


Matthew 5:9 | Children of Diplomacy

Let's talk about war, shall we? Since Cain killed Able, we've had a problem with taking the lives of our fellow human beings. Case in point, an Oxford researcher named Max Roser compiled all the data points for all the wars in the last 600 years.¹  Not surprisingly, the 20th century is the bloodiest of them all.

In fact, here's a shortlist of the most significant conflicts that the U.S. has been involved in since WWI.²

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| - WWI | 20 Million deaths |
| - WWII | 80 Million deaths |
| - Korean War | 5 million deaths |
| - Vietnam War | 3.5 million deaths |
| - Gulf War | 40,000 deaths |
| - War in Afghanistan | 62,000 deaths and counting |

Now, I'm not the best at "maths," but even my dodgy arithmetic can see those wars amount to well over 100 million deaths. To put that in perspective, that's roughly one-third of the United States' population today.³ And statistically speaking, given not only U.S. history but also global history over the past 600 years, we're actually overdue for a sizeable conflict.

The point is this, we as a species return to war the same way an alcoholic returns to the bottle. The ironic thing is that like any addiction, we know it is terrible for us, yet we just can't give it up. There's no AA for warrior barbarians such as we are. No matter how many people we hurt, it never seems to keep us from falling back into old habits.

Famously, English author H.G. Wells said that WWI would be the "the war that will end wars."⁴ Yes, the same guy who wrote such classics as the *Invisible Man*, the *Time Machine*, and—**cough**—*War of the Worlds* was so optimistic after the Great War that he genuinely believed

¹ Roser, Max, "War and Peace," 2016, *OurWorldInData.org*, <https://ourworldindata.org/war-and-peace#licence>, [accessed, November 2, 2020].

² Wikipedia contributors, "United States military casualties of war," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=United_States_military_casualties_of_war&oldid=986885066 (accessed November 8, 2020).

³ General Editors, "U.S. and World Population Clock," November 6, 2020, *The United States Census Bureau*, <https://www.census.gov/popclock/>, [accessed, November 6, 2020].

⁴ Milarski, Eric, "Why WWI was once called 'The War to End All Wars,'" April 29, 2020, *Mighty History*, <https://www.wearethemighty.com/mighty-history/war-to-end-all-wars/>, [accessed, November 6, 2020].

humanity had been cured of its unhealthy fascination with killing each other. Oh, how wrong he was.

We live in such a brutal and barbaric society that war is regarded as the norm, but peace is considered an abnormality.⁵ Sadly, those who vie for peace are often labeled as impractical dreamers who do not know how the real-world works. As we talked about when discussing the Beatitude of meekness, the world believes that “might makes right.” And no one can seem to convince them otherwise.

Yet, Christians aren't supposed to be conducting themselves based on the rules of this life. Instead, they are to live according to the laws of the next life. So while this world breeds warmongers, the Kingdom produces peacemakers. These are individuals who are to be more concerned with diplomacy than incivility. They are supposed to be craftsmen of the peace who bring two irreconcilable pieces together. They do not repeat the bombastic rhetoric of their camps but strive to find common ground for the good of all. Winning is not their goal, but peace is.

But before we dive too deep into this principle, we must first read through the beatitudes. It is time to memorize.

READ: Matthew 5:1-12 (NKJV)

¹ And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. ² Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

³ “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed *are* those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed *are* the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.

⁷ Blessed *are* the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed *are* the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed *are* the peacemakers,

⁵ Beauchamp, Zack, “600 years of war and peace, in one amazing chart,” June 24, 2015, Vox, <https://www.vox.com/2015/6/23/8832311/war-casualties-600-years>, [accessed, November 6, 2020].


