

Sun., Feb. 14:

Memory Verse: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." - Matthew 5:9-10

Message: **Momentum (The Beatitudes) #7: Peace and Persecution** -Pastor David

Sermon Scripture: Matthew 5:9-10

Reading of Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

Blurb: We come to the end of our Eight Beatitudes series, culminating in God's desire that we be peacemakers. This is hard work, but we reflect God's very character when we do. It's ironic, however, that when we make peace, we experience persecution. Yet our blessing carries us. The series is ending, but it is for us an ongoing pattern of discipleship. Let's keep the momentum!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew
Happy Valentine's Day!

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor Andrew
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." -Matthew 5:9-10

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify
For God Alone (Psalm 62)
Surrounded

PRAYERS -Pastor Andrew

[In Person Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *For God Alone (Psalm 62)* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David
Valentine's Day! Forest Hills heart-peace-cross stickers.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." -Matthew 5:9-10

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify
Love Is a Mess
O God of Every Nation
Surrounded (Fight My Battles)
Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: -Pastor Andrew with the Borst children.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV) -Reader: Michael Berglund

We read the Beatitudes one more time, all together. Notice this time how they end. Jesus explains more about the persecution that blessed people experience. Matthew 5:1-12,

1 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them.

He said:

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 be shown 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.

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.’”

LOVE.GROW.SERVE. MOMENT: Grow Groups sign up -Pastor Andrew

PRAYERS -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Momentum (The Beatitudes) #7: Peace and Persecution

PP#1: Momentum (The Beatitudes): Righteousness

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” -Matthew 5:9-10

Momentum (The Beatitudes). Peace and Persecution. Hmmm...do they go together? Well, today we find out they do! Christians have peace during persecution! But Jesus is also describing Christians as peacemakers. Matthew 5:9-10, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

PP#2: The Eight Beatitudes

1. Description of mature Xn discipleship
2. Prescription of how to grow spiritually
3. Window to see Jesus better

So, we're coming to the end of our eight rings of The Beatitudes! But it's not like we're "finishing them," as in *completing* them. We're just nearing our explanation of them. It's kind of like reading the Bible through. When you finish Revelation, you're not "done" with the Bible. You just now have a better total overview. Then it's time to go back and dig deeper in specific places, and applying it. It's important to make that move from understanding it to living it.

The Beatitudes, we've learned, are a *description* of mature Christian discipleship. This is what a mature Christian looks like. And so, one key application as we encounter the Beatitudes is to always ask ourselves: Does this describe me? Am I living like this? It helps us get a clearer picture of where we are and where we are headed, where we need to grow spiritually. A diagnostic tool.

But the Beatitudes—thank you Jesus!—are also a *prescription* for mature Christian discipleship. They also describe *how* to grow in maturity. They provide a pattern, a pathway, to grow. They are like gymnastic rings all lined up. We always approach our spiritual growth the same way, whether we are tackling a powerful sin or stumbling block in our lives, or whether we are starting the next day in our Christian lives. We start by climbing on the platform. That is the desire for more, a desire to be different, to want to be more like Jesus.

PP#3: *Image of a person resting rather than working out.*

Now, pause here a moment. As I've been wrestling with these Beatitudes, it's dawned on me that sometimes our biggest struggle is just to get on the platform! We don't necessarily feel a big desire to grow, to improve, to want more, to conquer our sin. The couch looks a lot more attractive! So, let's be honest: an important part of living for Jesus is making the ongoing choice for more. In what ways have you "settled" for things just the way they are, or are not overly motivated to improve, just not wanting to do *the work* of the workout. This is always true: God will not save us without ourselves. We must, as Paul says in Philippians 2:12, "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling." We need to choose to want more, to be different. We need to make the effort, to go step up to the platform. Without this, you stay an armchair Christian. You stay the same. The Beatitudes become merely something you know but don't live out. Maybe this Wednesday, as we observe Ash Wednesday, you need to be honest about a reluctance to working the workout!

PP#4: *Image of the "Beatitude Tree" (with roots, trunk, fruit) from Collin's book*

But, when you resolve to step up to the platform, the Holy Spirit works in you. He gives you a momentum that will carry you forward and change you, bringing you victory and maturity. From the podium, everyone can always reach the first ring, which is poverty of spirit. It's admitting that we can't go any further in our own strength. From there we can reach the ring of mourning our sin, for the Holy Spirit reveals to us the ways we are "off" from God. We must admit them and give them up to Jesus. That, then, gives us the momentum to reach the ring of meekness, of putting our personal mission under God's mission for our lives. It's a surrender, a submission. These first rings of spiritual humility are the roots that grow the shoot of the godly life. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They live the blessed life! They are blessed, are happy in their souls, are living in God's kingdom.

