of the Spirit. Anyone else ever see that growing up? And then it would have like a banana and a pineapple and an orange and an apple. And on the banana it might say like gentleness, on the pineapple it might say patience, on another fruit it might say kindness. And we would all look at that and think, ‘*Isn't that a wonderful picture.*’ Well it is a wonderful picture but it isn't true because it isn't individual fruit; it is all the fruit that comes from the tree of the Holy Spirit in us.

I am doing war with something called the brown fungus right now in my back yard. I have a peach tree, an apple tree, a pear tree, a couple of plum trees and a nectarine tree. I have all kinds of cool trees that were there when I bought the house. That was one of the reasons I bought the house. I like walking out in the morning on a beautiful June day and seeing a lovely peach being warmed by the morning sunrays hanging on my tree and then having it for breakfast. Or maybe I will have a handful of plums because they are just wonderful.

Well two years ago I went out and pulled off a peach and it had a big old brown splotch on it. I pulled another one off the tree and it had one too. Every peach on that tree that was so close to being perfect the day before now had the brown fungus on them. And since that day I have been doing war with the fungus among us. The next year I went out and it was on my plums because it had spread from the peach tree. So three weeks ago fresh off my heart attack in the freezing weather on a breezy day I am standing out there with my little pump thing, the little garden sprayer, and I am spraying my trees. They said you have to start spraying the trees before the buds come out. I have to do it again in three more weeks. Is it going to be worth it? Oh yes, as long as I don't fall off and break my neck it will be good, because I plan on having the fruit.

But if I only have one piece of fruit on those trees I am going to be a little disappointed, because when you see a tree that bears fruit you expect there to be a lot of good fruit on it. I don't expect to find a banana on my peach tree by the way. I expect it to be full of the fruit that peach trees produce. I say all that to say this. When the Holy

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Spirit is vibrant and alive in your life you are going to produce fruit in abundance and it is going to be healthy fruit and it is going to be all the fruit that comes from the Holy Spirit.

But some of us have a fungus on us whereupon we deny that the Holy Spirit is even in our lives so we don't listen for Him, and because we don't listen for Him we don't know He exists and we rob ourselves of the benefit of walking in the Spirit. I spent a lot of time on that but I think it is really, really important because we can't have peace apart from God doing His work in our lives that is born out of our personal relationship with Him. This is crucial.

What does a peacemaker not do? By the way all these notes are on our AP. You can download our AP, click on this week's sermon, and all these notes are there. And you can take your own notes alongside of them. Great devotionals are on there and all kinds of great things are on our AP. But here is the bottom line of what a peacemaker doesn't do. He doesn't avoid all conflicts and confrontations. That is not necessarily a peacemaker; that can be the sign of a coward. So sometimes making peace involves confrontation and conflict, and didn't you see it throughout all of Jesus' life? It always occurred.

Number two a peacemaker isn't laid back, it isn't relaxed about sin and evil. When you are committed to making peace you are willing to pay the price to get the peace. For Jesus it actually involved Him being murdered, but He was so committed to the price that had to be paid for us to have peace with God, He allowed Himself to be murdered. So the pursuit of peace is not going to be a laid back, easygoing one. We are going to have to get aggressive about it. We may have to fight for unity whether it is in our home, or in our marriage, or in the church, or in this nation, or with the kingdom of God. We have to make peace a priority.

Number three a peacemaker doesn't believe in peace at any price. A peacemaker should not be willing to compromise important things so that they can have peace at any price. There is a right way to get to peace, and sometimes it is painful, and sometimes it takes some time. The fourth thing is a peacemaker isn't in denial. If he is making peace he isn't into denial; he knows when it is real and he knows when it is fake. He knows when it is permanent and he knows when it is temporary. He knows when it is superficial and he knows when it is substantive.