For they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

So, before I tell you what Jesus *meant* by this, I need to first tell you what he *didn't* mean. Jesus didn't say blessed are the "pacifists." He said blessed are the "peacemakers." And there is a *significant* difference between a pacifist and a peacemaker. A peacemaker's goal is peace, whereas a pacifist's goal is appeasement.⁶ True peace comes when differences between two parties are amended, and conflict ceases to both parties' satisfaction. Appeasement is when the differences between two parties are amended but only for a time, and no one is truly satisfied. Meaning, peace is a state at which conflict is no more; appeasement is a state at which war is merely delayed.

EXAMPLE:  In times of international conflict, appeasement is a diplomatic approach offered to an aggressor in a bid to avoid full out war. However, history has proven that appeasement almost always fails.⁷ Famously, Great Britain, who was still reeling from WWI's effects less than twenty years prior, took the tactic of appeasement when dealing with a very aggressive Nazi Germany.

On September 30, 1938, Great Britain, France, and Italy, under the direction of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, signed the Munich Agreement. This treaty gave Hitler the power to annex a portion of Czechoslovakia. This portion had a predominately German populace, and so the Führer thought it rightfully belonged to Germany. The amazing thing was that the Czechs weren't even consulted about this and nor were they even invited to the concluding talks that finalized their own country's dismemberment.⁸ It is no wonder that many simply refer to this as the Munich *Betrayal* rather than the

⁶ Carson, D.A., *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew and Mark, Volume 9, Revised Edition, General Editors Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2010), p. 165.

⁷ Longley, Robert, "What Is Appeasement? Definition and Examples in Foreign Policy", July 3, 2019, ThoughtCo., <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-appeasement-4689287>, [accessed, November 6, 2020].

⁸ Lindsay, James M., "The Munich Agreement | History Lessons," September 26, 2012, *The Council on Foreign Relations*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKA-lhWFbsE>, [accessed, November 6, 2020].

Munich Agreement.⁹ Shortly after that, Czech soldiers left their post, and Germany moved in and took a portion of the land.

<INSERT PICTURE> After he landed back in England, Neville Chamberlain, while waving a memo signed by Hitler, claimed he brought “peace for our time.” But not everyone was convinced. Famously, Winston Churchill said to Chamberlain, “You were given the choice between war and dishonor. You chose dishonor, and you will have war.”¹⁰ And, as we all know, Churchill was right. In fact, less than six months later, the Führer seized the rest of Czechoslovakia. Eleven months later, on September 1, 1939—not even a full year after the Munich Agreement—Germany invaded Poland kicking off THE bloodiest war ever. Today, the Munich Agreement is panned by historians *en masse* for merely pushing off the WWII and giving Germany extra time to bolster its defenses and strengthen its military presence.

So, why the history lesson? Because, when Jesus speaks about peacemakers, He knows all too well that conflict is sometimes unavoidable. He is not calling us to be pacifists; he's calling us to be peacemakers. Remember, He himself will die on an executioner's cross because He came into conflict with the religious leaders of His day.

READ: Matthew 10:34-39 (NKJV)

³⁴ “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶ and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his *own* household.’ ³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

Jesus' point is that though He indeed brought a “sword,” it is the kind of sword that does not harm another (cf. Lu. 22:47-53; Jn. 18:10-11).¹¹ Instead, it is a sword that divides friends (cf. Heb. 4:12). One friend may choose violence, but the other can only choose sacrifice. One friend

⁹ Wikipedia contributors, “Munich Agreement,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Munich_Agreement&oldid=987023117, [accessed November 6, 2020].

¹⁰ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Munich Agreement,” September 23, 2020, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Munich-Agreement>, [accessed, November 6, 2020].

¹¹ Dalrymple, Timothy, “Why Evangelicals Disagree on the President,” November 2, 2020, *Christianity Today*, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november-web-only/trump-election-politics-church-kingdom.html>, [accessed, November 8, 2020].

will choose peace and the other will choose a cross. One friend will choose to save his life for his own sake while the other will choose to lose his life for Christ's sake. This is why Jesus will later tell the Twelve in Jn. 16:33, "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Trouble and conflict are as much a part of the Christian life as peace and forgiveness are. But the disciple does not forego his beliefs in order to secure peace.

