

## Week 3 | Peace

July 10 – July 16

### Monday, July 10 | Blessed Are the Peacemakers

#### Read Matthew 5:1–11

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

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.”

#### Reflect

This is how Jesus’ well-known Sermon on the Mount, which spans three chapters in Matthew’s Gospel, begins. In that sermon, Jesus gave all who had gathered to hear Him a vision for the upside-down nature of the kingdom of God. The people listening might have believed from their experience in the Roman Empire that the “blessed” were those in power, with money, and living in the lap of luxury. Or they might have thought that the religious leaders and those who followed the

law carefully and perfectly were the blessed in the world. But Jesus says it's not the powerful, the rich, and the beautiful that are blessed. Quite the opposite—it's the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted. In our world today, we may similarly be tempted to believe that the blessed are those in high positions or large homes. We may believe that the conquerors of the world that claim victory are blessed. But, indeed, just as was the case in Jesus' day, it is the peacemakers who will be called the children of God, the meek who will inherit the earth, and the merciful who will be shown mercy.

- Who comes to mind when you hear the word “peacemaker”? What does that person do or say, or what is their disposition, that caused you to think of them?
- Where do you see a lack of peace in your life? What's causing the disturbance? What help do you need to ask for from God? What step do you need to take toward peace?

### **Respond**

God, thank You giving us an image of peace in Jesus Christ. Mold my heart to be more like His—to be quick to seek forgiveness and to forgive, to enter into conflict with a desire to resolve it, to be humble in my interactions. Where I am lacking peace, please fill me with the peace of Christ and guide me in the ways of peace. Amen.

### **Tuesday, July 11 | The Peace of Christ**

#### **Read John 14:25–27**

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

### **Reflect**

Peace between people is one thing—and Jesus taught that such peace is a something to strive for—but another kind of peace is the peace within our souls. And many of us struggle deeply with being at peace, stilled and content on the inside. We are anxious, afraid, disillusioned. Our bodies break down and our minds don't rest. Busyness drives us. Technology hooks us. Multitasking exhausts us. And in the end, we feel broken apart, tired, and unable to stop. We don't have to live this way. Our souls can be at peace. As we remain connected to Jesus, we can experience His peace. But peace is a fruit—an outcome—of walking with the Spirit. We can't just decide to be at peace. We have to adopt practices to cultivate peace instead of continuing in the practices we have (often without knowing it) that cultivate stress and exhaustion.

- Consider whether there has been a time in your life when your soul was at peace. When was that? How would you describe that time? What contributed to that sense of peace?

- Reflect on your typical day and the activities it includes. What are the routines and practices that keep you in a state of stress and busyness (perhaps it's checking email as soon as you wake up, or eating lunch at your desk or breakfast in your car)? What are some practices you could adopt to help you slow and still yourself more often? (Ask some people you know who seem to be at peace what they do to cultivate peace.)

## Respond

God, I long for deep peace in my heart, mind, and soul. Instead of the frantic, busy exhaustion I often fight against, please open me to the peace and the wholeness You offer. Help me to see the ways my routines and practices contribute to a lack of peace and contentment. Grow my trust in You so that I can rest, break the hold that technology can have on me, and continue to open space to be transformed and healed by Your love. Amen.

## Wednesday, July 12 | Peace With Everyone

### Read Romans 12:17–21

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.

## Reflect

When someone treats us unfairly or hurts us, our first instinct is often to take revenge in some way. We may not necessarily wish them harm in return (although sometimes so), but we may do smaller things to punish or exact vengeance, like withhold our love, make unkind comments about them behind their back, or refuse forgiveness. Anyone who has experienced this—in themselves or from others—knows it is not a posture of peace or reconciliation. And the more relationships we have that follow this pattern, the less peace we have. Reconciliation and mending brokenness in relationships are the hardest work we have, and yet it is always the way God leads—toward peace, toward wholeness between Him and all people, in human relationships, and in all of creation. As Paul taught, seeking after reconciliation is our responsibility—"as far as it depends on you"—whether we caused the break in relationship or not.

- As you reflected on today's passage, whom did God bring to mind? Is there anyone you've been holding a grudge against, quietly exacting vengeance for a hurt they caused? What step toward peace and reconciliation do you sense God inviting you to take?

- Is there anyone in your life who seems to be holding a grudge against you or is refusing to forgive you? What step toward peace and reconciliation do you sense God inviting you to take in that relationship?

## **Respond**

God, thank You for this responsibility of reconciliation You have given me. At times, it feels impossible, and yet I know the fruit it will produce—the increased intimacy of relationship that comes when broken relationships are made whole again. Where I am holding grudges, give me the compassion to release them and lean into peace and wholeness. And where someone is holding a grudge against me, give me the courage to take the first step toward reconciliation so that, as far as it depends on me, I may live at peace with everyone. Amen.

