Sunday 13th November 2016 Message

The high calling

***Scripture - 1 Peter 1:19-25***

**Introduction**

We are made in the image of God, and we are being transformed into the character of Jesus Christ. To be a Christian means to be Christ like, and there in that passage of scripture we have one of our greatest challenges, to suffer wrong without retaliation, like Jesus did. Today we focus on the call of Jesus to be peacemakers **Slide** which has the blessing of being called “sons/children of God” this is a very high and difficult calling.

Like all of the beatitudes, leading to this one, none of them can be attained without the work of the Holy Spirit, helping us ascend the ladder of being made like Christ, step by step. **Slide**

The events of the last few months in politics around the world, and in particular the US election, we have seen a spirit that is at odds with living in peace with one another. When we do not like what someone else is doing, we now appear to be in the season of attack/peace breaking, and it is shown by world leaders to be totally acceptable.

We have in recent years been led into political correctness as a means of making peace, but in reality it has been a fake peace because we have not dealt with the injuries and wrongs done in our society, we have just tried to pretend they are not there. Political correctness has crept into the church and there is a dire warning in scripture against pretending there is peace when there is no peace

***Jeremiah 8:10-13 From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when they are punished, says the Lord. "'I will take away their harvest, declares the Lord. There will be no grapes on the vine. There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither. What I have given them will be taken from them.'"***

We are not called to be peacekeepers, or peace fakers, which are essentially the same thing, **people who avoid the truth that there is anything wrong**. We are called to be peacemakers ones who bring reconciliation with a non-retaliatory heart. When we do this we bring glory to God by being like Jesus, reconciling man to man, and man to God. Scripture calls upon us in everything we do to bring glory to God. **Slide *1 Cor 10:31 do it all for the glory of God*.**

**God is at peace**

**Slide** Don’t wait till the end to Rest in Peace – Be like God and LIVE in Peace

God is at peace because He does not stand on, or demand His rights.

If He who made the universe and is perfectly holy demanded that everything be the way He intended it to be, then we would either not exist, or He would be totally frustrated and lacking in peace.

If He who can change everything back to His original plan with a whisper and click of His fingers was not at peace then we would never experience His love, mercy and grace.

As we approach Christmas we particularly remember that our Father sent Jesus into the world to make peace available to all men, thus the angels declared to the shepherds “Peace to all men”. A prophetic declaration of what was being made accessible to us all. Peace with God, and a peace that if shared would bring peace to all.

God is the Prince of Peace, ***Isaiah 9:6*** and the way you honour God and show your worship to Him is by being LIKE Him, children of peace. We may find that hard to grasp as perhaps we have problems with our children having some of our flawed characteristics, but He has no flaws.

**Slide** God sent Jesus into the world to reconcile all men to God, and commissioned US to carry on the ministry of reconciliation. It is therefore to our shame when we are not at peace and reconciled to our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is glaringly obvious to others when we are pretending there is peace between us when there is not. Please note I am not saying we have to like everything that other people do, because God does not like what we do all the time, but He has done everything He could do to make a path of peace for us into His presence.

Have we made a way for people who do things that we do not like, to come into contact with God in us? Are we making reconciliation possible as far as it depends upon us.

The sign of your parentage is revealed by the shalom that flows out from you. Peace making is only possible when you have peace within.

**Violence and strife is all around**

***Psalm 55:9-14*** tells us the same old story violence and strife is all around, in the city, but it starts within the heart and within the family.

It should never be within the church, or within the hearts of Gods people, but all too often we find offence, and demanding of rights as prevalent amongst us as we do anywhere else. Have we forgotten that we are called to peace **Slide *1 Cor 7:15***

Have we forgotten that those who plan, counsel, encourage peace live in more JOY than others **Slide *Proverbs 12:20* Slide** Search for peace ***Psalm 34:14***

Peace is the active enjoyment of all that us good (not the absence of unresolved conflict). In all we do think about how you can bring joy to everyone in every situation. Make an effort to promote peace.

Isn’t it strange how conflict and confrontation seem to follow some people around, let me suggest that there is a lack of peace within them.

A lot of our lack of peace comes from having sin in our life which we are unwilling to repent from, because this brings a lack of peace between our spirit and the Holy Spirit within us. If you are not at peace examine yourself and decide if you want peace in your heart.

***Isa 48:18 If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.***

**Peace is a pursuit**

It is no coincidence that peace follows purity of heart in the beatitudes, because it is a natural outcome of that purity. That is why God ***says “There is no peace for the wicked” Isaiah 57:21.***

We need to be proactive in thinking and working towards gaining peace, and maintaining peace. Within the fellowship of believers there are clear guidelines for resolving issues. Indeed Jesus considers resolving issues more important than our worship, do we?

1. In all that we do glorify God by being at peace like He is
2. Get the log out of our own eye first Matt 7:1ff before attempting to correct another part of the family who only has a speck. Your log is probably pride in thinking you have everything sorted in your life and you cannot understand why your brother or sister has not.
3. Gently go and tell your brother or sister in Christ alone how their behaviour has affected you. They may not be aware. Their behaviour may not necessarily be wrongly intended. Do not gossip. These are steps to take before discussing it with others. Then maybe go with someone else. Then maybe go to the leadership of the church. Not sure why we always seem to get the order wrong?
4. Matt 5:23-24 sort it out before offering your worship, or using your gifts.