So, when Jesus is talking about a peacemaker, he is talking about people who mediate peace where they can (cf. Heb. 12:14). **A peacemaker is one who actively reconciles differences whenever possible.**¹²

READ: Romans 12:18 (NKJV)

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Even though conflict is unavoidable at times, and reconciliation can be as evasive as a frightened bird, the disciples still must *pursue* peaceful resolutions rather than *promote* bloody conflict. This means a peacemaker brings harmony where there is disharmony without giving up the melody which guides the song. They take discord and war, and they nullify the tension without compromising good ethics. As such, they do not avoid conflict at all costs, as a stout pacifist would; instead, they bring peace whenever a dispute inevitably arises. They do not seek out a fight, nor do they back down from one either.

The Greek word translated as "peacemaker" was *only* used in the context of warring Emperors who were trying to reconcile their differences.¹³ How irresponsible it would be for a leader to avoid conflict at all costs. Instead, a good leader looks for and works towards a peaceful resolution.

What's more, I want you to think back on the Munich Betrayal. History has proven that Churchill was right, and Chamberlain was wrong. Chamberlain was a lousy leader, and Churchill, a legendary one. In fact, along with the allied forces, Churchill proved to be more of a peacemaker than his predecessor, and Chamberlain was little more than a failed peacekeeper who helped a madman disjoint a country.

Sometimes peace isn't an option, and when the powerless are victimized, when whole lands are annexed, when entire people groups are ripped from their homes and put into concentration camps, the peacemakers must step in (cf. Mat. 5:5). Jesus wants us to be

¹² Turner, David L., *Matthew*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008), p. 152.

¹³ Keener, Craig S., *A Commentary on The Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1999), p. 169.

peace-makers, not peace-keepers.¹⁴ He is not talking about appeasers who vie for peace no matter the cost. He is talking about diplomats who compete for peace by defending the innocent (cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

Even Jesus will later explain to his followers in no uncertain terms that they will run into conflict in the same way that He has run into conflict (cf. Matt. 10:16-25). Furthermore, the very last Beatitude is about Kingdom citizens being persecuted for their affiliation with God. And, as we'll explore next week, should the Christian ever abandon God in order to avoid persecution? Should they choose the path of peace and prosperity if it means recanting their faith? No! God forbid it (cf. Mat. 10:26-39).

However, while Christians do not avoid conflict at all costs, they are not bullies. Meaning, they are bold with their faith, but not belligerent.

READ: James 1:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

The quickest way to fail at Kingdom work is to be angry. Only the peacemakers are harvesters of righteousness. They cultivate good, kind, and loving ethics wherever they go.

READ: James 3:13-18 (ESV)

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct, let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Righteousness (right-living) and rightness (right-actions) produce an abundant harvest when those have peace as their primary objective. And we are never more like God than when we are vying for peace. We are never more like God than when we have a love for our enemies.

In fact, Jesus says that those who are peacemakers are called the "sons of God." Meaning, peacemaking is a divine characteristic. When we are craftsmen of peace, we are similar to God

¹⁴ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1992), p. 101.

as a child is similar to his father.¹⁵ We should be like our heavenly Father, who is a peacemaker, and not like this world's father, who is a warmonger. We are reconcilers because God is the great Reconciler.

So, what's the takeaway?

The Christian is a courageous peacemaker, not a cowering pacifist nor a carnivorous warmonger.

READ: 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors [diplomats] for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

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READ: Isaiah 52:7 (NKJV)

How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who proclaims peace,
Who brings glad tidings of good *things*,
Who proclaims salvation,
Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

God takes no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked (cf. Ez. 33:11). He is not willing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). And we would do well to remember that it is the goodness of God which leads us to turn from our sin (cf. Rom. 2:4; Ja. 1:19-20). As such, we should be lovers of peace and not peddlers of war because God, our Heavenly Father, is a lover of peace and not a peddler of war.

¹⁵ France, R.T., *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2007), p. 169.