## **Thursday, July 13 | A Peace That Rules**

### **Read Colossians 3:15–17**

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

## **Reflect**

Before we can truly be peacemakers and reconcilers in our relationships and our communities, we must ourselves be ruled by the peace of Christ. But again, this is not something we can just decide: “I’m going to be ruled by the peace of Christ today!” Surrendering ourselves to allow the peace of Christ to rule over us is an important piece, but we also need practices that help us remain close to Christ and other believers. This happens when we gather together in the name and presence of Jesus and express worship and gratitude to God on a regular basis. As we gather, the message of Christ—His peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness—begins to dwell in us and in the community to which we belong. Then, out of this gathering, we can go into the world with the message of peace.

- Reflect on the level of peace you have in your own heart today, or even in the last week. How grounded do you feel in the love and peace of Christ? How might you share the answer to that question with a trusted friend?
- What practices within the church gathering help you recalibrate your heart toward Christ and express your worship and gratitude to God? How do they help? How might you continue to cultivate the peace those practices bring throughout the week?

## **Respond**

God, I long for the peace of Christ to rule my heart, mind, and body. Thank You for the reminder from Paul that this happens as I gather in worship and gratitude with other believers. This is not a journey I can walk alone. When I am reluctant to gather at church, provoke and enable me. Remind

me of the peace that comes as I gather in the name of Jesus with others. Help me, too, to foster the peace these gatherings bring throughout the week, so my life is truly ruled by that peace and I can bring it into my family, friend circles, work, and community. Amen.

## **Friday, July 14 | Peace That Transcends Understanding**

### **Read Philippians 4:6–7**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### **Reflect**

We often think of peace as a possession, a quality, or an attribute. Have you ever thought of it as a guard or protector? That's what Paul says in today's passage. God's peace is a protector. In times of anxiety or fear, God's peace can act as a guard around your heart, not allowing your circumstances to dictate the state of your soul. This is a peace that makes no sense—it transcends understanding. It is a peace that you take notice of and others ask about. It is a peace we all long for and which God freely gives when we ask.

- Reflect on a time in your life when your circumstances should have completely overwhelmed you, but during which you had peace—a peace that passed understanding. How would you describe that experience? What was the state of your soul?
- What circumstances in your life now threaten to overwhelm you and rob you of the peace you have? What is your prayer? Try expressing it to God now.

### **Respond**

God, thank You for Your peace that transcends all understanding. I ask You for this peace to guard my heart and my mind. In the areas I am anxious and afraid, fill me with Your peace and protect me against my circumstances dictating my mood, the state of my soul, the way I interact with others. Keep my mind focused on You and all You've called me to be and do in this world. In You I have salvation and life and love. Amen.

## **Saturday, July 15 | What Peace Looks Like**

### **Read Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.

### **Reflect & Respond**

- Read through today's passage two or three times, slowly, noticing what stands out. Remembering you are in God's loving presence, pray that He would show you how the particular words or phrases that stood out apply to your life right now. Pray that God would give you insight, wisdom, and courage, along with the power of the Holy Spirit, to act as He's calling you.

### **Sunday, July 16 | A Peace to Enjoy**

Read today's psalm as your prayer.

#### **Psalm 37**

Do not fret because of those who are evil  
or be envious of those who do wrong;  
for like the grass they will soon wither,  
like green plants they will soon die away.

Trust in the Lord and do good;  
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.  
Take delight in the Lord,  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in him and he will do this:  
He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,

your vindication like the noonday sun.

Be still before the Lord  
and wait patiently for him;  
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,  
when they carry out their wicked schemes.  
Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;  
do not fret—it leads only to evil.  
For those who are evil will be destroyed,  
but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.

A little while, and the wicked will be no more;  
though you look for them, they will not be found.  
But the meek will inherit the land  
and enjoy peace and prosperity.

### **A Way to Cultivate Peace This Week**

Intercession is the practice of holding a prayer request in the presence of God. When we do this, we learn God's desire for the prayer. When we join God's desire in prayer, we cultivate peace in our lives.

- Sit in silence for two minutes. Let the busyness of life settle as you rest in the presence of God.
- What is one desire or concern that comes to mind today? Hold out your hands and imagine holding an object to represent your desire or concern.
- Now imagine that you are holding this object in the presence of God. Remain in silence, simply holding your object in God's holy presence.
- If you feel led to pray with words, do so now, as you continue to hold your desire or concern in the presence of God.