Now, this life bears the mature fruit of the mature Christian facing any and all things of life. We've seen this fruit in those amazing saints we are blessed to be around. We see them showing mercy even when others deserve it least. We see in them a pure heart, a grounded centeredness out

of which pours blessing and calm in the midst of craziness. We see them bring peace wherever they are, and we see them return blessing for persecution. And, at times, we notice that *we* do this, too.

Now, bearing these fruit is the hardest part of the Christian life. They mark the *mature* Christian. The more consistent the fruit, the more like Jesus. And often, if I'm honest, we stall here in these. We lose our momentum, we fail at living this way. We can even fall off the rings. But, when we do, we go back to the podium—resolve to be different—and grab the first ring—admitting we can't do it on our own—and begin to swing again. This is what a mature Christian looks like.

PP#5: Blessed are the peacemakers

So, today we come to the last of the 7 attitudes that Jesus says describe the character of blessed life. (The last Beatitude is not a developed quality...we'll come back to that.) Now, as Jesus lists this last, it seems He is suggesting that this may be the most difficult of all the Christian attributes to develop. This is the "top rung" of the ladder, so to speak. Living as a peacemaker is even more advanced than having a pure heart. Wow!

And, He's saying, the momentum to live as a peacemaker comes from being merciful and having purity of heart. A pure heart *pushes* us to become a peacemaker.

PP#6: Blessed are the peacemakers

Peace = Shalom

Okay, what is the peace that God's people are supposed to be making? The Bible's word for "peace" is "shalom." It's a Jewish word that is much more complex than the English translation. It's far more than the absence of conflict. Shalom means being centered, having an internal grounding that keeps you settled no matter what you are facing. It's being "right" with God, yourself, and others. It's not having a war *within* you. We'll come back to that.

You see, biblically, peace is the very nature of God, and God's intention for His creation. Having a pure heart means having a heart after God's heart, which is a heart of peace. When Jesus, the Savior of the world is born, the angels proclaim what it's all about. Why did Jesus come? The angels said, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, *peace* to those whom He favors!" God's kingdom is a kingdom of peace. Jesus came to bring God's peace in a world of division, violence, chaos. In the creation story, God brings order to the chaos that was swirling. Peace. To the chaos of sin Jesus comes as Peace. At the end times, Satan and evil are destroyed. Peace.

PP#7: Blessed are the peacemakers

Peace = Shalom

God is a peacemaker

God's people are peacemakers

"God has called you to peace." -1 Cor. 7:15

God is a peacemaker. And therefore, God's people, while still in the chaos of this worldly life, notice it says in 1 Corinthians 7:15, are called to peace. We are to ourselves experience Shalom in our lives, and we are to promote shalom wherever we go.

Diagnostically, does this describe you? Are you at peace? How about in your life, with those you touch. Do you leave a wake of godly peace?

PP#8: Blessed are the peacemakers

Peace = Shalom

God is a peacemaker

God's people are peacemakers

God's people *plan* peace

“Pursue the goal of peace along with everyone.” -Hebrews 12:14

The Bible says that God's people promote peace. We are God's peace agents “on site,” “on the ground,” “in the game.” Peace makers. We don't just get lucky. We intentionally foster peace, we work at it. We are all God's peace workers!

That means we have to be strategic. We have to ask, what will promote peace in my family, at work, in this situation, with that person? Then we have to plan for it.

Hebrews 12:14 says, “*Pursue* the goal of peace along with everyone—and holiness as well, because no one will see the Lord without it.” Keep working at it, day after day. Intentionally plan for it. Proverbs 12:20 “Those who plan peace have joy.” Blessing, joy, comes when you *plan* peace. James 3:18 says, “Those who make peace show the seeds of justice by their peaceful acts.”

PP#9: Blessed are the peacemakers

Peace = Shalom

God is a peacemaker

God's people are peacemakers

God's people *plan* peace

God's people *have* peace: singleness of heart

So, pretty advanced Christian living, right? Planning and bringing God's peace wherever we go! Pastor Collin Smith, who we are using as a guide through this Beatitudes series, says, “People bring peace to others because they have it themselves.” We can't bring to others what we don't have.

