

November 9, 2018

The 7th Beatitude
Matthew 4:23-5:9

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. ²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

⁵ When Jesus saw *the crowds*, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then Jesus began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³ **BLESSED** are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ **BLESSED** are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ **BLESSED** are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ **BLESSED** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ **BLESSED** are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ **BLESSED** are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ **BLESSED** are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called *children of God*.

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) are identified as the essential teaching of Jesus. They have been taken seriously from literal to metaphorical, from concrete pragmatic directives to poetic unrealistic hopes of how heaven is. They include a tension between now, and what is to come, as each beatitude contains the first verb in the present tense, with a dependent clause articulated in the future tense.

the crowds. While the crowd seems like a faceless mass, the text implies that it's made up of all those we've heard about suffering from illness, disease and social rejection in Matthew 5:23-24.

BLESSED: in Greek – μακάριος; pronounced [**MAKARIOS**]: most often translated as “blessed,” “fortunate,” or “happy.” In the Ancient World could also mean “wealthy,” seeming to be tied to a notion of blessing related to material well-being, given by the gods. Here then Jesus seems to be saying something radically divergent from the established social-religious notion of blessing as possessing lots or good things. It's also implies a dynamic call to action and engagement extended to those who don't usually see themselves as actors worthy, capable and needed to participate in the transformation and redemption of the world. It could thus also be translated as “congratulations”; “Let's roll!”; “Get up! Get going!” “Let's do this thing!”; or the Spanish expression “Vamos!”

peacemakers:: εἰρηνοποιός [eirénopoios] from [eriéné] (peace) and [poiéó] (to make or do). Peace can have many different meanings across cultural contexts. The Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55 – 135 CE) defined peace as “calm detachment from surrounding circumstances” – a sort of serene detachment. In the time of Jesus peace was culturally often associated with Rome's peace (the Pax Romana) consistent of Rome's “gift” of order, security and prosperity, guaranteed by the emperor as commander of Rome's military to all peoples conquered and subject to the power of Rome. Calgacus, an enemy of Rome. was a chieftain in what we now call Scotland in fighting the Roman Army in 83 ce said this of the Pax Romana - or Peace of Rome - or 84: “These plunderers of the world [the Romans], after exhausting the land by their devastations, are rifling the ocean: stimulated by avarice, if their enemy be rich; by ambition, if poor; unsatiated by the East and by the West: the only people who behold wealth and indigence with equal avidity. To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire; and where they make a desert, they call it peace.”

Biblically speaking peace שָׁלוֹם [shalom] is much more. It's both the gift and work of God, a cosmic peace in which all things are in just relation with each other and their creator. It's the well-being of the whole created order. Peacemakers describes those who work to halt wars among nations and those who seek harmony in personal relationships. It doesn't come at someone's expense or subjection. It is not complacent or indifferent. It's the thing that the Messiah – the prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) would bring. As a result sometimes peacemakers are seen to be troublemakers or unrealistic dreamers.

children of God:: To act like God is to be one of God's children now. God's children aren't shaped by ethnicity but by imitating God. To be like Jesus, to be a peacemaker, is to be a child of God.

Isaiah 2:1-5

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¹ The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² IN DAYS TO COME

the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all **the nations** shall stream to it.

³ Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between **the nations**,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵ O house of Jacob,
come, *let us walk*
in the light of the Lord!

John 14:23-27

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

[Responding to the fear of the disciples,]²³ Jesus answered
[Judas (not Iscariot) saying], ...

²⁵ "I have said these things to you while I am still with you."²⁶

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.²⁷ **Peace** I leave with you; **my peace** I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What grabs your attention in this reading?**
- **How do you need the shalom of God in Christ? How do we need it?**
- **What does it look like to be a peacemaker? How do we (you) do that concretely and pragmatically in daily life? How is that our vocation and identity as children of God?**

IN DAYS TO COME :: this is a traditional formula used by the Biblical prophets to talk about God's time, the future coming into our present. It's synonymous with the expression "in the last days." This is a vision which can only be expressed through poetry and metaphor.

the nations:: in Hebrew: גוֹי [goy] in Greek ἔθνος [ethnos]: meaning "a race, a nation, the nations (as distinct from Israel). It was used in particular by the Jews to talk of the Gentiles, or the heathen world. It implies races of people that do not (yet) know the ways of the God revealed in the Bible and story of Israel.

his ways | his paths :: while these are easy to picture literally, metaphorically they represent the way one lives, the road which one takes in life: lifestyle, worldview, life-commitments. It implies the choice between choosing to walk in the way of the Lord or in our own way.

let us walk :: הָלַךְ [halak] to go, come, walk both literally as in movement. The metaphorical meaning is the way in which one lives, how one walks through life. This final phrase is a sort of invitation to conversion or transformation.

Peace :: again this peace is different than peace understood in the world, specifically in the Roman Empire where peace came at the cost of military subjugation and domination. Shalom (Peace) was the standard Hebraic expression of "goodbye". It' the gift and work of God, what only God can give. Jesus signals his "departure" with this greeting, echoed in Colossians 3:15 "Let the peace of Christ reign in your hearts." It's a peace that the Messiah would bring as the Prince of Peace. It's the covenant that YHWH will make with the people (Ezekiel 37:26).