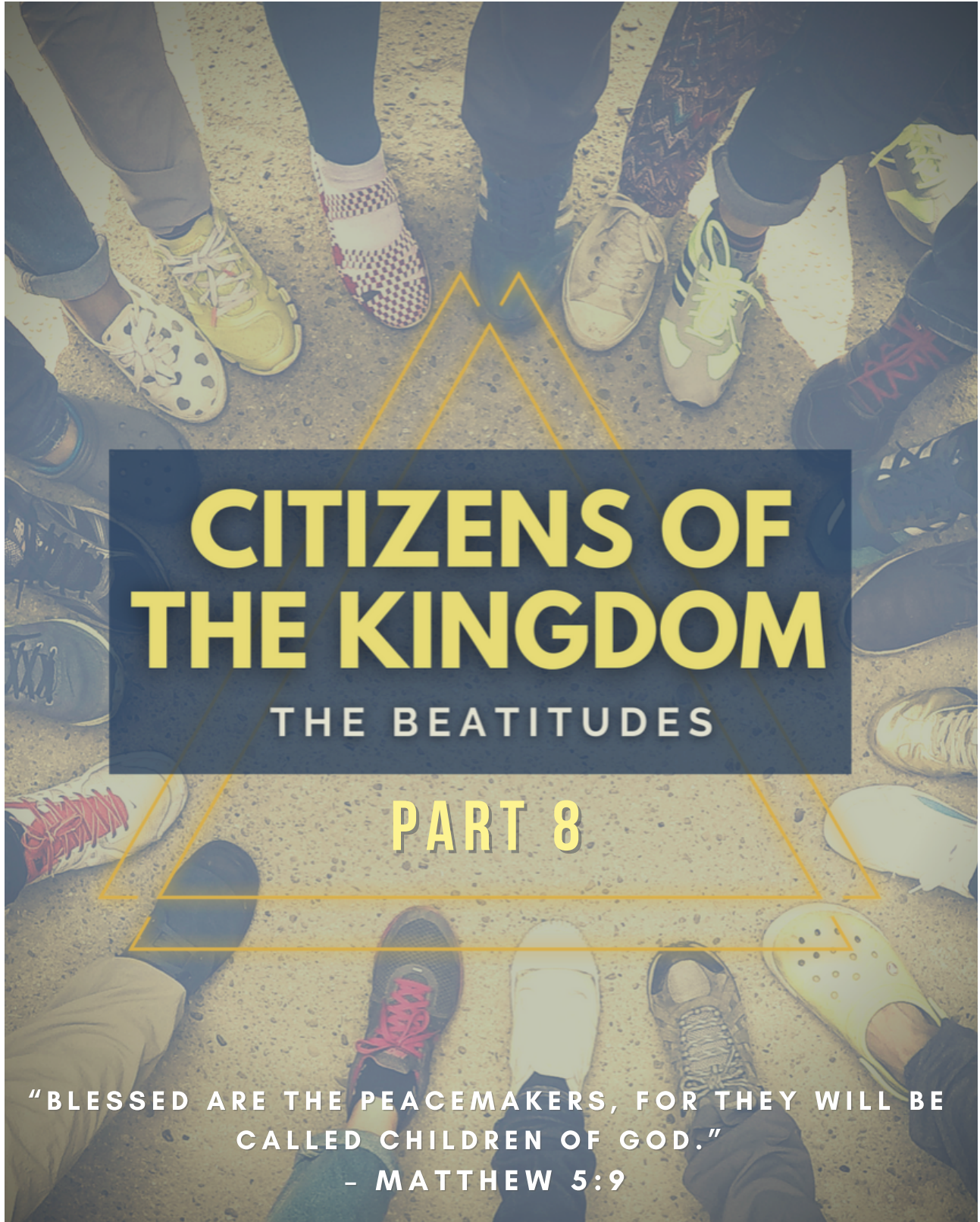


AUGUST 15, 2021 | STUDY GUIDE |



CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

THE BEATITUDES

PART 8

"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY WILL BE
CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD."

