

God's Peacemakers

By Santiago Lange



INTRODUCTION:

Our world today is very deeply troubled and divided. As we watch and read the daily news we seem to have more questions than answers. Uncertainty is all around us. And yet, as Christians, we have been told by Jesus Christ, even in a chaotic and rather hostile environment, to be faithful messengers of reconciliation in a turbulent and confused world.

Everyone needs peace. Whether you're a national leader sitting across a table from other world leaders, or a refugee facing ethnic or religious tensions, or a businessman facing the pressures and deadlines at the office, a homemaker trying to corral the kids, or a student just trying to make it through the semester, everyone needs peace. But most of us, if we're honest with ourselves, have to admit that we often experience more stress than peace. Disagreements, feuds, and suspicion seem to be the rule of the day rather than the exception.

One of the indelible images from the Vietnam War is the photograph of a nine-year-old girl named Phan Thi Kim Phuc. During a battle between North and South Vietnamese troops, an American commander ordered South Vietnamese aircraft to drop napalm bombs on her tiny village. Two of her brothers were killed, and she was burned badly. Wearing no clothes, she fled up the road toward the cameraman. Because of the pain her arms are held out sideways, and her mouth is open in a cry of agony. Some of us perhaps remember that horrible, but telling picture (show picture). Ms. Kim Phuc suffered third-degree burns over 50 percent of her body, but she lived. She endured fourteen months of painful rehabilitation and scores of skin grafts. It was so painful to have her wounds washed and dressed that she lost consciousness whenever she was touched.

Eventually, she married, emigrated to Canada, and became a Christian who hoped someday to attend Bible college. Her burned skin lost sweat and oil glands, and she was still in much pain. Scars stretched up her arms to her chest and back. But despite her past and present suffering, in 1996 she accepted an invitation from several Vietnam veterans groups to join in Veterans Day ceremonies held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where she laid a wreath and spoke words of forgiveness. "I have suffered a lot from both physical and emotional pain," she told the audience of several thousand people, who greeted her with two standing ovations. "Sometimes I could not breathe. But God saved my life and gave me faith and hope. Even if I could talk face to face with the pilot who dropped the bombs, I would tell him, 'We cannot change history, but we should try to do good things for the present and for the future to promote peace.'"

Since the Vietnam War many other conflicts around the world, have headlined our daily news. Terrorism has become an almost daily event and none of us can escape the brutality of our

times. The numbers speak loudly. Only eight percent of the time since the beginning of recorded history has the world been entirely at peace. In over 3,500 years, only 295 have been warless and over 8,000 treaties have been broken in this time. The world's peacemakers have a terrible record. The peace they hail today is gone tomorrow. Peace, as the world conceives of it, is merely a moment when everyone stops to reload. The United Nations has not brought an end to war. However, on the positive side, who can say whether we would have had many more wars without it? At least it provides a forum for discussion of conflicting ideologies. Much of its ineffectiveness is because many involved nations either deny God exists or else worship deities other than God. The United Nations makes one thing quite clear. To be sure, everlasting peace will come, not through human diplomacy, but through submission to God who has revealed Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The idea of peace dominates the Holy Scriptures. There are four hundred references to peace in the Bible. It opens with peace in the Garden of Eden and closes with peace in the New Heavens and New Earth. In fact, a study of redemptive history could be made from the standpoint of peace. Man's sin interrupted our peace with God. At the cross, Christ became our peace. And, because Jesus has provided peace, there can be peace in the heart of one who comes to know Him. One day, that is our sure expectation, Jesus will come again and will establish an eternal kingdom of peace. But, this fact, does not free us up from our Christian calling and responsibilities.

Jesus instructed his own followers and disciples to be reconciled with one another. That, I think, you will agree, is a rather daunting and challenging assignment, even for believers. And yet, we must realize that the surest way to encourage any form of violence is to give in to it.

And so, we definitely need to understand what reconciliation, or to put it perhaps in a more colloquial way, what "peacemaking" is and how to go about accomplishing that God given mission. Jesus underscored that, if we take the charge of reconciliation with one another seriously, we would be blessed.

My message will hopefully help us unlock essential keys to that more blessed life, as we, following Jesus' instruction genuinely seek to be reconciled with one another in becoming instruments of peace.

