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**The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:1-12 - The Character of the Kingdom**  
***Part Eight: Blessed are the Peacemakers - Matthew 5:9***

By Tal Davis

"All we are saying, is give peace a chance!" Do you know that sentence? It is the repeated lyrics to one of the late John Lennon's (of the former Beatles) most popular songs – Give Peace a Chance (1969). When Lennon wrote that chant, the United States was in the middle of the long and bloody Vietnam War. He sincerely wanted to bring an end to the war and violence in the world, and maybe believed his worldwide fame could help bring it to pass. Later he wrote and sang another song expressing his longing for a time when "the world will be as one" (Imagine, 1971).

Ironically, Lennon was himself the fatal victim of a violent attack by a deranged fan named Mark David Chapman in December, 1980. John Lennon probably thought of himself as a peacemaker. But, in reality, he never really did anything to further peace in the world other than sing songs about it.

In any case, Lennon's hope of a peaceful world turned out to be a pipe-dream. Wars have continued all over the world ever since his death. Even after the end of the Cold War, conflicts have not ceased. Even today, wars are being fought in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Yemen, Sudan, Mozambique, and even Mexico.

Nonetheless, Jesus said in this Beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Once again we must ask, what exactly did He mean by that statement? The Greek term translated "peacemaker" is *eirenopoioi* and is only used this one time in the

New Testament. It is derived from two other words. The first is *eirene* ("peace" – which can also mean "at one," "quietness," or "rest"). It is essentially the same concept as the Hebrew term *shalom* ("completeness," "soundness," "welfare," or "peace").

The other Greek word from which peacemaker comes is the verb *poieo* ("to make"). It may also mean "manufacture," "construct," "do," "act," or "cause."

We know, naturally, that Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace," a Messianic title taken from Isaiah 9:6.

*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;  
And the government will rest on His shoulders;  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, **Prince of Peace.***

Granted, this is a difficult Beatitude to interpret and even harder to know how to apply. It's application is controversial, with Christians disagreeing on some important points. Nonetheless, let's explore how Jesus intended this Beatitude to be understood. We will survey some key passages in Scripture that will help us interpret this principle. We start, as with our previous studies, with what is not meant by being a peacemaker.

First, being a peacemaker does not mean one must be a pacifist. One of the most popular movies of 2016 was titled Hacksaw Ridge. It was the true story of Desmond T. Doss (1919-2006), a young pacifist Seventh-day Adventist. At the outbreak of World War II, Doss enlisted in the U.S. Army. However, because of his beliefs

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he refused to carry a weapon. Nonetheless, he volunteered as a combat medic and accompanied US forces on numerous campaigns in the Pacific war. During his service he was personally responsible for rescuing and saving as many as 100 wounded men while under intense enemy fire. He was eventually awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Doss, like many sincere Christians throughout history, had strong convictions that a Christian should never kill another person under any circumstances. And while we respect his and other pacifists' beliefs, we cannot agree with their moral conclusion that killing is always wrong.

The Bible clearly declares, in numerous places, that bearing arms in service to a legitimate government for just reasons is right. The Apostle Paul stated unequivocally that the government serves a valid purpose in society to resist evil.

*For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. (Romans 13:3-5)*

Even Jesus Himself remarked that carrying a sword for personal defense was necessary. He suggested his disciples actually purchase one for their protection when carrying money (they bought two).

*And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No,*

*nothing." And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was numbered with transgressors'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough." (Luke 22:35-39)*

Furthermore, Jesus never required any soldiers or police agents he encountered to quit their jobs to be His follower. In fact, He gave one of His highest compliments to, of all people, a Gentile Roman Centurion!

*And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented." Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. (Matthew 8:5-10)*

The book of Acts records a similar situation. Peter had been reluctant to preach the Gospel to anyone but Jews. However, the Lord told Peter in a vision to consider no one unclean. Then God sent him to Caesarea to preach the Gospel to a God-fearing Roman centurion named Cornelius, who quickly received the message and was saved, along with his household. Though Peter was instructed to preach to the Roman officer, God never suggested that Cornelius had to cease being a Gentile or a soldier.

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*Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually...*

*...Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him..."*

*...While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. (Acts 10:1-2, 34-35, 44-45)*

Thus, being a peacemaker does not mean one must adopt a totally pacifist mindset. Furthermore, being a peacemaker does not mean one has to make peace at any cost. That is simply an unrealistic position in this fallen world. Sad to say, there are times when good people have no choice but to take up arms against evil forces. Certainly, Christians should do everything possible to avoid and end war. War is never a good or desirable thing. No believer should ever take pleasure in the thought of his or her nation going to war. Nonetheless, to defend one's country and other innocent peoples against rampant tyranny and evil is certainly just cause.

As General Dwight D. Eisenhower stated in his remarks to his forces the day before D-Day in 1944:  
*"Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!*

*You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months.*

*The eyes of the world are upon you. The hope and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world...*

*...Good luck! And let us beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."*

So then, just what does Jesus mean by being a peacemaker? First, Christians should be involved as much as possible to resolve peacefully conflicts among individuals, people groups, and nations. We should encourage and support those individuals and groups dedicated to finding amicable solutions to difficult issues. Those include diplomats, political leaders, religious organizations, and Christian relief organizations. Thus, being a peacemaker means seeking to make peace between people and nations. It also means seeking reconciliation among peoples (especially among fellow believers in Christ).

As Paul told his readers:

*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. (Romans 12:17-19)*

*But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)*

Therefore, while we should labor to establish and maintain peace in the world, we must not forget that, ultimately, Jesus is the only real hope for the world and the universe for eternal peace. Only when He returns will peace finally be made on earth.

*And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Colossians 1:20)*

All that being said. Being a peacemaker principally means seeking to bring others to peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ. It is what Paul calls "the Gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15).

It is through God's grace and our faith in Christ that we can know and experience real lasting peace. It is the only way to bridge the gap of sin and bring peace and reconciliation between ourselves and God.

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)*

John Lennon wished for world peace. But, sadly, he never found it in his own heart. He should have looked to the Prince of Peace for the answers he sought.

Thus, we close this analysis of this Beatitude with the words of Paul.

*But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:13-22)*

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