

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: September 13, 2015

Making Peace, or Keeping the Peace?

by Dan Trygg

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

Matthew 5:9 NASB

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

Proverbs 10:10 LXX

Examining the opening remarks of Jesus (traditionally called the “Beatitudes”) in the Sermon on the Mount in light of the Septuagint Greek translation of the OT (LXX) has opened up some very dramatic and powerful insights into the impact these sayings would have had on Jesus’ audience. This seventh “declaration of happiness” is no different. Again, **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.** The LXX was the version they were familiar with. *When Jesus spoke these sayings, He was not uttering pronouncements in a vacuum. He was referring to passages in the Greek OT, which His listeners would have recognized.* For them, hearing these words would have dialed up the passages in which these words had been used in the LXX. **The meanings of those passages would have colored their understanding of what Jesus was saying.** These allusions to these well-known Greek quotations add another layer of context which may not be readily apparent to us.

In this passage, the OT reference is quite distinct. The word translated as “peacemakers” here is a compound word, a combination of the verb “to make” and the word for “peace”. It is an unusual word form. It only occurs here in Matthew 5:9 in the New Testament. The root word also only occurs once in the LXX, in Proverbs 10:10, in the verbal form. 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 which the LXX translators used in this case. There is no way to go from the Massoretic Hebrew text that we have to arrive at the LXX rendering. This is another 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 Proverbs 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 the 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 referred to as a child of God, because bringing about healing and reconciliation like this is a God-like thing. It goes against the normal human tendency of *feeding* fires of hostility, instead of *putting them out*. Often, people will pick up other people’s offenses, side with their friend, and add to the divisiveness.

If we look at the LXX version of Proverbs 10:10, there are two very different scenarios that could be being described. In the first case, a treacherous person is suggesting some inappropriate course of action by gesturing deceitfully with their eyes. In the other possible setting, a small group is being described. One of the group members is talking, while another is making faces behind their associate, rolling their eyes, or in some other way making a mockery of the things being said by their compatriot. This kind of behavior trivializes the person who is trying to legitimately share their thoughts. It sows disrespect for them, and attempts to divert the attention of the other onlookers away from the speaker to the mocker.

In either of these examples, there is an element of superiority or bullying going on. The gesturer hijacks the attention of others 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 is usually kept from open view *because there is something wrong or inappropriate 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. They are being manipulative and asserting their agenda over you by sheer social pressure.*** By using secrecy, they get you moving in their direction before you even find out what it is that they have in mind. **Proverbs 6:12-15** warns us about such people, "A worthless person, a wicked man is the one who walks with a perverse (crooked) 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, **Proverbs 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!* **Psalm 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 kinds of furtive behaviors is usually doing so to avoid being detected, ...which usually means they want to do something which is potentially wrong and destructive.**

What is the alternative from Proverbs 10:10? "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 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* to just "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 approach the issue in different ways. **The goal, however, is to "make peace" by bringing about agreement to the truth.** Read on in the context. The righteous speak life, while the wicked cause strife (vss. 11,12).

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. 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 of concern. 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 (Prov. 18:19). "Love *covers* all offenses" (Prov. 10:12). It protects the reputation of others. **Thirdly, you keep the issue the issue.** If you can avoid these other entanglements, you can deal honestly and squarely with the real matter that needs to be addressed.

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.** This is co-dependent. **If there cannot be a healthy discussion about problems, then any abusive, destructive behaviors will likely continue.** Those who are abusive, or irresponsible, are being *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 can only come from open, honest, respectful communication.** When we have been trampled in the past, it may be hard to begin to do that with those people who have hurt us. **We can begin to develop these skills with one another in the Body of Christ, however. The Church is meant to be a learning laboratory for developing health and personal growth** (Eph. 4:11-5:17).

Jesus' declaration about peacemakers is a statement that the Kingdom of God will not be a place with unresolved pretense. Kingdom people are to learn to be open, able to deal honestly and tactfully 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, He also has given us the ministry of reconciliation. As we bring the truth to light, people who respond will experience God's reconciling work in their lives and relationships.** James, the brother of Jesus, observed, "The fruit of righteousness is *sown* in peace *by the ones making peace*" (Jas. 3:18). The agapē-love of God will motivate us to bring grace, truth and health into our relationships with others (II Cor. 5:14-21; I Cor. 13:4-8a). People will see the change in how we approach others, and the good fruit it produces. **When the Church, as a whole, lives this way, people will begin to recognize that it is because we are children of God that we have become peacemakers.**