In the so-called Sermon on the Mount, in the gospel of Matthew, a summary of what was originally surely a longer message, Jesus preached, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God*" (Matt. 5:9). Into a world that is ugly with violence and hate, our Lord sends us out as agents of change. As His disciples we aren't really given the choice of whether or not we would like to be „peacemakers“. And, we certainly aren't given the choice of what kind of world we would like to live in. As bad as things may be, this is the only world we have and, if we are going to be true to our Lord, we must strive towards accomplishing the given instruction. The practice of peace is the practice of Christianity. Peace is, after all, a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Now, what did Jesus mean by the term "peacemakers"?

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary a peacemaker is...

"a person who helps to prevent or stop an argument, a fight, or a war".

The Louw Nida Greek Dictionary, a scholarly standard reference work, explains more specifically that the term “peacemaker” in Matthew 5:9 (Gr. *eirēnopoios*) refers to “a person who restores peace between people—‘peacemaker, one who works for peace.’” Then it goes on to explain, „though in Mt 5:9 the cessation of war is by no means excluded, the focus of meaning of *εἰρηνοποιός* is reconciliation between persons and not primarily to cause wars to cease”.

These definitions do help us a bit further. And yet, I believe, more clarification is needed.

BODY:

And so, before jumping too far ahead, let me quickly dispel a few misconceptions connected to the term “peacemaking” while holding the just shared definitions in mind. It is important that we should also understand what a Peacemaker IS NOT. For instance, peacemaking, we need to be clear, is not the absence of conflict, or the avoidance of strife. Never in God’s Word are we instructed to always and in every case to run away from conflict. In fact, sticking proverbially our heads in the sand, hoping that some conflict will soon end, frequently only delays the inevitable. The “peace at any price” mentality is far from biblical command. I have discovered through repeated experience that we can never really make everyone happy all the time. That admission will surely also not be foreign to you. The person who simply glosses over problems, acting as if everything is alright (when this is obviously not the case) is not a true peacemaker.

So, then what DID Jesus mean by Christians being „peacemakers“? Keeping Scripture in mind I would like to suggest the following working definition... a peacemaker is, “someone who is actively seeking to reconcile people to God and to one another”. We can easily see that the compound word “peacemaker” is comprised of two very common words: “peace” and “maker.”

The word *peace* in Hebrew is the word *shalom*, often used as a greeting or as a departing word in much the same way one might utter “good day” or “may you be well”. *Shalom* is a broad term related to health, prosperity, harmony, and wholeness. It means perfect welfare, serenity, fulfillment, soundness, well being, freedom from trouble, and liberation from anything which hinders contentment. When a Jew utters “*Shalom*” they are wishing on another the full presence, peace, and prosperity of all the blessedness of God.

As you might recall, the famous Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:24-26 brings out this idea very clearly: “The LORD bless you and protect you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD look with favor on you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24-25). It is important to remember that peace in the Bible is always based on justice and righteousness.

Where justice prevails and righteousness rules, there you will also have real peace. But, without those two virtues, without justice and righteousness, lasting peace is not possible. Providing peace for his creation is a characteristic of God. In the OT peace came through adherence to God’s will as expressed in his spoken word, covenants and law. The Hebrew word “*shalom*” means “peace in all its fullness, in every aspect of life”. God’s ultimate provision of peace is discovered in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew word *shalom* and its derivatives have been said to represent “one of the most prominent theological concepts in the OT.” (The word group occurs about 180 times in the OT.) It was not a negative or passive concept but involved wholeness and completeness. The

related verb could mean to “repay” or “fulfill a vow” and so referred to completing or repairing a relationship. Ultimately, again, it is only through Christ that peace with God can be achieved and maintained. No God, no peace; know God, know peace.

The term translated “peace” in the NT is the Greek term *eirene*. It occurs in every NT book except 1 John (most frequently in Luke, 14 x; followed by Rom. 10 x; then Eph. 8 x). Outside the Bible the Greek word was likely to mean just the opposite of war, but its use to translate *shalom* in the Septuagint may have been what broadened its usage. Like *shalom*, the term in the NT could refer not only to the absence of hostility, strife, and disorder (1 Cor. 14:33) but also to the condition and sense of being safe and secure (Acts 9:31). Christ made *eirene*, made peace, between believing Jew and Gentile by making them into one new man in Him (Eph. 2:14–15). The term could also describe a state of either physical or spiritual well-being.

