

Last year when we gathered we commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the official end of ww1, the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month at 11am. (PPT) This year there has been the 75 anniversary of the D-Day landings, and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Versailles treaty, and the moves towards peace following ww1. This weekend also marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first armistice day exactly one year after the end of the first world war. So many anniversaries, so many commemorations, so many ways to remember. Remembering – we re-member to learn from the past and commit ourselves to the future. I wonder if our bible reading can help? Many of these 8 ways to be blessed by God could be our focus today – blessed are those who mourn, for instance – as people continue to suffer through conflict and how we might be part of their comforting. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness is a powerful way to honour the dead so that their sacrifice was not in vain. All of these are signs of God’s kingdom breaking in through the actions of God’s people in God’s name.

But I want to focus on one - ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’ (verse 9). What does being a peacemaker in God’s kingdom include? The peace of God reverses all the effects of humanity’s rejection of God Making peace in every aspect of life is the kingdom call to God’s children. What might it involve?

True Children Resemble Their Father (ppt)

When Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God,” he is not telling us how to become a child of God. Rather, Jesus is simply saying that children of God are, in fact, peacemakers. So first we need to make sure we are children of God – how – John 1:12 – we receive him, we believe in him, that’s the way we make sure. Children resemble their parents – have you discovered that – in yourself, or if you are are parent, in your children – who do they look like? Our heavenly Father, scripture tells us, is a God of peace. Col 1:20 Jesus makes peace by dying on the cross.

God is a peace-loving God, and a peacemaking God. The whole history of redemption, climaxing in the death and resurrection of Jesus, is God’s strategy to bring about a just and lasting peace between rebel humanit and himself, and then between humanity God’s children have the character of their Father. What he loves, they love.

The Spirit of God Is the Spirit of Peace. (ppt)

To put it another way, as Paul says in [Galatians 4:6](#), “because you are his children, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” He also says in [Romans 8:14](#), “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.” Being led by the Spirit always includes bearing the fruit of the Spirit. And the fruit of the Spirit is peace.

So you see why it must be so — the children of God must be peacemakers. It is by the Spirit of God that we are made children of God, and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of peace – as a result of this – we demonstrate the Spirit’s presence in us as we become peacemakers too

Push For Peace

The promise of sonship in the second half of the [Matthew 5:9](#) points us to [Matthew 5:43–45](#) for our main insight. There Jesus comments

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

“If our Father is a peacemaker, then his children will be peacemakers too.” How do we do this? Jesus gives us two examples....

First, pray for those who persecute you ([Matthew 5:44](#)). (ppt) But make sure your prayer is not ‘please God, change them’ – but Holy spirit, help me to see you at work, Help me to know what to say, and give me your peace as I say it.

Second [Matthew 5:47](#), Jesus gives the other specific example of peacemaking-love in this text: “If you salute [greet] only those you love, what more are you doing than others?” In other words, if there is a breakdown in one of your relationships, or if there is someone who opposes you, don't nurse that grudge. Don't feed the animosity by ignoring and avoiding that person. That's how war starts. That is the natural thing to do — just cross the street so that you don't have to greet them. But that is not the impulse of the Spirit of a peacemaking God, who sacrificed his Son to reconcile us to himself and to each other.

Peacemaking tries to build bridges to people (ppt)— to initiate conversations, so that the animosity doesn't remain. The peacemaker wants reconciliation. The peacemaker wants harmony. And so we show what may be the only courtesy the enemy will tolerate, namely, a greeting. The peacemaker looks the enemy right in the eye and says, “Good morning, John.” And he says it with a prayerful longing for peace in the heart

### Long for Peace

So we pray and we take whatever practical initiatives we can to make peace beginning with something as simple as a greeting. But we do not always succeed. Peacemaking is not always peace-achieving. A peacemaker longs for peace, and works for peace, and sacrifices for peace. But the attainment of peace may not come. (ppt)

[Romans 12:18](#) helps. There Paul says, “If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.” That is the goal of a peacemaker: “If possible, **so far as it depends on you** . . .

### Peacemaking May Not Work

Yet, this raises a tough question: Is it your fault when the stand that you take is causing the division? If you have alienated someone and brought down their anger upon your head because you have done or said what is right, have you ceased to be a peacemaker?

Not necessarily. Paul said, “If possible . . . live at peace.” He thus admits that there will be times that standing up for what is right will make it impossible. Peacemaking is not the same as pacifism. So we long for peace and work for peace. we pray for your enemies, and do good to them, and greet them, and long for the barriers between you and them to be overcome. But not at the cost of abandoning truth.

### Jesus Cares About Your Soul

Now all this talk about what I do, and what you do, might raise the question of what about the big world out there? Why, in view of the world situation, does this message on peacemaking confine itself to the personal dimensions of prayer and greetings and individual reconciliation? Aren't these personal issues insignificant in comparison with the issues of war? (ppt)

It's clear that Jesus knew about what was going on in the world around him – the oppressive roman state, the anarchists at work against them, divisions between Jew and Samaritan, issues of injustice between the pharisees and those they considered 'sinners'. Jesus knew about these things, and weeps over Jerusalem. Yet the answer is clear – it begins with our change of heart, our change of attitude, our pursuing peace and praying for our enemies.

Doing these things brings about real remembering, and having that deep spirit of reconciliation honours those whose sacrifices in conflicts long ago and more recently.

One other anniversary has just taken place (ppt)— it's the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the berlin wall-this peaceful revolution that took many by surprise. I remember it well. I was at theological college, and a fellow ordinand was on placement in east Germany – when she came back she gave an eyewitness account of the event – and even brought back a piece of the wall – making peace is about breaking down walls, not

building them – building bridges instead. There was a lot of prayer surrounding the fall of the wall, and a great deal of peacemaking conversation.

Jesus said Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. May that be true of me, and may that be true of you.

(time of reflection) – ripples in bowl?