

The Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the Peacemakers.
(Matthew 5 v 9)

Everyone everywhere is familiar with the concept of sowing and reaping. Even city dwellers know this truth – we reap what we sow – right? A farmer sows barley he reaps barley, not wheat or corn. If he doesn't bother ploughing and sowing anything worthwhile he'll reap nothing more than a field of weeds and dandelions carried by the wind!

The Apostle James is into this very practical kind of wisdom. In the 3rd chapter of his New Testament letter he writes that people who sow things like envy and selfish ambition are unspiritual, worldly and under the influence of the devil, and they can expect to reap a harvest of disorder and every evil practice.

“But,” James goes on, “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 raise a harvest of righteousness” (James 3 v 17 & 18)

Perhaps James was thinking of the Beatitudes with which the Lord Jesus opened His famous “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew 5. The Lord Himself said, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God”.

God blesses His people when we sow seeds for peace because we are behaving like true children of God, reminiscent of and bringing honour to the Lord Jesus, God, the eternal Son.

Jesus Himself is our example for He was willing to sacrifice everything, His majesty and dignity as Heavenly Ruler, His very life on the cross to reconcile sinners to our Creator. Listen to what Paul says to Christians in Colossians 1 v 22 & 23: “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical

body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation”.

Ouch! We don't mind thinking of sin as a mistake, or missing the mark. We don't mind admitting such things. But scripture hits us squarely between the eyes here – our sin amounts to open rebellion against our Maker and His commands, making us His enemies, liable for His judgment and punishment.

But here also is the gospel – for those who accept this unpleasant diagnosis from God, who confess to Him our sin as it is and repent from it – here is the Good News! He loves us so much He provided a spotless Substitute in Christ His Son who made complete satisfaction for our sins, took the entire blame and holy anger of God we deserve on His own innocent head when He suffered at Calvary. He did so that whosoever trusts in Him can be forgiven, declared acceptable before God, given a new status of “holy”, “without blemish”. Christians are free from accusation because there is no longer condemnation from God for those who are “in Christ”, continuing in the faith, led by His Spirit.

We no longer fear God as a Judge but love Him as our generous Father in Heaven! We are reconciled, Christ has made peace for us where it matters most.

Consequently, the Lord Jesus, and the rest of the New Testament insist that Christians who have benefitted from divine grace, who have been reconciled to God and tasted His peace must live in the light of that peace with one another. If God has treated us with more kindness, patience and forgiveness than we could ever deserve, that is how we must treat our fellow men and women both within and outside the Church.

Paul speaks of this aspect of Christian faith in Ephesians 2 v 14. In Ephesus some of the Christians were from a Jewish background and some from a Gentile background. Traditionally people from these

two groups despised and distrusted each other. But listen to what Paul says:

“[Christ] Himself is our peace, Who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility ... Through Him we both have access to the Father by One Spirit. Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household ...”

It has pleased God to bring people together, even former enemies, to enjoy the peace of belonging together in His family. Brothers and sisters often squabble but in the end of the day they are family and each one is given a place at God’s table!

Now do we want to argue with the Lord Jesus about this? Or are we willing to accept James’ advice and humbly seek the wisdom that is from above? What kind of seeds are we sowing in our lives at the moment? Are we sowing seeds of bitter envy and selfish ambition? Then let’s be warned we shall reap misery for ourselves and discord and evil disruption in our fellowship.

But if with His help, we follow our Master’s example and sacrifice our pride to sow instead seeds of mercy and forgiveness, kindness and love, then we can prayerfully anticipate reaping a harvest of personal peace of mind and harmony and fruitfulness for our fellowship.

James confidently assures us, “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness”.

And our Lord Himself adds His benediction: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called God’s children”.

Let’s pray.