Now, the word *make* in the term “peacemakers” comes from the Greek verb that means “to do” or “to make.” It is a word bursting with energy. It mandates action and initiative. The literal idea is that someone has to drag the combatants to the table and give them a reason to put down their arms. Notice Jesus did not say “Blessed are the peacemakers or the peace-helpers or the peacemakers or the peacelovers or the peacetalkers.” God has not called us to become „peacekeepers“, but to be „peacemakers“. Peace, here the crucial point, is something that must be made. That is, peace never happens by mere chance. „Peacemakers“ are never passive. They are always seeking to take the initiative. They are, in other words, up and around and doing.

So when these two words are taken together, “peace” and “maker,” the term describes one who actively pursues reconciliation. Granted, a person cannot be a particularly effective reconciler until first he finds reconciliation for himself or herself.

„Peacemakers“ pursue more than the absence of conflict; they don’t avoid strife (in fact, sometimes, peacemaking may even cause strife); „Peacemakers“ aren’t merely seeking to appease the warring parties; they aren’t trying to accommodate everyone. Instead, they are pursuing all the beauty and blessedness of God upon another. As William Barclay exegetes Matthew 5:9, “*peacemakers are people who produce right relationships in every sphere of life.*”

We can change the things we can. We can invite. We can fight suffering, prejudice, inequality and discrimination. We can stand up for fairness in the marketplaces of the world. We can help take care of others. But the real starting place is finding inward peace with self. Until we start with inward peace we will never have long term spiritual and emotional health.

As so as we begin thinking about with a deeper focus and more specifically as to how we can become true to our calling to become genuine “peacemakers” allow me to share with you briefly 5 „points to ponder“ related to “peacemaking”, thoughts you might want to seriously consider and study as we ask God for a clean heart, guidance and wisdom.

Thought 1:

Peacemaking seeks long term sustainable solutions rather than polite agreements or uneasy and fragile truces to difficult conflicts.

Many times, people avoid the difficult work of conflict by layering over the problem with a superficial, nice fix. Effective peacemaking, though, takes on the painful, difficult, and sometimes frightening aspects of conflict directly.

Thought 2

In peacemaking, truth telling and truth seeking are honored, integrity is valued, and trust is given because it is earned.

People learn in the peacemaking process to speak from their hearts and minds what they have personally experienced. They are honored for revealing difficult truths when they could brush over them. The „peacemaker“ instills this value in the process and insists on a commitment to truth telling from everyone participating in the process.

Thought 3:

Peacemaking offers an opportunity to explore and discover that which is as yet unimagined. In many conflicts, the conflict issues are forbidden subjects to talk about because the anxiety of dealing with them is too uncomfortable. Peacemaking allows that anxiety to be contained and managed. As a result, people sense relief at being able to talk about issues that have irked them, sometimes for years. Furthermore, peacemaking allows new visions and ideas about relationships to be explored and perhaps created. The process permits discovery of ideas and solutions that before seemed unimaginable.

Thought 4:

The peacemaker must create a place where people are able to approach, rather than freeze, flee, or fight.

„Peacemakers“, knowledgeable in the neuropsychology of fear, always recognize the importance of the environment on preconscious brain processes. „Peacemakers“ are therefore charged with the duty of controlling environments that allow people to approach one another, rather than to defend against one another.

Thought 5:

Peacemaking requires tremendous courage by those faced with difficult conflict.

Conflict causes people to fear others as well as themselves. What people detest in others is what is inside of them. Thus, to confront others is to confront the same thing within. People know this intuitively, but cannot articulate it. This fear is why so many people avoid peacemaking—they do not have the courage to face themselves, their secret inadequacies, and their deepest fears. Peacemaking is not easy nor is it soft. So many of us carry deep wounds from the battles of this life, we are all in a very real sense, wounded worshippers – worshipping a God of healing and restoration. During Jesus earthly ministry, he was busy bringing healing and he is still healing lives to this very day. Many have been wounded in the battle grounds of their families. For some these wounds were inflicted by a physically abusive parent or spouse. The wounds that these people carry go much deeper than the remembered bruises or scars they still carry. These wounds go deep into the soul. For others the scars which they carry from the battle that have raged in their families do not show any external signs. We carry perhaps our scars as remembered hurtful words which did so much damage to us. Occasionally the evidence of our scars manifests itself in the form of repeated behavior. They hit us so we hit others. They were tyrannical to us so we, in turn, set standards for others in our lives which are completely beyond reach. We set standards for ourselves which we can never reach... and in the process the cruel cycle of unhealthy – sinful – hurtful behavior continues. How often in a marriage do we wound one another with words? I’m reminded of the childhood adage, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” How horribly untrue these words are! As sad as it is for me to say it, the church is often another place that can, and often does, become a battleground. Any time you get imperfect people together, there is

bound to be some conflict, some difference of opinion, some trouble that creates quarrels and disagreements and can even lead to bitterness.

