

Day 40
Whose Image do You Bear?

Matthew 5:9 (NTE) Blessings on the peacemakers! You'll be called God's children.

To become a peacemaker requires more than just having a peaceful demeanor or a stable composure. Jesus came to give us peace, but peace only comes to those who are willing to go the way of the cross, the way of holiness, and the way of the beatitudes. Those who are willing to admit their need for God and follow the path He has laid out. When the angel announced the birth of Jesus, it was an announcement of peace, with a qualification. Sometimes we glibly just say Jesus came to bring peace on earth, without understanding what the birth announcement actually said: *"Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 'Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.'"* (Luke 2:13-15 NLT)

Peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased! We know that Jesus pleased the Father. When Jesus was baptized by John, this is what the Father said: *"After Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up from the water. Suddenly, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down as a dove to him. 17 Then a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love—my Son with whom I am pleased.'"* (Matthew 3:16-17 GW) This is my (hyios) mature Son, with whom I am pleased. Jesus pleased the Father; He did only what the Father told Him to do. **Jesus knew Who He was and what He was given to do. In the same way, if we desire to walk in the power of the seventh beatitude, we must know who we are, Who we belong to and Who we are ultimately accountable to.** We can please the Father, by faith, because it is through faith that we receive the promise.

We cannot and will not have peace in our own lives until we understand Whose image we bear. Even if we live in an unfair and unequal world, we are required to acknowledge God first, so we may have His peace. When the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus, they conspired with some of the supporters of Herod and came to Jesus with one of those unfair issues of the day. What about the unfair taxes that we have to pay, surely He wouldn't want us to fund our own demise? *"Then the Pharisees met together to plot how to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested. 16 They sent some of their disciples, along with the supporters of Herod, to meet with him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we know how honest you are. You teach the way of God truthfully. You are impartial and don't play favorites. 17 Now tell us what you think about this: Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' 18 But Jesus knew their evil motives. 'You hypocrites!' he said. 'Why are you trying to trap me? 19 Here, show me the coin used for the tax.' When they handed him a Roman coin, 20 he asked, 'Whose picture and title are stamped on it?' 21 'Caesar's,' they replied. 'Well, then,' he said, 'give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.' 22 His reply amazed them, and they went away."* (Matthew 22:15-22 NLT)

Jesus asked them for a coin and then asked them whose image and title was on it; they answered, "Caesar's." So, Jesus said, (I am paraphrasing) ***"The coin has Caesar's image on it and so give to him what belongs to him. His image, his coin, he gets the taxes. You however are stamped with God's image. So if you are made in God's image, you have to give yourself to God, because you belong to Him."*** We need to be concerned with our relationship to the One who created us first, before we can attempt to change our world. **Taxes might be unfair, but what is worse, is that we bear God's image, but refuse to submit our lives to God's rule.** The world we live in today is not only refusing to admit God's image on them, they completely deny His authorship. The world rejects God's image and, therefore, loses identity, and then replaces it with whatever looks and feels good. So society becomes

more and more confused as it attempts to completely deny the existence of a good, loving and Holy God. Some say they believe in God, but claim that God approves of any and all identities as man sees fit. Yet, it leads to more and more confusion and even delusion; to the point that man has no rest and no peace. **The rejection of our God-created image will progressively lead to a path where peace is completely absent and darkness becomes our only constant.**

The mindset of today is not very dissimilar from the mindset that existed before Jesus came. Zechariah's prophecy about Jesus pointed to the need in the hearts and minds of people. ***"Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace."* (Luke 1:78-80 NLT)** In our culture today, we claim so-called enlightenment, yet things are getting darker. **We sit in our darkness, proclaiming we have the light and the path to peace, yet when you pull back the proverbial covers, you will find nothing but turmoil, anger, angst, anxiety and stressed out human beings. Jesus cannot give us the peace we need until we receive His light.** Rejecting the Light from heaven and denying the image we bear is a guaranteed way to ensure that we will never find the path to peace.

So God, in His tender mercy, releases His love through His Son. Jesus, the Morning Light from heaven, shines into our hearts and gives us His light that dispels the darkness. **The dawn of His grace breaks open the prison of our darkness and we can finally see. So now we walk in the light as He is in the Light and are being cleansed.** That brings His refreshing and peace to hearts who desperately need it. Then Jesus tells us we are the image bearers of our Heavenly Father and He sends us just like the Father sent Him. Now we have become the salt and the light to a dark and distasteful world, a world that has lost its path to peace and needs peacemakers. **Peacemakers look like their Father to help show the world the Way to peace.**

We need to stop being so consumed with fighting the culture we are living in, and instead, we need to live the Kingdom culture that Jesus showed us in the beatitudes. We need to stop complaining about the culture and the politics and do what the Holy Spirit told us to do through Paul. ***"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2 Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and pleases God our Savior."* (1 Timothy 2:1-3 NLT)** Do you want to please the Father? Then pray for all people! That includes the people you might disagree with or even those who oppose you. What should we pray for them? Pray that God would help them, stand in the gap for them, and give thanks for them. How can we give thanks for people who do not acknowledge God or are downright hostile to the things and people of God? **Giving thanks is an act of faith and obedience. By giving thanks, we are acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from our Father.** Giving thanks declares God's sovereignty even over our enemies; it enables us to walk by faith and to trust God for the outcome. There is not one instance in the New Testament that we see Jesus complaining about any of the injustice or even malice of those in authority. What we do see, and we see it over and over again, is Jesus praying to the Father and giving thanks.

Our example is Christ! He is the firstborn. He is the Perfect Son. He is the model and pattern. He is the standard and the measure. **Praying, instead of complaining, shows that we are our Father's sons. It shows that we are peacemakers who desire peace and who want to live lives marked by godliness and dignity.** When we do this, we, just like Jesus, please the Father and He works in the lives of people to accomplish His purposes. ***"But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. 14 And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless***

in his sight. 15 And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him." (2 Peter 3:13-15 NLT)

Whose image do you bear? Whose character do you portray? Whose behavior do you emulate? Who do you follow? If you say, "Jesus," then demonstrate His character of peace. As you bear the image of your Father, allow Him to bring about what He has promised! Live your life in such a way, that it will draw others to your Father's love. If it takes longer than you think it should, remind yourself it is your Father's patience at work. So, be prayerfully patient, live pure, blameless and peaceful, and so bear your Father's image.

Reflection and Prayer:

- **Pray for those in authority. Pray sincerely for them and ask the Lord to work in their lives to fulfill His purposes.**
- **Take a moment and thank the Lord for them. Do it by faith and trust the Lord's faithfulness to help you have a heart for those who do not know Him.**
- **Ask the Lord to give you His patience, so that even when things do not look like they are moving in the right direction, you will completely trust God's sovereignty over all.**
- We were never promised a problem-free existence. We were promised peace in the midst of any and all trouble: ***"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33 NLT)** Remind yourself that Jesus has already overcome the world, and ask the Lord to change your complaining heart into a prayerful one.
- When you sense that your heart is being disturbed by circumstances and situations, remind yourself Who you belong to and Who is with you. Thank the Lord for His never ending presence in your life and receive His peace. ***"Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all."* (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NLT)**