



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Life Group Notes from Sunday 21st August 2022

Blessed are the peacemakers by Fiona Mayne

Last week Andy Butcher was talking about Jacob wrestling with God and receiving a blessing from him. Today we are following on in the bible and looking at the passage in Genesis 33 1-11 where Jacob and Esau meet and make up after a family feud between them.

We see that Jacob had to take the initiative in the reconciliation to make it happen and took a huge risk in going to Esau and hoping he would accept the apology and peace offering. He might not have been forgiven or might even have been killed.

We see that if Jacob and Esau can reconcile after all that had gone on between them then anyone can. Neither twin was faultless in the story though as we saw and in our own situations, we're kidding ourselves if we think we are blameless.

But both Jacob and Esau were willing to be peacemakers and both brothers grew more like Jesus in their state of forgiveness. We even see that Jacob thought Esau looked like God when they met because he was in an attitude of complete forgiveness with is a beautiful thing and made him look Christ like. The twins' relationship was fully restored in that moment. Jacob's name was changed from Jacob meaning deceiver to Israel meaning he wrestles with God.

So as the title of the talk is blessed are the peacemakers I wanted to go on to look in more detail now about what being a peacemaker like the twins in the story means.

The seventh beatitude in the bible says Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God. So what did Jesus mean by peacemaker and how is it relevant to us today? One definition of a peacemaker is someone who is actively seeking peace. It's important to remember that peace in the Bible is always based on justice and righteousness. Where you have justice and righteousness you also have peace. But without those two things, lasting peace isn't possible because people don't feel fairly treated.

The word make in the word "peacemakers" comes from the Greek verb that means "to do" or "to make.". It's a verb which implies action and initiative not being passive. For example in war someone has to lead armies to the table and give them a reason to put down their guns and negotiate. Notice that Jesus didn't say Blessed are the peace wishers! Peace has to be made, it doesn't happen by chance. A peacemaker is never passive. They always take the initiative. In such an unpeaceful world as the one we live in today it's even more important for us to be peacemakers.

A peacemaker is someone who has peace in their own heart and walks closely with God, otherwise they can't help others if they are not at peace themselves. In a stressful situation we can pray to God to help us be at peace.

To be a peacemaker you have to be gentle and fair. You can't just gloss over problems as if they don't exist but actually have to help solve them. You have to be willing to actively listen. We can ask the holy spirit to guide us in these difficult situations and pray for wisdom. Peacemaking is divine work. God is the author of peace and, Jesus is the supreme peacemaker who came to establish peace.

It is crucial to talk to God in these tough situations of conflict in prayer before we talk to the people concerned. Doing this gives us wisdom on how to proceed. It gives us God's perspective and tenderness. God helps us see the deeper needs in the relationship and what's caused the problem. He, also, shows us our part, and our wrong words, behaviour, or attitude that might be stopping the reconciliation. If we go to speak to that person 121 and sort out the problem, however awkward that is it is best.

When you take the first step and speak to the other person, before you speak let them have their say and really listen with an open mind to how they feel. Go with a humble attitude like Jacob did. Consider their situation.

When you do that you earn a recognition that far exceeds anything you can imagine. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called children of God" The word called means to be officially designated so when we are peacemakers we are firmly on Gods team!

Reconciliation begins with God. When we spend time in God's presence in prayer and reading the bible it helps us to want to fix broken relationships in our lives because God is a God of love, not hate. He doesn't want us to have rage and revenge in our hearts but love and forgiveness. Reconciliation requires us to be humble and vulnerable like Jacob was in the story.

Unforgiveness on the other hand separates us from God. Unforgiveness is a real burden to carry around with you like a heavy backpack filled with bricks or tins. Another word for it is bitterness. It can affect your body making you ill, causing ulcers, depression and anxiety. Forgiving someone frees us and we literally feel like a weight has lifted off us. When we stop focusing on the past we can move forward to enjoy the present and future. It says in Matthew 6 if you forgive those who sin against you your heavenly father will forgive you your sins. There is no better feeling than forgiving someone and moving on with your life.

Discussion Questions

- 1 What are the similarities and differences between this passage and the passage about the prodigal son in Luke 15 11-32?
- 2 What are the benefits of forgiveness?
- 3 Can you think of obstacles to forgiveness that might get in the way?
- 4 How can praying and reading the Bible help us to forgive others?
- 5 Can you think of someone that you need to forgive and how could you take the first steps in this?