The fifth thing is a peacemaker is not going to compromise his convictions or his principles in order to just get it over with. And that is why it is important for us as believers to know that the first step to lasting peace is peace with God. And number six a peacemaker doesn't remain silent in the face of conflict for the sake of a bogus peace, a false peace, a fake peace or a phony peace. There are times when we need to speak up and say, *'No, no, no, and no. Let's not pretend here. This isn't going to be peace on these terms. This isn't going to be real if we do it this way. We need to deal in the currency of truth.'*

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The Scripture is real clear that God expects us to do this. Romans Chapter 12 and verse 18 says this: ***“If possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”*** And by the way that even means with the enemy. See ‘all’ there isn’t just those who see things our way. One of the hallmarks of being a child of God is having this foundation of peace that allows you to deal with the other issues in such a way that it doesn’t distract them from meeting the Prince of Peace. There is a higher hierarchy of importance when it comes to peace. And there is no question that the most important peace is our peace with God.

The Scripture says this in Romans Chapter 14 and verse 19: ***“So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.”*** If we expect for others to grow in peace we are going to have to begin with the foundation of peace in God. Listen to this passage that James wrote. He continues it in over two chapters so it begins in verse 16 of James Chapter 3 and the first part of Chapter 4. ***“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”***

Then James goes on in Chapter 4 and verse 1 and says this: ***“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this that our passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.”*** Who are we supposed to be asking? It is God. What are we supposed to asking for? We are to ask for peace. What kind of peace must we have? It is peace with Him. And when we have those things in order then we are going to be able to attain perspective on what is really important, and it is not our personal desires, our personal passions, of getting things our way, or trying to be number one. And so those other things that cause stress and conflict diminish because our joy in the Holy Spirit increases.

Very quickly, what is the mission of the peacemaker? It is just two things, two sides of the same coin. And the first thing is this – we are called to evangelize. We are to be evangelists of peace. In fact Jesus called the footwear of the soul winner the ***“shoes of peace.”*** We are shod with the shoes of peace. Where we go we need to carry the message of peace. Remember we read Romans Chapter 5 and verse 1 a while ago where it talked about peace with God. A few verse later in Romans Chapter 5 and verse 10 it says this: ***“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.”***

Here’s the deal, before we were walking in warfare, we were the enemies of God, we were at enmity with truth, and we understand that. But now that we are reconciled the terms have changed. We have been saved by His blood and now we are called to share that good news with others. The greatest thing that you can do toward real peace is to

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share your faith, it is to evangelize, it is to tell others about how much God loves them and how He wants them to know the peace of God through peace with God.

But then there is the second side of that coin and that is to harmonize. And to harmonize is super crucial, because it is very intentional and it is something that we have to be committed to and aware of. Once we get the correct pitch we know what this is supposed to sound like, look like, we can become part of a chord. And God uses the diversity of the reconciled, and that's us, the believers, people who have made peace with God. God uses our diversity to produce unity. And make no mistake, I want you to hear this, biblical unity is not unanimity. Biblical unity is not even being uniform. Biblical peace is having a unity that recognizes our differences, but being committed to the same truth and that is the truth of Scripture. It doesn't have to be uniform, it doesn't have to be identical, and it doesn't even have to be unanimous. What it must be is unified around truth.

The Scripture says this in Ephesians Chapter 4 and verse 3. It tells us that we are to be *“eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* By the way ‘bond’ is a requirement, do you understand that? This is an expectation we have peace, that is a legal agreement between us and God, and that is settled. We don't lose that, it is a commitment, but whether or not we are walking in unity ought to be an outcome of that promised peace we have with God. If bodies are to be healthy then all the individual parts of the body are to be performing their particular role.

That is why in this church we have a diversity. We have a diversity of background, education, personality, and type. You name it and we have it. But why is that significant? It is because of what Christ has done in us it allows us to all move in the same direction with the same purpose. We don't have to be fighting with each other; we can be conquering because of Christ.

