

"THE WISE PEACEMAKER"

{1 Kings 3 and Matthew 5:9}

Trinity Presbyterian Church

October 5, 2008

I read a great story this week that I want to share with you about a man who had a physical check-up and then returned the following day to see his physician and get the test results.

The doctor said he had bad news and worse news for him—which did he wish to hear first?

The man was a bit non-plussed and said he'd rather hear the bad news first. So, the doctor said, *"The bad news is that you only have 24 hours to live!"*

At this the man jumped up, totally flabbergasted and distraught. *"Twenty-four hours to live? I can't possibly get my affairs in order that quickly. I can't believe this, it's incredible! What could be worse news than that?"*

The doctor replied, *"The worse news is that I was supposed to tell you this yesterday but I forgot!"*

A diagnosis like that could certainly provoke panic rather than inner peace. I wouldn't categorize that doctor as a peacemaker.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The seventh beatitude of Jesus given to the crowds on the mountainside was...

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" {Matthew 5:9, NIV}

Every Christian is meant to be a peacemaker—both in the community and in the church. Where there's conflict, the believer should do their utmost to actively pursue peace.

Peacemaking means working towards reconciliation. There are right ways to do this and there are methods that would inevitably bring even more conflict in the long run. It's a delicate tightrope one walks.

I was reminded of the story of the Swedish couple, Helga and Henry. They were married for 60 years, and they fought like cats and dogs every day of their married lives. Finally, their 60th anniversary arrived. Helga and Henry began the morning with a terrible spat...and...they argued all day long.

At the end of the day, Helga said to her husband, *“Henry, tonight I tink ven ve pray, ve better pray for peace. Ve been fighting each other for 60years, Henry. May the Lord give us peace. So tonight, I tink I’ll pray that the Lord vill take you home and I’ll go live with my sister, Olga!”*

Obviously, that’s not the way to resolve a conflict.

PEACEMAKING MEANS TAKING A RISK

Jesus says the reward for peacemakers is being called children of God.

God was/is the author of peace and reconciliation. We read in Colossians 1:19-20...

“God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Christ, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.”

For the believer to be a peacemaker is seeking to do what their Heavenly Father has done...and is doing...daring to take a risk to bring peace and reconciliation.

Former Senator and Vice President, Hubert Humphrey, known by his colleagues in the United States Senate as the “Happy Warrior” said:

“Negotiating between conflicting parties is like crossing a river and walking on slippery rocks...it’s risky, but it’s the only way to get across.”

Being a peacemaker can be dangerous...slippery...and you can in the process fall and break your neck...but, it’s the only way to the other side.

Whether the effort is successful or not, it is a risk worth taking!

PEACEMAKING REQUIRES TAKING THE INITIATIVE

When we lived in Southern California we vacationed a number of times in the beach town of San Clemente. It was an exciting time for that sleepy little town for it was during the time that Richard Nixon was President of the United States the Western White House {Casa Pacifica} was located on the point just south of the beach.

It was great fun watching the big limousines enter and depart the estate and frequently while on the beach Marine One, the Presidential helicopter flew overhead.

I recall one summer after the President had just returned from meetings in the Soviet Union with President Leonid Brezhnev seeing the marquee on the San Clemente Inn saying: “Welcome Home, Mr. Peacemaker.”

But, that was before Watergate...and the fall of the President. He left Washington humiliated...and to this day the very mention of “Watergate” is associated with Richard Nixon’s Presidency. Gone are the memories of his peacemaking efforts with the Soviet Union and China.

Nixon had narrowly defeated Hubert Humphrey for the Presidency in 1968. Dr. Robert Schuller tells of a conversation he had with Humphrey ten years later who was then dying of terminal cancer.

