

Day 1 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

How do you envision “peace”?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. **Matthew 5:9-12 NIV**

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.”

And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. **Genesis 1:27-31 NIV**

Sermon Insights:

There are two dimensions to peace – spiritual peace and social peace. True peace begins and emanates from spiritual peace. Social peace that is holistic and lasting is derived from spiritual peace! Our sights must be set on purity! Purity is the basis of biblical peace.

Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

What does God’s desire for “peace” say about his character? Does it help you appreciate him in a new light?

What do you think about the idea that God wants peace for you, personally, before he asks you to make peace in the world?

The Scripture in Genesis points out that God created peace in the beginning. Sin destroyed peace between God and people, between people and people, and between people and the earth. Instead of justly punishing the world, God sent Jesus to restore peace. Since peace is of utmost importance to God, how invested are you in being a peacemaker?

Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for being a God of peace. Thank you for sacrificing so that we who are undeserving of peace may experience your peace. Help me to be a peacemaker!

Day 2 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

What is real freedom?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. **2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NIV**

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. **Romans 6:1-14 NIV**

Sermon Insights:

With each one of Jesus’ “Blessed” statements (the Beatitudes in Matthew 5), Jesus is driving home the fact that a person cannot be saved unless they change. A person cannot inherit eternal life if their actions and attitudes do not align with God’s righteousness.

Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

Are you using your freedom to follow Jesus’ ways?

Baptism (going under the water like a burial) shows your commitment to letting your old sinful self die with Jesus. What died in your life? What still needs to?

Baptism (coming out of the water like a resurrection) shows your commitment to let God give you a new life. What new attitudes and actions have you experienced? What do you want to experience?

Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for giving me a relationship with you based in freedom and love rather than a religion of self-improvement guilt trips. Help me to continue to trust your goodness and embrace the freedom that binds me to you and brings me real peace.

Day 3 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

Who in your life has been a true peacemaker?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. **Romans 12:17-21 NIV**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. **Matthew 5:43-48 NIV**

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. **1 Timothy 2:1-6 NIV**

Sermon Insights:

Social peace that is holistic and lasting is derived from spiritual peace!

Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

Why is it important to have spiritual peace before you attempt to provide peace for others?

If God owns the right to vengeance, does that affect your willingness to show love for your enemies?

If someone were to interview your nonbelieving neighbors, coworkers, and those who read your social media posts, what would they conclude about your commitment to making peace?

Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, I am so thankful that my ultimate authority is you, not government or culture or the opinions of my friends or even my own attitudes. Thank you for working for peace in everyone. Teach me to be a peacemaker. Please guide our leaders so we may live peaceful and quiet lives in godliness and holiness.

Day 4 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

What comes to mind when you think of the word “purity”?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)

Scripture:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. **Matthew 5:8 NIV**

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. **James 3:13-18 NIV**

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. **Titus 1:15 NIV**

Sermon Insights:

Purity is the basis of biblical peace. Our sights must be set on purity!

Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

What next step do you need to take in being each of these descriptions of wisdom from God?

- Pure
- Peace-loving
- Considerate
- Submissive
- Full of mercy and good fruit
- Impartial
- Sincere

Why is “seeing God” only reserved for the “pure in heart”?

“To the pure, all things are pure.” What does that mean?

Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for saving me from the corrupting influence of Satan, the unbelieving world, and my own selfish desires. I am desperate for your wisdom and ask that you help me grow in purity!

Day 5 – Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer (“SOAP”)

Conversation Starter

Why, if you are a peacemaker, live above reproach, and do your job with excellence, could you still face persecution?

Scripture Observation (5 minutes)**Scripture:**

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:10-12 NIV

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight. **Luke 16:13-15 NIV**

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. **John 15:18-21 NIV**

Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them... **Hebrews 11:36-38 NIV**

Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. **Hebrews 13:3 NIV**

Sermon Insights:

True righteousness involves a relationship with Jesus! Righteousness does not stand alone (“Look at all the good things I am doing”) but is always for Jesus’s sake. The mercy and purity and the peacemaking of a follower of Jesus comes from Jesus.

Our allegiance is to Jesus. And for those who reject Jesus, the standard operating procedure is to push back. That is the root of persecution!

Jim Elliot, before he was martyred, said this, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Application Suggestions (5 minutes)

Is Jesus your ultimate allegiance...no matter what? Are you willing to be hated for loving him—and still be a peacemaker?

Who can you pray for the way Hebrews 13:3 directs us as believers?

<https://www.persecution.com/>

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/>

Prayer Suggestions (5 minutes)

Lord, thank you for loving us and leading us through thick and thin. Teach us how to support our brothers and sisters who are holding to their faith despite tremendous hardships. Thank you for rewarding those who stay faithful to you.