

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: July 4, 2010

Making Peace, or Keeping the Peace?

by Dan Trygg

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Matt. 5:9 NASB

“The one gesturing with the eyes with deceit gathers together grief to people, but the one showing someone his error with openness makes peace.”

Prov. 10:10 LXX

The Septuagint (LXX) was a translation of the Old Testament into Greek. It was translated about 250 B.C. in Egypt, and was widely disseminated to the Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora, i.e., those living outside of Judea. **Examining the opening remarks of Jesus in the sermon on the mount (traditionally called the “beatitudes”) in light of this Greek translation can open up some very dramatic and powerful insights** into the impact these sayings would have had on Jesus’ audience. The seventh “declaration of happiness” is good example. Seeing the LXX connection brings a whole different angle to the thrust of this passage than would otherwise probably be understood. **The Galilean Jews who were gathered at Jesus’ feet on the mountainside were largely Greek-speaking.** Their dealings with the business world around them had forced them to utilize the common speech of the day. **Furthermore, they had been taught the Scriptures in Greek from the time they were little, as undoubtedly was Jesus.** The LXX was the version they were familiar with. Thus, when Jesus spoke these sayings, He was not uttering pronouncements in a vacuum. **Jesus was referring to passages in the Greek OT, which His listeners would have recognized.** For them, hearing these words would have brought up much more than what was said on the surface. It would have dialed up in their minds the passages in which these words had been used in the LXX. **Those verses would have colored their understanding of what Jesus was saying.** Unfortunately for us, this LXX connection is not so obvious. Most of us can’t read Greek, much less the Greek of more than 2,260 years ago. Even if we could, **we are not familiar enough with the LXX to begin to make associations like Jesus’ listeners would have.**

In this passage, the OT reference is quite distinct. The word translated as “peacemakers” here in Matthew 5:9 is a compound pronoun (Gk. – εἰρηνοποιός), a combination of the verb “to make” and the word for “peace”. It is an unusual word form. It only occurs here in the New Testament. The root word also only occurs once in the LXX, in Prov. 10:10, in the verbal form (εἰρηνοποιεῖ). If you look this verse up in your English Bible, however, you will quite likely find that the latter half of the verse does not at all resemble the translation of the LXX which I have above. **The Massoretic Hebrew text, from which most of our English OT’s are translated, is obviously different.** Scholars think that there must have been another Hebrew version in existence in 250 B.C. which the LXX translators used in this case. There is no way to go from the Massoretic Hebrew text that we have today to arrive at the LXX version. **This is a strong argument that Jesus was speaking in Greek, not Hebrew-Aramaic as some have supposed.** He was making a clear reference to the LXX. **The fact that this word usage was (1.) unusual; and, (2.) that it only occurred in one LXX passage, most likely indicates that Jesus meant for His listeners to think of Prov. 10:10 when they heard His declaration.**

So, what is the point of this statement, “Fortunate are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”? Why is it important to see this LXX connection? On the surface, **peacemakers are those who negotiate a healing of relationships, where some kind of breach, gap, fracture or open hostility exists between two people.** A peacemaker steps into this situation and brings the two parties together to bring about reconciliation. **Someone who consistently does this will be recognized as a child of God, because bringing about healing and reconciliation is a God-like thing.** It goes against the normal human tendency of *feeding* fires of hostility, instead of putting them out.

If we look at the LXX version of Prov. 10:10, there is a contrast painted between two types of individuals. The first is a treacherous person, who is suggesting some inappropriate course of action by gesturing deceitfully with his or her eyes. Or, if a small group is being described, this person is making faces behind his or her associate, rolling the eyes, or in some other way mocking what is being said by his or her compatriot. This trivializes the person who is trying to legitimately share their thoughts. It sows disrespect for them, and attempts to divert the attention of the onlooker away from the speaker to the mocker. **The gesturer hijacks our attention without using any legitimate content, just by the manner in which they present themselves.** The power of the gesturing is in the secretiveness of their actions, suggesting that *they* have something to offer that is *better* than what is happening or being said, but that it is not *for everyone*. **It is a secret to be shared with the gesturer and you. This immediately draws us into the darkness, the hiddenness, the secretive, which isolates us from others and is fertile ground for further sin.**

