

During World War I, on and around **Christmas Day 1914**, the sounds of rifles firing and shells exploding faded in a number of places along the Western Front in favor of holiday celebrations in the trenches and gestures of goodwill between enemies.

Starting on Christmas Eve, many **German and British troops sang Christmas carols to each other across the lines**, and at certain points the Allied soldiers even heard brass bands joining the Germans in their joyous singing.

At the first light of dawn on Christmas Day, some German soldiers emerged from their trenches and approached the Allied lines across no-man's-land, calling out "Merry Christmas" in their enemies' native tongues. At first, the Allied soldiers feared it was a trick, but seeing the Germans unarmed they climbed out of their trenches and shook hands with the enemy soldiers. The men **exchanged presents of cigarettes and plum puddings and sang carols and songs**. There was even a documented case of soldiers from opposing sides playing a good-natured **game of soccer**. Some soldiers used this short-lived ceasefire for a more somber task: the **retrieval of the bodies of fellow combatants who had fallen within the no-man's land between the lines**.

The so-called Christmas Truce of 1914 came only five months after the outbreak of war in Europe and was one of the last examples of the outdated notion of chivalry between enemies in warfare. ⁱ

The irony of those final words undoubtedly is missed by the author. Their intention is clearly to insinuate that humanity is inherently good. But the mark of humanity is seen in the fact that the same soldiers who spent that Christmas celebrating with one another had been shooting at each other in the days leading up to Christmas and then returned to shooting at each other in the days and years following Christmas. In other words, the "essential humanity" referred to is actually found in the statement, "It was never repeated."

The difference between man's concept of peace and God's is seen in this historical advance. Man considers truces and cease fires as peace. God defines peace as an everlasting end to conflict between man and himself. In Jesus, God has provided victory not a temporary hiatus of hostilities. He brought about a means reconciliation and has offered adoption as sons and daughters to his one-time enemies.

It is with that in mind that we study the 7th Beatitude found in . . .

Scripture: Matthew 5:9

I. The Pleasure of Peacemaking

A. Paradox of Peace (God's peace VS Man's peace)

1. God's Peace is at war with man's peace (Matt. 10:34)
2. Man's Peace

- a) Based on Man's feelings and emotions
 - (1) Self-centered
 - (2) When self is first, peace is last
 - b) Involves circumventing sin
 - (1) Evades issues
 - (2) May belie peace in the present but has leads to everlasting pain
 - c) Absence of conflict
 - (1) At best, a truce
 - (a) Lack of resolution and reconciliation results in a cold war
3. God's Peace
- a) Based on God's truth
 - (1) God and his way is first, last, and everything in between
 - b) Involves confronting sin
 - (1) Not peace at any cost
 - (2) May bring conflict in the present but leads to everlasting peace
 - c) Presence of righteousness
 - (1) Provides resolution, reconciliation, and unity
- B. Path to Peace (Eph. 2:13-14)**
- 1. Righteousness
 - a) Imparted
 - b) Purity of heart (holy living)
 - c) No peace for the wicked (Isa. 48:22)
 - 2. Reconciliation
 - a) Provided by God (Col. 1:19-20)
 - b) Partakers in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor.5:19-20)
- C. Practice of Peacemakers**
- 1. Preaching Jesus
 - a) Peacemakers help bring others to peace with God
 - (1) People can only come to God through Jesus by the work of the Holy Spirit
 - (2) We are part of God's plan to bring peace and the means we must obey the Holy Spirit by proclaiming the Gospel
 - 2. Performing Jesus' teaching
 - a) Peacemakers live at peace with others
 - (1) We must be righteous before helping other's be righteous
 - (2) Conflict resolution/Confronting sin (Matt. 18:15-17)
 - (a) Failure to obey is sin
 - (b) "God's people are to contend without being contentious, to disagree without being disagreeable, and to confront without being abusive." [1]
- D. Pleasure of Peacemakers**
- 1. Peace with God
 - a) No longer enemies with God (Rom. 5:10)
 - 2. Peace with People
 - a) As much as possible (Rom. 12:17-18)

3. Part of the Family
 - a) Two words for "sons/children"
 - (1) *Teknon* - term of tender affection and endearment
 - (2) *Huios* - expresses the dignity and honor of the child to the parent
4. Promise of Peace (John 16:33)
 - a) Nowhere in Scripture does God promise peace among all people
 - (1) There cannot be peace where there is sin
 - b) Jesus promised his followers peace in Him

The Bible opens with peace in the Garden of Eden and closes with peace for believers in eternity. In between, we read of a great deal of pain and suffering. That's the result of sin. However, the New Testament introduces us to the solution to the conflict between man and God, in the person of Jesus.

One cannot have peace with man until they have peace with God. And one cannot have peace with God apart from surrender to Jesus. In other words, peace cannot be realized, in any true and lasting sense with anyone, until a person has confessed and repented of their sin, trusted in Jesus for salvation, and given him control of their life. You can't be a peacemaker if you're not a Christian.

So this morning, I invite you to accept the means to peace God has provided. If you have already received that great gift, I encourage you to be peacemakers. Preach Jesus and practice his teaching; even when it's difficult. Being a child of God is a high honor but it comes with a huge responsibility. If you need help being the minister of reconciliation you have been called to be, use our time of invitation to seek strength, wisdom, and a heart of love from your Father who gives without measure.

^[i] <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/christmas-truce-of-1914>

^[ii] MacArthur, John, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7* (Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 1985) p. 217