- MATTHEW 5:9



PEACE MAKERS

Citizens of the Kingdom: Peacemakers

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

– Matthew 5:9

The blessing in this beatitude is *not* for those who have found “inner peace”, or those who “love peace”. It’s not even for the *peacekeepers*. The blessing – those who have God’s deep and abiding approval – are the *peacemakers*.

The Living God forms us into the sort of people who participate in his redemption of the world; one small corner of the world at a time.

Euangelion (Greek) – “gospel”, “good news”

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” – Isaiah 52:7

Jesus begins his ministry by announcing: “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” – Mark 1:14-15

I. The Nature of Peace

The Hebrew word for peace is shalom – and it does not mean the absence of conflict, though it includes that.

Shalom: “wholeness”, “soundness”, “well-being” or “harmony.”

“Shalom is a psychosomatic, relational, economic, racial, and spiritual wholeness”
–Darrell Johnson

“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 2:4b

(See also Isaiah 11:6; Isaiah 35:2; 5-6)

Shalom has not come until the very causes of the wars, or the inner turmoil, are revealed, dealt with, healed.

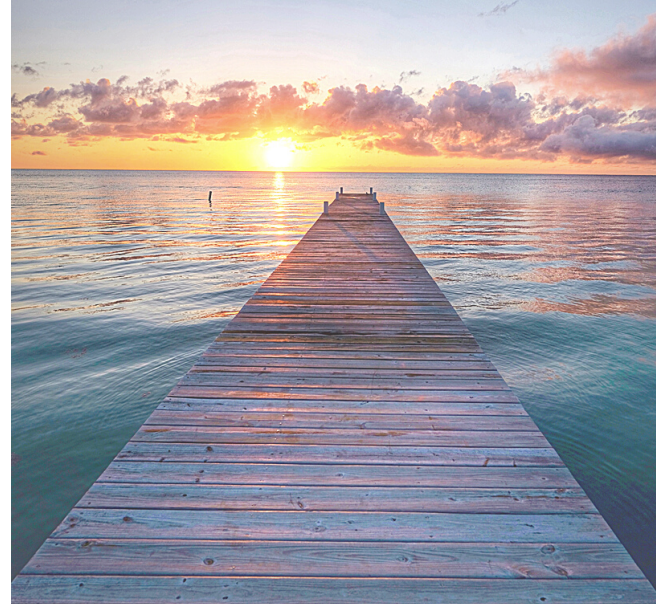
II. Jesus, the Prince of Peace

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [in Jesus, God the Son], 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.”

– Colossians 1:19-20

“For **he [Jesus] himself is our peace**, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.”

–Ephesians 2:14-16



III. They will be called children of God

Technically, the phrase is “...sons of God”.

It means “men and women” here. That said, in the ancient world – with its inbuilt ‘male-centered-ness’ – a “son” was the person who was the inheritor of the status, responsibility, and, in large part, the financial assets of a family.

So to be called “sons” of God has two significant implications:

1. The language of being a “son” is about mirroring the character of “their Father”.
2. In Jesus’ time, “sons” are ‘inheritors’ of the family name, the land, and all the benefits of inheritance. Jesus overturns the militaristic agenda of Israel at that time and offers this striking promise: those who are actually “sons of God” are not the aggressive, the violent, the ones grabbing for power. No. The “sons” of God are the ones who accept and live in God’s way of peacemaking.



IV. Peacemakers, All of Us

There is a progression through the Beatitudes – the one before feeds the next and sustains the possibility of a growth in virtue as God’s Kingdom Citizens.

So it is important to note, then, that this list of beatitudes – of the poor in spirit, those who mourn, are meek, hunger for righteousness, are merciful, and are pure in heart – and now, are ‘peacemakers’, and who will face persecution as a result – this is not describing ‘eight’ different sorts of people. This is describing what a single person who has entered the gracious reign of God begins to look like.

