

Editorial: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers,’ but is peace possible?

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“Prophets and priests alike,
all practice deceit. ...
‘Peace, peace,’ they say,
when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:13-14).

This deception is not our problem today. We do not suffer today from proclamations of peace. We suffer today from a pervasive lack of peace. How well we know.

Yet, as I try to process all the implications of events over the last week(s)—

- the [interracial brawl in Montgomery, Ala.](#),
- the [guilt](#) of [six former Mississippi police officers](#) who terrorized and brutalized Black men,
- the [fourth indictment of Donald Trump](#),
- the U.N. finally recognizing the [Burmese military is committing war crimes](#),
- the continuing [religious violence in Northeast India](#),
- the continuing [Russian atrocities in Ukraine](#),
- the [deadly fire in Maui, Hawaii](#),
- scorching heat,
- economic unrest,
- [social unrest](#),
- [denominational strife](#) and more

—as I try to take all of this in, Jesus’ words echo in my mind: “Blessed are

the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

But is peace possible? It doesn't seem so. Can we be expected to make the impossible? Which is to wonder if Jesus expects us to make peace or if he simply blesses the notion.

I contend Jesus expects us to be peacemakers regardless of peace's possibility.

What peacemaking isn't

By “peacemaker,” I'm not referring to the streaming series starring John Cena. I'm also not referring to a famous pistol. Both are symbols of how our world makes peace. With both, violence or the threat of violence is a prerequisite to peace. Both reduce peacemaking to a blunt-force business.

In reality, peacemaking is a complicated business in our world. What one person calls “peace” another derisively calls “pacifism.” What is peacemaking in one situation is placating or avoidance in another. Such is the case on every level—from the interpersonal to the international.

In a hostile world, peace all too often requires a fight—of some kind, somewhere, to some degree. This isn't to justify any fight. It's simply to acknowledge the malformation of our world. I contend Jesus expects peacemaking to be about re-forming our world, but this is a contentious statement.

One group of Christians intends to do just that—reform the world along a conservative line, correcting back to long-held norms. Another group of Christians intends to do just that in the opposite direction—reform the world along a progressive line, correcting away from long-practiced norms. For each, peace means aligning with their line.

Between them—yes, even between Christians—there is a fighting and a

cleaving. With such a divide among those called to be peacemakers, how can peace be possible anywhere?

What I think peacemaking is

If we take a closer look at what Jesus said, we will see he didn't *call* us "peacemakers." He said those who make peace are blessed. I interpret this to mean Jesus knew peacemaking is not the norm and certainly is not easy, yet he expects his followers to be peacemakers anyway.

Biblically speaking, peace is harmony between two or more people or between God and humans. Such harmony is accompanied by a sense of rest and all being well with the world. How we need some rest and all to be well with the world.

It's worth noting, musically speaking, harmony requires two or more different notes sounded together or in close proximity to each other. Harmony is not a single note sounded multiple times or in varying volumes. Harmony is the combination of distinctly different notes.

Too many of us think peace requires forcing different notes into a single tone. *That* is not peacemaking. Peacemaking as I believe Jesus meant it is the opposite of such force and radical conformity. Peacemaking as I believe Jesus meant it is to live self-sacrificially.

Peacemaking, if consistent with the Beatitudes, ought to harmonize with hungering and thirsting for righteousness, with meekness and with being merciful, poor in spirit and pure in heart. Oh, and it will bring persecution.

Peacemaking should cost the peacemaker more than it costs anyone else. It should hurt the peacemaker more than it hurts anyone else. Jesus was the perfect model.

There are those who say this kind of peace and peacemaking is weak, that

it's not what is needed today. They claim the name and power of Jesus, and they wear the name "Christian." But they are prophets and priests of a different deception.

Make peace anyway

Jesus lived in a time no less tumultuous than our own. He knew how distant peace was, had been and would continue to be. And yet, he expected his followers to be peacemakers anyway, regardless of peace's possibility.

For that matter, asking if peace is possible is like asking, "Who's my neighbor?" It's a rhetorical question allowing us to dodge the expectation that we will be the kind of people Jesus calls us, expects us and even commands us to be.

When Jesus blessed the peacemakers, he didn't qualify the blessing. He didn't reserve the blessing on the condition peace was possible. He didn't limit the blessing only to those who successfully achieve peace.

He simply said those whose lives are characterized by peacemaking will be characterized as God's children: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

I would like for the news to get better. I would like less mourning, less persecution, less strife. For now, we continue to hope for that day. Until then, let us be peacemakers, not as the world makes "peace," but as Jesus did and continues to do—even when peace looks impossible.

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