Being a „peacemaker“ requires a „full meal“ every day, including feeding on the Word of God, both the written and the LIVING Word of God, meaning the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no „fast food“ „peacemaking“.

True peacemaking is, of course, ultimately and primarily a divine work. God is the author of peace. And, Jesus is THE supreme Peacemaker. Jesus came to establish peace; his message explained peace; his death purchased peace; and his resurrected presence enables peace. In fact, the messianic predictions were that he would be the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). The angels announced our Saviour’s birth by singing, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors!” (Luke 2:14). Jesus’ persistent word of absolution to sinners was, “Go in peace!” And just before he was crucified, Jesus’ last will and testament was, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Your heart must not be troubled or fearful” (John 14:27). Later, when the Lord returned after the resurrection, his first word to the disciples was “Shalom.” “Peace to you!” (Luke 24:36).

The life of Jesus was saturated with his mission to bring the peace of God and to initiate the healing relationships of peace with God. He paid an enormous price for us to experience that peace, that true and everlasting shalom. In fact, the very same word, *peacemakers*, which is used of us in the Beatitudes, is applied by the apostle Paul to what God has done through Christ so that we could be at peace with God. Through Christ God was pleased “. . . *to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross*” (Col. 1:20). Furthermore, the apostle Paul informed us that Jesus is seeking to... “*create in Himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace*” (Eph. 2:15). Jesus saw the gravity of our problem, the problem of sin, and he refused to sweep it under the rug or stick his head in the sand. Only a drastic solution would suffice, and so the Eternal Word, becoming one of us, “made peace” by shedding his precious blood on the cross. Christ is our supreme example in bringing peace in our hearts, in our relationships, in our church, in our nation, and in our world.

That task, however, as I have mentioned, will not be easy nor will it be pretty. And, those who actively engage in peacemaking will often be misunderstood. In 1781 Ben Franklin wrote to US President John Adams, “Blessed are the peacemakers’ is, I suppose, for another world. In this world they are frequently cursed.” Sadly, Mr. Franklin was quite right.

Unfortunately, when we read the words of Jesus, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” we often smile blandly and say, “Oh, that’s nice.” But peacemaking, my friends, is not nice. Peacemaking can be quite messy, and at times, a very frustrating enterprise. It can take time and a lot of emotional energy. It can be like trekking across a fast moving creek on slippery rocks. But, that journey is needed. The call is risky. And, occasionally we may slip and fall. We might get bruised. And, sometimes we will not make it across the stream.

And, let me be honest, peacemaking doesn’t always work. In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he exhorted, “If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18). We are to live at peace with everyone. That is a pretty clear command. But Paul adds that all important phrase, “If it is possible.” Sometimes, according to Paul, peace isn’t possible. There are those cantankerous types who just go through life picking fights with everyone they meet. You can’t always live at peace with people like that. That, is a fact.

However, let's focus on the phrase "as far as it depends on you." The hallmark of a Christian is the ability to get along with other people. And, the testimony of a church is its ability to get along with other people. We have a God-given, scripturally-directed responsibility to pursue peace. As the apostle Paul declared, "God has called you to peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). Does that mean we agree with everything others say or do? Of course not. Sometimes we will have to agree to disagree, but we should always strive to do so lovingly and agreeably. God wants his children to be bridge builders.

This brings us to the next important point.

What does all of this mean for us? What can we do to build those bridges of peace? What steps, what methods, can we employ to actively reconcile people to God and to one another? Where should we start?

First of all, I find it crucial to talk to the Lord about what I've done or what people may have done to me before engaging in peacemaking with others. This approach gives me a more balanced perspective and the right tenderness. The Lord helps me see through this reflection the deeper needs in the damaged relationship and what has caused the problem. God will also show me my part, and often, my wrong words, behavior, or attitude that is hindering reconciliation. Even if the other person is 95% in the wrong and I am only 5% in the wrong, I still have to confess my error. Then, and only then, I am able to surrender the conflict to the Lord.