A course of action suggested under the cover of secrecy usually is kept from open view because there is something wrong about it. Any “inside jokes” or “juicy gossip” shared in secret at the expense of others will color our

relationships with them. If someone is gesturing for us to go off in secret, then our shields need to go up. This is dangerous ground. Furthermore, *we are being manipulated* by someone's body language, drawn to follow them, when they have not even shared any actual positive content with us. What's up with *that*? Just because someone is acting like they have some special secret, I am supposed to jump up to follow them? **Watch out for people who do this** regularly. **By using secrecy, they get you moving in their direction before you even find out what it is that they have in mind.** Prov. 6:12-15 warns about such people, "A worthless person, a wicked man goes about with a perverse mouth, who winks (gestures) with the eyes, who signals with his feet, who makes signs with his fingers; who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil, who *spreads strife*. (Note this! They sow strife, the *opposite* of peacemaking.) Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing." Again, Prov. 16:30 says, "He who winks (gestures with) his eyes does so to devise perverse things; he who compresses his lips brings evil to pass." If you read the preceding verses, you find that *the context is again about spreading strife and slander*. Psa. 35:19,20 is another passage about the same themes, treacherous people winking the eyes and speaking deceitful things which do not sow peace. Now, this does not mean that *all* winking or gesturing with the eyes is wrong! I find it interesting, however, that the scripture is so specific about these body and facial movements. God wants us to be forewarned and be aware that **the person who is using these kind of furtive behaviors is usually doing so to avoid being detected, which usually means they want to do something which is wrong, divisive and destructive.**

What is the alternative from Prov. 10:10? **What is the *other* kind of person described in this verse? "The one showing someone his error with openness makes peace."** This is the opposite of deceit. It is the opposite of secrecy, darkness or hiddenness. **A peacemaker is someone who brings things out into the light. He or she goes to the offender and shares openly and frankly what the area of concern is.**

Note that the purpose of this is not an excuse just to "vent" on the other person. **There is a legitimate and heartfelt desire to help the other person see that they are believing or doing something that is mistaken, short-sighted, wrong or destructive, so that they can benefit from this insight.** The focus here is on exposure of the darkness, the error. **The word for "showing the person his error" can range from "expose" to "convince" to even "rebuke", leaving us a lot of room to work through whatever needs to be worked through.**

The goal, however, is to "make peace" by bringing about agreement to the truth. **Open, honest, respectful sharing with the other person is the best way to bring about such peace. First of all, if you treat the person with respect, by open, honest communication, they are less likely to get defensive, and not even hear you out. Secondly, you show that you value the person by coming to them, and protecting their reputation with others. Thirdly, you keep the issue the issue.** If you are discovered talking behind someone's back, they will be angry about *that*, and be less likely to be able to focus on the issue that they may have. They will be offended and hostile because they will *feel betrayed*. It will be harder to repair that breach of trust than if you would have had the courage to go to them directly in the first place. If you can openly, respectfully come to that person with humility, they will more likely hear you out.

What is the difference between "making peace" and "keeping the peace"? A lot of us have come from families where we have learned to keep up the *appearance* of peace by *not* addressing issues openly. *We have learned to keep the peace by hiding and avoiding the conflict.* The problem is that this is not real. **This is an *illusion* of peace. If there cannot be a healthy discussion about problems, then the abusive, destructive behaviors will probably continue.** Those who are abusive and irresponsible are enabled by family members and friends who "cover" for them. Eventually, however, **the unresolved hostility this produces causes either an *explosion* in the relationship, or an *implosion* in some of the people who are "giving in to get along".** Either there will be a big blowout, or there will be emotional withdrawal, sickness, depression and the coping techniques people use to cover their inner pain. **Real peace in relationships only comes from open, honest, respectful communication.** When we have been trampled in the past, it may be hard to begin to do that. **We can learn to develop these skills with one another in the Body of Christ. It is to be a learning laboratory for developing health and personal growth.**

Jesus' declaration about peacemakers is a statement that **the kingdom of God will *not* be a place with unresolved pretense. Kingdom people will learn to be open, confident enough to deal with the hurts and broken relationships of those around them.** Just as Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and reconcile us to God, *we also have been given the ministry of reconciliation.* **As we do this, people will see God at work in our lives, and they will recognize that we are children of God. Through peace-making, we will gain credibility in their eyes to share the Gospel, and to talk about things of God.**