

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: Christians, Despised by the World, but Super-Blessed by the Father, A Study of the Beatitudes Part Eight. From Matthew 5:3-9

November 25, 2018

Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction:

Context

Exegesis (no need)

Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (ESV)

Word study: The Greek is a combination of 2 words: *eirana* (irenic) and *poios* (work) (Only time used in the Bible is here). Jesus wasn’t speaking in Greek but Aramaic and the listeners connected this concept with what they already knew. They would have been thinking of Psalm 34:11-14 which says: *“Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it”*. (ESV)

The Hebrew word they would have been thinking about is “shalom”. Shalom is much more than the absence of war and conflict it is encapsulated in the words harmony and fellowship and intimacy or deep deep friendship.

by Rabbi David Zaslow

“Contrary to popular opinion the Hebrew word shalom does not mean “peace,” at least not in the English sense of the word. It comes from a Hebrew root-word that means “wholeness.” And what is wholeness? In the Hebraic way of thinking, wholeness is the joining together of opposites. Shalom brings together people who disagree with each other so that each will listen deeply to the “other” side. It is the people you do not agree with who have the greatest gift for you – the gift of the potential for wholeness.¹

Or from another Jewish scholar:

¹ <https://rabbidavidzaslow.com/the-deeper-meaning-of-shalom/>

“The Hebrew word for peace, shalom (שלום) is derived from a root denoting wholeness or completeness, and its frame of reference throughout Jewish literature is bound up with the notion of shelemut, perfection”.²

1. Peacemakers therefore are those who bring about the wholeness of others. In other words it is not people who simply wish others well and wholeness but actually bring it about.
 - It is more than just getting two people to stop fighting.
 - It is getting two people to walk together in harmony and to be on the same side, or
 - As we will soon see, it is bringing others to God in order to be reconciled to Him.
2. Peacemakers are those who “pursue” making peace. Psalm 34:14 *“Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it”. (ESV)* This is an action verb.
 - The Jews listening to Jesus would have connected this command to an Old Testament sacrifice known as the Shalamin or Peace Offering. Leviticus 7:15 And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. (ESV)
 - In other words if they wanted to sit down and have a harmonious meal with God in the Temple they would have to pursue it by bringing their sin offerings first and then the shalom offering could come after.
 - The patriarch of the family would initiate this and make sure his family traveled to Jerusalem to partake of the yearly feasts.

But, some of them, if not many of them, would have gone further in their understanding of what Jesus was saying because their literature highlighted this virtue in one famous Israelite: Aaron. (This would be like us saying think of Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn or Robin Hood) Here is what their literature says:

Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures and bringing them close to the Torah. (m.Avot 1:12)³

3. It was Aaron’s job to bring peace between God and man (his fellow Israelites) by being the mediator who represented man before God.
 - According to their own literature, they were encouraged to be disciples of Aaron, meaning minor-high priests.
4. Therefore what the Jews heard Jesus saying was that they needed to be like Aaron who got right with God first on the Day of Atonement and then assisted others to get right with God.

² <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shalom/>

³ <https://www.emethatorah.com/blog/2014/january-26/blessed-are-peacemakers>

- In their limited understanding this probably meant they were to encourage fellow Jews to return to the Law of Moses and abandoned the legalistic law of the Pharisees, and by so doing find true salvation (shalom). *Psalms 85:4–9 Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us! Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly. Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. (ESV)*

but to the Apostles it soon meant:

- Bringing people to Jesus in order to be reconciled to God through Christ's shed blood on the cross. *Colossians 1:19–20 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (ESV)*

To summarize what they understood Jesus to be saying, this is what they heard:

1. They need to be the ones who bring others to a shalom-status with God.
2. They need to be the ones who bring shalom status to others: *Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. (ESV)*
3. They need to be the ones who are themselves at peace internally because of their trust in God. *Isaiah 26:3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (ESV)*
4. And some in the audience may just possibly have connected Jesus to the prophecy of *Isaiah 9:6–7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (ESV)*

What is their (our) reward for preaching the Good News of the Kingdom?

They will be called “sons of God”.

1. The “sons of God” in the Old Testament are supernatural created beings (of the angelic realm).

- This can be concluded from when God asked Job about his whereabouts on the days of creation: *Job 38:6–7 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (ESV)*
- It seems that these angelic beings had access to God’s throne even after Satan rebelled against God: *Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (ESV)* and *Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. (ESV)*
- Some of these supernatural beings rebelled against God and interbred among the human race to create a mixed breed of genetically modified humans who became giants. *Genesis 6:1–4 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. (ESV)*
- Prior to this rebellion, God had given each “son of God” the assignment to watch over an individual nation and people. It is uncertain what the angelic being was exactly responsible for although it appears from the Book of Daniel they wielded enormous political power (the name given to these super angelic beings eventually were “the Watchers” according to the Book of Enoch). *Deuteronomy 32:8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. (ESV)* *Daniel 10:10–14 And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.” (ESV)*

2. The audience listening to Jesus must have been astonished to hear that if they pursued peace to the degree that they helped people be at peace with God then someday they would be called the equivalent of a powerful supernatural being!
3. The Apostles must also have been astonished when they heard Jesus confirm his previous teaching when he said in: *Luke 20:34–36 And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. (ESV)*

Application

1. Ponder and absorb how important it is to God that we busy ourselves with the task of expanding the Kingdom of God and rescue people from the Kingdom of Darkness to grant his children such an honor as to become a “Son of God”!
2. Notice. 2 Corinthians 5:16–21 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)