We have to decide to let our bitterness go, it won’t disappear of its own accord. We also need to accept and be prepared for the fact that the person who has hurt us may not repent or be sorry, but as much as it depends on you – go and try to make peace and let go of your bitterness and hurt because it will destroy you if you do not.

**Ten Biblical Ways To Begin To Make Peace**

1. Recognise where there is a problem ***Jeremiah 6:14***

Remember Gods first move towards bringing us into peace with Him was by making us aware of the problem. He did not consider it acceptable for Him or us to ignore the breakdown of peace caused by our sin

If you are not in at peace in a relationship determine the problem.

1. Deal with conflict early. ***Proverbs 17:14***

***The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.***

Ever tried to dam a river, you have to deal with every little breach before it is all washed away.

Any broken marriage or relationship started with a little harsh word, breach of trust, abuse. Leave it ignored, thinking it is a little thing, it is then built upon with other things and then there is a mountain of issues.

1. Practice restraint, especially of the tongue. ***James 1:19***

Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

We are so tempted to unload all our feelings. Self expression is a big idol in todays culture, you hear people saying “They have to say what they think.” Do they really have to? What would happen if you did not? There will be no spontaneous combustion. Peacemakers are slow to speak. Particularly if they have not listened or understood the other person first. Often to say what WE think in a torrent is damaging.

Would you like God to unload every offence you have committed against His nature all in one go. How incredibly heavy that would be, and we would never be able to look up to Him again. He deals with us progressively and increasingly.

There are not many times when you regret remain silent, but there will be plenty of times when you regret having said something.

1. Prepare for a long journey. ***1 Peter 3:11***

***Seek peace and pursue it.* Slide**

Just think how long a process God went through to deal with the sins of the world. The long journey that Jesus came on from heaven to earth, to take on a form lower than angels, to humble himself, to know our frame, and to sacrifice Himself to make peace with us. Our alienation from God began with the fall of man, our hostility to God was part of our nature at birth.

We have to seek it because it is not always easy to find. We have to pursue it because there may be a long journey.

It is not always a long process but don’t expect quick resolution everytime you will sometimes be disappointed.

1. Take a step toward peace. ***Romans 12:20* Slide**

Long journey, small step – feed your enemy. A long journey starts with a little step. Sometimes when you think of the length of journey to reconciliation you could become discourage. Think about one thing that you could do to bridge the gap, one small step

You could rush into war and press the nuclear button, thankfully a lot of thought and process has to go in before such action is taken, but in the heat of the moment do we try to solve the situation with one destructive action.

1. Aim at humility not humiliation. ***Philipians 2:8***

God comes with His glory veiled in the form of Jesus on the cross. No show of His strength or His rights. He woes us, draws us with His love to bring peace between us both. ***Being found in the form of man.***

God does not humiliate us and expose our sins, points. When we are wronged we may want the person who hurt us do want revenge, and everyone know we were in the right? This will not lead to peace.

Never claim victory in bringing peace as if you were victorious this devalues the part of the other person in the process.

1. Trust the injustice you have suffered to God. ***1 Peter 2:19-25***

Remember the passage we read at the start. Jesus went through such rejection and suffering because He trusted His Father with the outcome.

There will be many times when you have been taken for granted, ignored, overlooked, passed over for promotion, accused of things you have never done. Determine you are going to react like Jesus who suffered more injustice than any of us.

***1 Peter 2:20-21 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.***

He did not revile those who reviled Him, He did not threaten them. He did not take His revenge. **He was a peacemaker and His example was that He trusted it to God**

1. Pray for peace. ***Psalm 122:6***
2. Share the gospel of peace. ***Ephesians 6:15***

You put on shoes to take a journey towards making peace. The gospel of peace is both in reconciliation to God and in reconciliation between mankind.

1. Cherish peace wherever you find it. ***Ephesians 4:3***

***Eph 4:3 Make every effort to KEEP the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace***.

**Concluding Comments**

Lord we were one when we came together in Christ to worship You, May we remain one in peaceful relationship as we go from here and face whatever circumstances that await us this week.

**Ten Biblical Ways Too Begin To Make Peace**

1. **Recognise where there is a problem. Jeremiah 6:14**
2. **Deal with conflict early. Proverbs 17:14**
3. **Practice restraint, especially of the** **tongue. James 1:19**
4. **Prepare for a long journey. 1 Peter 3:11**
5. **Take a step toward peace. Romans 12:20**
6. **Aim at humility not humiliation. Phillipians 2:8**
7. **Trust the injustice you have suffered to God. 1 Peter 2:19-25**
8. **Pray for peace. Psalm 122:6**
9. **Share the gospel of peace. Ephesians 6:15**
10. **Cherish peace wherever you find it. Ephesians 4:3**