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Christian Perspectives: Be a peacemaker

?Peace, peace, they say when there is no peace!? the prophet Jeremiah declared.
Let me tell you about Alfred.
It was the turn of the 20th century and Alfred was one of the preeminent scientists of his time.
Not only was he brilliant but he was also quite an entrepreneur.
Alfred made a fortune by inventing and then selling explosives, his most famous invention being something called ?dynamite?.
Now his intentions were for his explosive inventions to help mankind. He thought, ?How much easier would it be for creating roads through rock and laying foundations for massive buildings if people could simply detonate an explosive to do the job rather than the back-breaking process of shovels and pick axes??
And he was right.
Builders across Europe and indeed the world flocked to purchase dynamite to improve working conditions for their labourers and to speed up production.
A real win right?
Well, yes and no. it didn't take long for the value of explosives to become evident in warfare, and soon most of Alfred's money would be made selling to militaries.
That which he invented to help mankind was now being used to kill mankind.
Towards the end of his life, Alfred reflected on his legacy. Was this what he wanted to be remembered for?
For creating new and improved forms of death and destruction?
His answer was ?no?
And so he used the bulk of his fortune to establish international awards that would be given each year to scientists, thinkers, philanthropists and leaders that tried to better mankind and not erase it.
Listen to the criteria for his award??Given to the person or persons who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and for the promotion of peace.?
You might have figured out by know Alfred's last name, ?Nobel?.
And the Nobel Peace Prize has become one of the highest honours a person can receive, even up to today.
Listen to this impressive list of recipients.
Jean Henry Dunant, the man who founded the International Red Cross.
Mother Teresa for her work with the desperately poor in India.
Nelson Mandela for his work in dismantling apartheid in South Africa.
Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin for their efforts to bring peace in the Middle East
And more recently Al Gore for his dedication to issues of global warming that effects humankind.
An impressive list right?
And that's just a sample of great thinkers and leaders who have used their talents andpositions to advance the cause of peace in the world, and yet here we are.
We are no closer to achieving that goal than we were 100 years ago, and in fact we might be further away.
Conflict between countries.
Conflict between races.
Conflict in families.
Peace seems to be the most elusive of all our ambitions.
And yet in Mark chapter 5 vs 9, Jesus makes this statement in the Beatitudes,
?Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God?
Peacemakers?
Really Jesus?
You make it sound like this is actually possible!
What does it mean to be a ?peacemaker??
As we try to answer that important question I think it's important to understand what Jesus didn't say.
Notice Jesus didn't say, ?blessed are the peaceful for they will get a good night sleep?
Hey, there is nothing wrong with ?inner peace, I wish I had more of it.
There is nothing wrong with ?peace of mind?, we all wish we had it, but Jesus wasn't pronouncing a blessing on peaceful people.

Notice Jesus also didn't say, Jesus also didn't say, ?blessed are the peaceable for they just seem to get along with people?.
Hey, there's nothing wrong with peaceable people, I am one in fact, I hate conflict. But what I've found is that my peaceable character, while nice to be around, seldom changes the word.
Sometimes conflict needs to be addressed.
What he said was, ?Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.?
So what is a peacemaker?
Peacemaking is not a game for cowards. In fact, peacemakers are often mis-understood and almost always unappreciated.
?Peacemaking? is an active word, the very word implies taking initiative, peacemakers don't sit on their hands. It implies intervention, sometimes peacemakers need to step into hard places.
And it implies risk, peacemakers don't play it safe.
When Jesus uses the word peace here, he is invoking the Old Testament idea of peace,
?SHALOM?.
Shalom is a beautiful word when we understand it's full meaning and it's a word that appears in the Old Testament 250 times.
Shalom is a holistic word, that means wholeness and wellness. To experience shalom is to be in complete harmony with God, with other people and to be at peace with yourself.
The Old Testament word shalom, is essentially the same Hebrew word for salvation, and when Jesus paid the full price of sins penalty on the cross he actively brought the world the most profound and beautiful expression of shalom.
On this ancient hillside Jesus was commissioning those that would follow him to something extraordinary.
In a world that is so conflicted, God has positioned us perfectly to be peacemakers. Maybe it's in your family, your place of work or your school, but wherever you have influence, you get to choose whether you will be a part of the problem or a part of the solution.
Choose shalom.
Be a peacemaker today.
Jay Wagstaff
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