

40-05-03.wpd -- The Happiness of True Christians, Part 3
 peace, soul-winning, discipleship, persecution
 Mt.5:9-12

The price of peace is to carry the cross.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)

–"Attitude is everything!" How we live depends on the attitude we live.
Beatitudes are "**happy**" attitudes of being, or "*be-attitudes*" of **blessing**.
 –"Lord bless me!" is a common prayer, but "*Make me a blessing*" better
 represents this list of *be-attitudes* (a goal to bless others, even God, as
 in the exclamation from the Psalms: "Bless the Lord, my soul!"
 --The last two beatitudes are closely tied together by the central theme
of the Cross: the peace this world seeks is in what the Prince of Peace
accomplished through *His death on a cross*, and **HOM.idea**.

I. The Practice of Peacemaking, v.9

A. Many are "*peace-lovers*"–God needs *peacemakers* for His Kingdom.

1. *Peace* is a real possibility! (or Jesus wouldn't have said this)
 - a. In history, it's better negotiated with words than weapons.
 - b. In relationships, it happens by communication, never coercion.
 - c. In the heart, it comes by *God's grace*, not by *self-righteousness*.
2. *Peace-making* is real work! (many facets to the job) **It's work...**
 - a. to keep peace from being lost and to recover it when it is
 - b. to devise *plans of peace* and to submit *proposals of peace*
 - c. to help close the distances that divide *families, neighbors, citizens, and nations*. [Mediators of peace, by standing between two opposing factions, often get blasted from both sides–**HOM.idea**.]

B. The ***real work of peace*** is to bring Christ into the situation!

1. Because the meaning of true peace is found in Him:
 - a. The OT word *shalom* stands for *safety, health, contentment, prosperity*, [from Heb. root word *shalam*, meaning "*to pay, make good*"!]
 - b. Peace in NT Greek means a state of *harmony or tranquility, free from havoc and discord* [from the Gk. verb root "*to join*"]
 - c. Both these OT and NT meanings converge in Christ:
 - (1) Christ paid the debt of peace-- **Col.1:19**. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 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.

(2) He joins what is divided [Jew & Gentile]– **Eph 2:13-14**. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

2. (*) Because the Gospel of Christ is the message of peace:
 - a. It was the prophet's message– **Isa.9:6b-7a**, ...he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.
 - b. It was the angel's message– **Luke 2:14** (NKJV), "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"
 - c. It was the Christ's own message– **John 14:27**, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."
 - d. It is our message– **Eph.6:15**, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. (Where Christian feet go, the Gospel of Christ should go, bringing *Gospel peace*)
- C. This beatitude's reward is "*they will be called sons of God*"– (not about *gender* but *character*, because peacemaking is a God-like work)
 1. A worldly person seeks self-centered peace (absence of conflict that disrupts or interferes with "*my rights...opinion... privacy*")
 2. Children of the Trinity [*God of peace; Prince of Peace; Spirit of peace*] seek a peace for all humanity through the Reign of Christ.

II. The Peacemaker's Path May Lead to Persecution, v.10-12

- A. The great paradox in Christianity, **v.10a** ("*happy...when persecuted*")
 1. Persecution began in NT times, continued in the early church, and became common in the modern missionary movement.
 2. Why is this so? [**Tertullian**: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."] Where the church has grown by **spreading Christ's peace**, it has been **at the price of carrying the cross**.
 3. Today this historical trend has only escalated (Christianity is more persecuted worldwide than ever before [Est. 75 million martyrs in history, 45 million in just the last century!]).
- B. Jesus explained why this happens:
 1. In **v.10b** (which repeats **v.3** ["*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*"] almost summarizing the *Beatitudes*) We are aliens, loyal to a foreign King whose values and plans oppose those of this world.
 2. People suffer *insults* and *slander* and *persecution* in this life for many reasons, but when they come, Jesus says in **v.11**, "*because of*

me," then we are "blessed"— we are "happy"— **John 15:19-21**, "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

C. We are to "rejoice and be glad" (v.12) for two reasons:

1. In a world that ignores *ultimates*, we await an ultimate reward...
 - a. We are "happy," when spoken of poorly by the world, because later our King will speak of us richly.
 - b. We are "happy" to enjoy life in God's Kingdom now & forever, even at the cost of worldly reputation or comfort —**Rom.14:17,19**, For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,...Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.
2. AND we're in *good company*, "*for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*" **We are "blessed"— we are "happy"...**
 - a. to have "*the communion of saints*" on a well-beaten pathway;
 - b. to have the same grace that got them through horrible suffering.
 - c. to have divine comfort— **2Co.1:5**, For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.
 - d. to have divine strength that brings us to victory— **2Co.12:10**, That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

CONCLUSION:

—**The price of peace is to carry the cross.** (*Cross-bearing* for some is merely *cross-wearing*, a fad in jewelry, instead of a symbol of execution that identifies us with our own death-to-self in Christ.)

—Having paid for our peace with His own life, Jesus invites us to enjoy happiness by becoming citizens of His Kingdom. But it will cost us an attitude change, a change in life-style, it will cost us our lives.

--This is **the happiness of true Christians**, seen in the Beatitudes, the call of the cross-bearing Christ: "*Take up your cross and follow Me.*"

Matthew 5:9-12 (NIV)

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.