The momentum for being a peacemaker comes from the previous ring, right? What is that ring? Having a pure heart! What is a pure heart? It's having singleness of heart, a heart that is focused on pursuing God. James 4:1 asks the Christians, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires at war within you?” Inner warring desires bring fights. Singleness of heart brings peace. You want shalom? Get your heart focused on God. You want to be a peacemaker? Get your heart focused on God. Divided people have inner conflict, and no peace. Elijah challenged the people on Mt. Caramel, “How long will you hobble back and forth between two positions? If the Lord is God, follow God!” (1 Kings 18:21) Conflicted inside.

PP#10: *Image of a full cup spilling.*

People are like cups filled to the brim: what fills us will spill out of us when we hit a bump. When someone bumps you, what splashes on them? Is it the staining, caustic mix of conflict on the inside? Or is it the purity of peace that God has poured into you? I've really been thinking about this image this past week. What spills out when I hit a bump? Psalm 23:5, “My cup runs over,” spilling—splashing!—God's goodness and mercy on everyone and everything around me!

“Blessed are the peacemakers,” says Jesus, “because they will be called the children of God.” You know, this is in the passive: “they will be called.” By others? By those whom we have splashed on! People with a pure heart are filled up to the brim with God, who is peace. We are God's children,

walking around with full cups of peace, splashing God's peace on others. And others, when we splash on them, are they put off by what we've spilled on them, or do they praise God and say, "When I accidentally bumped into her, I got God's peace on me!" That's a child of God!

How do we spill peace on others? One quick biblical "tip" (pardon the pun!) Remember, Jesus lives these beatitudes? How does Jesus bring peace to us, in our own hearts and in our relationships with others? He offers Himself to die on the cross. He empties Himself. He doesn't hang on to His rights. He steps down from His rightful position in order to make peace.

We are to be like Jesus. We have His peace in us, so now the Holy Spirit can prompt us to also give up our high position. We choose to not hang onto our rights. When others violate us, and we have the right to be offended, to push away, to retaliate, to get even, we let go of that right to make peace. Now, there are times we must press our rights in order to stand for godly righteousness. But peacemaking is always a function of forgiveness, and in forgiveness we give up the right to be right. See now how this Beatitude is just so hard? It can only come when we are filled by God's forgiveness of us first, and with a heart that has been changed toward forgiveness. Your offense, your pain, your violation, this you take to the cross. Jesus hung it there, and that's where it goes.

Jesus' blood is what splashes on us and cleans us from our sin. This is God's love pouring out on us when God is "bumped!" And this love pours out of our hearts when others bump us.

Jesus is God's Son. And we are also called God's children. We also are peacemakers!

PP#11: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." -Matthew 5:10

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." -Matthew 5:11-12

And this then leads us to the last Beatitude. Now, this is not a characteristic we are to grow in us as disciples. This is something that happens to us when we choose the righteous life. This beatitude names the reality that when we choose the blessed way, when we do it all *right*, and according to God's plan, we will be persecuted. It's honest. It's not, "When you live God's way, then everything goes well." When others target you, it's not because you're doing it wrong. When you do it right, then others persecute you. You see, choosing God's way means you don't live other ways, and those other ways try to pressure you to do things their way.

In fact, Jesus follows up the 8 Beatitudes by saying a bit more about this last one. Verse 11, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. [Because you are a Jesus disciple. In stead,] 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven [your path of life leads to glory for eternity. Besides, you're in good company!], for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Pursuing the hard work of these rings of blessing, says Jesus, will result in being persecuted by the world, but in being blessed by God.

You're choosing God's side, and that means you're against Satan's side. And Satan is working full-time in this world to defeat blessing. Others who do not see things God's way will be suspicious of you, stay distant, even become hostile. Jesus names that being targeted for your faith is the normal Christian experience. Expect it!

What a great, positive note to end on, Jesus! Thanks.

But don't ever stop hearing the last part of each of the Beatitudes. Nine times in nine verses, Jesus says you are blessed. And here, even in persecution, never forget, yours "is the kingdom of

heaven.” It’s yours now, in this life, and it is yours in the life that will never end. Nothing tops that! With that promise, we can endure any persecution with inner peace and create peace wherever we are. And we eagerly keep the momentum growing spiritually.

Blessed are you, disciple of Jesus!

Amen!

[In Person Only] CLOSING SONG: *Servant Song*

OFFERING: -Pastor David

-Give of your monies to God’s work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the “square” on the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Ash Wed. this Wed. Start Lent series: Empty! “Empty Chair.”

Begin Lenten fast from screens - Wednesday

Next week’s message: “Empty Life.”

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” -Matthew 5:9-10

BENEDICTION -Pastor David