Jesus is really clear on this action. He said, "So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

This, I believe, is one of the most ignored verses in the Bible. Later, Jesus said, "If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother" (Matt. 18:15).

We are to make the first move. „Peacemakers“ take the initiative. "But we might say, "Why should I go to the person when he or she is the one that hurt me." Do we want the biblical answer? Well, are you ready? Here it is. Because, Jesus says so. Conflict is never resolved accidentally. That first step may involve writing a letter, making a phone call, or a visit. If someone has wronged us or we have wronged someone else, take action. Don't delay. Our peace of mind and our Christian witness depends on our taking the first step. Happiness awaits action.

When we take the first step and speak to the other person, before we speak, let us remember the words of Solomon and Paul. Solomon wrote, "A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath" (Prov. 15:1). Paul wrote, "No rotten talk should come from your mouth, but only what is good for the building up of someone in need, in order to give grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29). We should empathize with the feelings of others. Consider their situation. Attack the problem not the person. Clarify don't confront. Cooperate as much as possible. Emphasize reconciliation not resolution. Reconciliation is always more crucial than being right.

Nothing disqualifies us in being peacemakers more than talking about people rather than talking to them. The old Spanish proverb is correct: "Whoever gossips to you will gossip of you."

A peacemaker never says anything about another person that she or he has not first said to that person directly. After that, why tell anyone else?

When we put the above steps into practice, we earn a recognition that far exceeds anything that we can imagine. Jesus again said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9). The word *called* means to be officially designated as holding a particular rank, office, or function as when we name a chair or choose a leader or designate a spokesman. Jesus says that those who are „peacemakers“ will be known and recognized as what they really are—the sons (or daughters) of God. We may wrongly assume at first glance that “sons of God” means the same as “children of God.” But the terms are not quite identical. A “child of God” is one who is a part of the family. It is a statement of position. A “son of God” is one who is like the family. It is a statement of character. A son of God is one who not only carries on the family name but bears the family resemblance and reputation. Jesus is saying that as his followers become known as „peacemakers“, they will be recognized as the sons of God who share His name and share His mission. And so, I wonder, do the people in our life recognize the family resemblance based on our efforts of peacemaking? We may be a “child of God” because we accepted Christ; but we are a “Son of God” because we pursue peace. Are we actively seeking to reconcile people to God and one another—putting two neighbors back on speaking terms, restoring unity within a family, or making amends with a brother or sister? Are we recognized as assisting in God’s activity in our neighborhoods and world? If so, we are doing what God himself has done for us through Christ and doing to others what God intends of us.

The opposite must be pointed out as well. The opposite of „peacemakers“ is troublemakers. People who are mean-spirited, stirring up strife, creating conflict. Allow me to quote pastor and author Kent Hughes: *“If we are not peacemakers, but instead are troublemakers, there is every likelihood that we are not true children of God (notice his word choice)”*.

Troublemakers definitely are not bearing the character of Jesus. In fact, Hughes radically even questions their position in the family of God. „Peacemakers“ are sometimes „troublemakers“ to bring peace, yes, but troublemakers in the negative sense, make trouble for the sake of trouble. If our character is such that we spread rumors and gossip about others; if we are constantly fomenting discontent; if we find joy in the report of trouble and scandal; if we are omniscritical, always fault finding; if we are unwilling to be involved in peacemaking; if we are mean—if these negative qualities characterize our lives, if that is what we are known for, there is a good chance we are also not living up to the Christian ideals in other areas. Notice I did not say, if we fall into these things or are struggling to control them; but rather if these elements are a part of our character. If this is what we are like and project, then I would earnestly counsel that the time has urgently come to take a day off from our daily routine and spend it with the Scriptures open before us, seeking the face of God. True “Sons of God” are not troublemakers!”

Those are sobering thoughts. But, the good news of the gospel is that a troublemaker can become a „peacemaker“. Light can shine most brightly in darkness. My experience with troublemakers is that they are creating conflict in their external world because they have internal strife. They can change. In fact, they “must” change in order to experience the reward and benefit of the blessing mentioned in the sermon of the Mount.