So let me close by giving you these final thoughts. Number one, and understand I am being repetitious on purpose, because I want you to remember this. We cannot know real peace until we really know God. And my question, my challenge to you this morning is this, if you happen to be sitting here and you are living in conflict, you feel despair, you wonder why you are here, and you wonder how can you know anything at all let alone where you are going when you die, understand that God brought you here for a purpose and He brought you here for a reason. He wants to get rid of that uncertainty and that discord and that conflict that is going on in your heart and your life. And He put you here this morning for a reason. And right now I think if you will listen His Holy Spirit is saying to you that you need His peace, and that it is available.

In just a moment I am going to give my final point, we are going to stand and we are going to sing a song, and then it is over. When I do that, I want to urge you while we are singing, or while I am praying at the very end that as you walk out those doors that you take a hard right and walk to the room with the glass doors. And in there will be

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someone who will love to pray with you. They will answer your questions. If you want to talk to me or one of the other pastors, they know where we will be and they will come get us.

And in that moment you can say this, *‘I want that peace that we were talking about this morning. I want to know that I am adopted into God’s family. I want to be reconciled with God. I want forgiveness of my sins. I want hope for my future. How do I do that?’* And I promise you that you won’t need to get in your car until you get that question answered. You don’t have to write a check, you don’t have to sign a contract; you don’t have to join this church or even come here again. Of course we hope you will want to come back so you can grow and be a part of our family, but you don’t have to, because none of that matters until you have a relationship with Christ. It is that clear, it is that simple, it is that easy, and I hope you will do it.

Number two – when we compromise truth in pursuit of peace we are only going to achieve a false peace. We are only going to achieve a false peace. My father when he was a teenager was at war with everything in his life, in despair and discouragement. Someone in his family died and my dad went to the funeral. A Christian pastor was conducting the funeral for his family member, and at the end of the funeral my dad, who was seventeen years old at the time, went up to that pastor and said, *‘How can I know I am going to heaven when I die? I am devastated.’* My dad was looking for hope and that pastor looked at him and said, *‘Brother, all you have to do is join the church and do your best.’*

So my dad joined the church, he went to the new members class, signed a little document but nothing changed in his life. It wasn’t until a few years later when he had left home and was working in a gas station in Detroit, Michigan that a man who he worked with on the midnight shift started telling him about Jesus. He told him how much Jesus loved him and had died for him. And that night he crawled out of his bed and on his knees he said something like this: *‘Father, forgive me of my sins, I am trusting Jesus to take me to heaven when I die.’* Had that not occurred I don’t know that I would be where I am today. Someone shared their faith. Peace is not the absence of conflict; that is a false peace. Peace is not doing good works; that is a false peace. Peace is not joining a church; that is a false peace. It is getting right with God and that is real peace. Peace is not the absence of conflict it is the presence of genuine reconciliation. There is nothing sweeter than to know that you can literally look to God and call Him your Father.

Finally, there are no shortcuts; there are no ‘work arounds’ to biblical peace. It is always, one hundred percent of the time, through Jesus because it was Jesus who paid the price. Not through Dan, not through this church, not through another prophet, not through some system. The Bible says, ***“There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”***

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So today my invitation to you is twofold. Number one – if you don't have the peace with God you need I invite you to receive Him today. Number two – if you know Christ as your Savior then let us be an ambassador for peace in the week to come. I left a whole sermon on this on my desk because I knew I wouldn't have enough time, and I am over my time right now. But here is the reality, when we apply this verse in our current culture it will create conflict, but it will also testify of the difference that Christ makes in our lives.

What our culture today needs are ambassadors that will say, *'My relationship with Christ is more important to me than politics, or money, or position, or power, or identity, or affiliation, or association, or status, or education.'* And in that you can throw anything you want at us. We won't care who is richer, who is more educated, who is less educated, who is of a different color, who belongs to a different political party, or who is in power. We won't care about all that because we have made peace with God and in a hundred years none of that will matter. So we can smile, we can have joy, we can be generous, we can be longsuffering, patient and kind every day no matter what the circumstances are because the peace that we have is a real peace. And we are blessed.

If you do that people are going to look at you and say, *'That guy acts like he is a child of God.'* And we will have gone against the grain and we will be living in our culture like Jesus asked us to do. ***"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."***

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.