How are we peacemakers?

1. **The Heart-Posture of Peacemakers**
It starts by our hearts being restored and captivated by the Prince of Peace himself – living with him as our peace. That’s the only hope for *this sort of all encompassing peace*.
2. **The Path of Peacemaking (What does “peacemaking” include?)**
 - a. **Evangelism.** Peacemaking involves “proclaiming” God’s peace to the world. The “*evangel*” people – the people of Good News – captivated as they are by the one whose ‘beautiful feet’ were nailed to the tree to bring them the news, they are a people who hold out the hope that calls all and sundry to return – to come home.



b. Seeking the “Peace” of the City. “The Christian’s role as peacemaker extends to...lessening tensions, seeking solutions, ensuring that communication is understood” – D.A. Carson. We do so when we, with level heads, meekness, mercy, patience and hunger for the right-ways, aim to bring peace in our work places – to be people who reflect God’s heart for harmony in the world around us.

c. Peace-making is Costly. “People hate to be disturbed – even for the better” – E. Stanley Jones. Jesus said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23). This ‘cross shaped’ life defines a follower of Jesus. It is not an optional add on. Jesus makes peace through his sacrificial love. And then calls us to follow him in doing the same.

V. Small, Practical Steps

Romans 12:18: “If possible, as far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people.” (These ‘Steps’ are borrowed loosely from Darrell Johnson).

Step One: We can affirm our identity and calling in Jesus. We can say “I am a peacemaker.”

Step Two: We can acknowledge any resistance to God in our hearts.

Step Three: We can acknowledge any anger that still remains in our hearts –against others, against ourselves, against God.

Step Four: We can acknowledge any fear in our hearts.

Step Five: Affirm, again, the Gospel.

No one and nothing can finally stand in the way of God’s kingdom. Shalom is coming – Easter morning guarantees that....For the Prince of peace has defeated the greatest enemy of Peace; Jesus has defeated death. Shalom is coming.”

– Darrell Johnson.

Healing Interpersonal Conflicts:

First: Pray. Pray with the Psalmist: “Search me, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts, see if there is any offensive way in me.” (139:23). This invites God to have his way in us. It prepares us to take responsibility for any part in the conflict that we need to acknowledge.

Second: Evaluate. Is this something that I even need to be angry about, or need to address, or is the sort of thing that can, and should, simply be overlooked? In 1 Peter 4:8 we read: “love covers a multitude of sins.” Proverbs 19:11: “...it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.”

Third: Go. Jesus says that we are to pursue reconciliation as needed: “First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.” (Matt 5:24b). “Peace grows in the soil of meekness.”
– Jonathan Dodson

“Look to empathize and forgive, not to be right or avoid further hurt. Instead, aim to regard Christ above all things, seeking his glory, his mercy, and enjoying his favor together.” – Dodson

Discussion and Reflection Questions:

1. How do you typically think of “peace”? How is the biblical vision of “peace” – God’s shalom – enlarge your understanding (see the message, or notes above)?
2. Read Matthew 5:1-12. How are these beatitudes ‘connected’ – how might a ‘progression’ be evident?
3. Why might ‘peacemaking’ (followed by persecution!) be so far along the end of this progression?
4. Share an example of a ‘peacemaker’ that you have known. What were some of the features of this person’s character that stood out to you?

Discussion and Reflection Questions:

5. In your experience, why is “peacemaking” costly? How have you experienced that? How do the “Five Steps” mentioned above – which include embracing and rehearsing the gospel – help?
6. In what situations do you need to courageously engage in “peacemaking”? What might that look like based on what we are learning in the beatitudes?

Prayer: Take some time to thank God for what we are learning about “the God of peace” through this study. Bring those instances of ‘peacemaking’ work that are before you to God together.