Dr. Schuller said to Humphrey: *“Hubert, I don’t suppose there is any American today who is being applauded more than you.”*

Humphrey responded: *“That may be true.”*

Schuller then said to the Senator: *“The irony of it is that 20 miles from me sits a man in almost total exile. His name is Richard Nixon. You now are honored. But because of the Watergate scandal, he is suffering the opposite fate. What’s your opinion? Should he stay that way all his life? Should he be forgiven? Could there be a healing?”*

After discussing it for a short while, Dr. Schuller said, *“I don’t think Nixon can make it back without a lot of help: (1—he would have to be invited to a prestigious public event; (2—he would have to be invited to come out by someone all of America respects; (3—he would have to be invited by somebody who is not running for political office, because the opponent would really use this against him.” [As was the case I might add when President Gerald R. Ford pardoned Nixon in 1974—and by so doing probably cost him the election two years later.]*

Senator Humphrey hesitated and then replied, *“It sounds like I’m the man. I’m surely not running for office!”*

He thought for a few minutes and then said, *“Yes, I’ll let it be known that he can come to my funeral. I think that will be an event. And since it’s being sponsored by a liberal democrat, I don’t think they could fault it.”*

And, that’s exactly what happened. When Senator Humphrey’s body lay in its casket under the Capitol rotunda, there sat Muriel Humphrey, and next to her sat Richard Nixon.

Someone said, *“How could they invite Nixon to Humphrey’s funeral?”* Another person sitting nearby answered, *“If you knew Hubert Humphrey you wouldn’t have asked that question.”*

In the end, it was Senator Hubert Humphrey who took both the risk and the initiation...and was “Mr. Peacemaker.”

That speaks message loud and clear to us this morning.

PEACEMAKING REQUIRES DISCERNMENT AND WISDOM

In 1 Kings 3 we have a very delicate case brought before King Solomon that demanded incredible discernment if there was to be a reconciliation of the matter presented him.

King Solomon has succeeded his father to the throne of Israel. He is very young, insecure, and has had little experience in leadership. Our text of the morning tells us that he loved God and did his best to follow in his father’s footsteps.

One night Solomon has a dream in which God asks him: **“What can I give you? Ask!”**

Solomon praises God and then responds...

“God, my God, you have made me your servant, ruler of the kingdom in place of David my father. I’m too young for this, a mere child! I don’t know the ropes, hardly know the ‘ins’ and ‘outs’ of this job. And here I am set down in the middle of the people you’ve chosen, a great people—far too many to ever count.

“Here’s what I want. Give me a God listening heart as I can lead your people well, discerning the difference between good and evil. For who on their own is capable of leading your glorious people?”

God gives Solomon the opportunity of asking what he needs, and Solomon responds by asking for practical wisdom to rule his people effectively. He sensed the enormity of his task and knew that he needed divine wisdom.

{It’s ironic that when the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt placed the burdens of the Presidency on the shoulders of Harry S. Truman, the new

President prayed Solomon's words in asking for divine wisdom and guidance.}

Solomon may have been young and inexperienced—perhaps even in over his head; however, he was wise enough to know what to ask for from God Almighty when given the opportunity.

God was delighted with Solomon's request and responded...

“Because you have asked for this and haven't grasped after a long life, or riches, or the doom of your enemies, but you have asked for the ability to lead and govern well, I'll give you what you've asked for—I'm giving you a wise and mature heart...(and) as a bonus...I'm giving you both the wealth and glory you didn't ask for...!”

Note God's generosity—He gave Solomon far more than He requested—as He does for us even today. **This is a sign that God responds to our requests—even beyond what we can anticipate if our prayers are in accordance with His will.**

Soon, Solomon faced the first test to use his wisdom to discern the difference between good and evil...to be a peacemaker.

Two women, prostitutes living in the same house, dispute as to whose child is dead and whose child is alive. Both claim the living child is theirs. Solomon decides by commanding that the living child be cut into two pieces by his sword and shared between the two women. One woman refuses and offers to let the other have the child—obviously, she is the real mother.

What a stroke of genius on Solomon's part. God gave him that discerning ability and in the process, he became a peacemaker.

CONCLUSION

God's blessings rest upon those who are peacemakers. Jesus called them children of God. To be a peacemaker it requires...

 **TAKING A RISK**

 **TAKING THE INITIATIVE**

 **DISCERNMENT AND WISDOM**

Pray and ask God this morning that He will grant you both the wisdom and discernment to be His peacemaker.