You've heard perhaps the story of the Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel who invented dynamite in 1866. The invention earned him fame and much of his wealth. At one point in his life Nobel held more than 350 patents, operated labs in more than 20 countries, and had more than 90 factories manufacturing explosives and ammunition. Yet today he is most often remembered as the name behind the Nobel Peace Prize. What you might not have known is that in 1888 his brother Ludvig died while staying in Cannes, France. The French newspapers mistakenly confused the two brothers and reported that it was Alfred, the inventor of explosives, that died. What shocked Alfred was not simply the reporting of his death but the opinion people held of him. One French paper's headline read: "The Merchant of Death is Dead." Horrified, Alfred set about changing his reputation, and change it he did.

So, let me ask, what would be the headline that summed up OUR reputation?

In a letter to a certain Diognetus, thought to have been written around the mid-to late-2nd century the sender, identified as „Mathetes“ in the fifth chapter of his epistle, describes to a curious inquirer Christian behavior under the heading „The Manners of the Christians“ as follows...

„For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred“.

So, I again ask, what is OUR reputation? I would say the letter to Diognetus is a pretty good description of a true „peacemaker“.

Significantly, the Bible writers seem less concerned with the reputation that we leave behind and more concerned with the reputation we are going to.

Many different ideas of peace exist in the world today. Someone may say as long as I have money I have peace. Someone else may say as long as I have family I have peace. Someone else may say as long as I have health I have peace. These are all wonderful explanations of peace; nevertheless, these illustrations of peace are all examples of imperfect peace. Man

often will try to find peace in many different avenues only to find that they are chasing something that they will never apprehend without God.

The radicalness of Christ's call to peacemaking demands a radical remaking of human personality. One must first have a profound experience of the Shalom of God. No one can become a „peacemaker“, in the biblical sense, until he has found peace himself and that will involve trusting and resting in God. We cannot give what is not first real to us. Peacemaking therefore begins with an experience of peace in our own hearts. The salutations of the Apostle Paul's letters almost always begin “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:2). Reading Paul's letters, you never find the order reversed to “peace and grace.” Grace always comes before peace. We have to experience the grace of God before we can experience the peace of God. We have to come into an intimate relationship with God through his son Jesus Christ before we can be purveyors of peace to others. We have to know peace ourselves before we can make peace in our relationships. In other words, we can't make peace if we don't have peace.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus is on a recruiting mission. He's looking for a few volunteers to join God's Peace Corps. He's looking for a few good men and a few good women who will spread God's peace and message all over the world. The greatest peacekeeping force on the planet ought to be the church.

High up in the Andes Mountains, there stands a bronze statue of Christ. Its base is granite, and the figure is fashioned from old cannons. It marks the boundary between Argentina and Chile. Engraved in Spanish are the words, “Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust than Argentines and Chileans break the peace sworn at the feet of Christ the Redeemer.” For many years, the people of these two countries had been quarrelling about their boundaries. Both countries were suffering from the mistrust created. In 1900, when the conflict was at its peak, some citizens begged their leaders to ask King Edward VII of Great Britain to mediate the dispute. On May 28, 1903, the two governments signed a treaty ending the conflict. During the celebration that followed, Senora de Costa, a noble lady of Argentina who had done much to bring about peace, conceived the idea of the monument. Senora de Costa had a statue of Christ shaped from the very cannons that had been used to strike terror into the hearts of the Chileans. It was taken to the summit of Uspallata Pass and was set up at the point where the two countries meet amidst perpetual snow. At the dedication ceremony, the statue was presented to the world as a sign of the victory of good will. Senora de Costa knelt and prayed, “Protect, O lord, our native land. Ever give us faith and hope. May fruitful peace be our first patrimony and good example its greatest glory.”

So much war, so much strife, so much pain exists in the world. That means there is plenty of work for you and me to do.

Some seven hundred years ago a remarkable man was born. Although he was the son of an Italian cloth merchant and destined to be a knight, he forsook the path of wealth and fame, choosing instead to wear a ragged cloak tied with a rope borrowed from a scarecrow. He spent his days preaching and giving to others. History records that he was a noble, kind, humble, Christlike man—we know him today as Francis of Assisi. Centuries after his death, someone translated one of his prayers into English. It was later set to music. Some of you might recall the prayer. It goes like this...

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

May we, both individually and as a community of believers, be the living embodiment of those very words. □