

**Title: Winning the Peace****[Slide 1]****Text: Matthew 5:9****War and Peace****The Treaty of Versailles:****[Slide 2]**

World War I was meant to be the "war to end all wars." After four long years of slaughter and devastation the war finally ground to an end. The guns fell silent at 11:00 a.m. on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918. The armistice that brought about the end of hostilities was signed by all parties in a railroad carriage car in Campiegne, France.

Seven months later the former combatants signed a formal peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles. This treaty could have been the victors' opportunity to secure a lasting peace: to win not only the war, but the peace as well. Sadly, it did anything but that.

The victorious Allies determined to make this treaty a weapon with which to punish their defeated enemies. In the words of German historian Hagen Schultz, the treaty placed Germany "under legal sanctions, deprived of military power, economically ruined, and politically humiliated."

As a result, WWI simply became the first act in a horrific tragedy. Just 21 years later everyone was fighting again. Germany had been so humiliated and economically ruined that its people were willing to embrace Nazism and its charismatic leader, Adolph Hitler.

That is what happens when you win the war, but fail to win the peace.

**The Marshall Plan:****[Slide 3]**

What a contrast to the way that the United States intervened following the end of the Second World War. This time, Germany and much of Europe lay

in ruins. Millions of refugees roamed the shattered landscape. People were starving. Communism threatened from the east.

In the face of the chaos gripping Europe at the end of the war, Secretary of State George Marshall made a bold proposal: Rebuild Europe, both friend a foe.

In his words:

*Our policy is not directed against any country, but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Any government willing to assist in recovery will find full cooperation on the part of the United States.*

From 1948 to 1952 the United States gave two billion dollars to the people of Europe. That sum would be the equivalent of 100 billion dollars today! While much of the money went to Great Britain and France, 11% of the funds went to West Germany – the nation that had just 3 years before been a mortal foe!

You see, George Marshall understood that winning the war was just the opening battle. The real test was whether or not the United States and its allies could *win the peace*.

And *win the peace* they did. In the years immediately after the war, the United States sent 1/6<sup>th</sup> of its food production to Japan and Europe. Instead of further humiliating her enemies, the United States offered them the tools to rebuild and become friends and allies!

That's called *winning the peace*.

## **The Seventh Blessing**

### **The Seventh Blessing:**

This is exactly what Jesus is talking about in the seventh riddle He gave at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount:

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*Matthew 5:9 NIV*

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."*

Here is a riddle that speaks directly to the battle that we wage every day against the chaos and brokenness of the world. And it raises the question: Will we focus solely on winning the war, or will we commit ourselves to winning the peace.

Peace, you see, is not simply the silencing of the guns or a time-out in a hostile relationship. Peace isn't something that automatically happens just because the fighting has died down. Peace doesn't magically appear because you won an argument or your party won an election.

Peace is something you have to "make." It has to be constructed. It is New Creation work, the repairing and restoring of God's good Creation.

### **The Peacemaker:**

Paul explains that God Himself is the ultimate Peacemaker. He writes to the Colossians:

#### **[Slide 5]**

*Colossians 1:19-22 NIV*

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus, 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.*

#### **[Slide 6]**

*Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 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.*

The entire human race, in its broken condition, is at war, as it were, with its Creator. God is perceived as the enemy. But God stepped in, winning the war with Death itself, and *making peace* between Himself and His lost humanity.

You see, it was far more important to God that He *win the peace*, than that He win the war over evil. He went so far as to let our punishment fall upon His own Son, so that He could win a far greater battle – the battle for Shalom, Peace.

## Peace:

What does this Peace look like? Well, Paul would say it looks like a world that has been put back together, reconciled. Nothing is left out: the reconciliation and restoration of God's Creation reaches from the highest heaven to the lowest place on Planet Earth. It embraces each and every one of us, right down to the broken places inside us and the broken relationships in which we find ourselves. It is a reconciliation which can bring together former enemies. It is bigger than politics and culture. It is a restoration that only the Creator of all things can do!

We get a first glimpse at this Peace in what Jesus Himself did. Paul takes as his example the intense hostility between the Jews and Gentiles of his time. He explains that Jesus came to make the two warring camps

### [Slide 7]

*Ephesians 2:14-18 NIV*

*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, setting aside in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to **create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace**, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

### [Slide 8]

*He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

### [Slide 9]

In the great Temple in Jerusalem there was a wall which divided the part of the temple open to Gentiles from the part reserved only for Jews. It was a literal "dividing wall." If a Gentile trespassed into the Jewish-only part of the Temple, he would be put to death. But now, Paul says, Jesus has broken down the dividing wall. To do so, He had to be willing to seemingly "lose the war." He took the hostility into Himself on the cross and put it to death. The fight stopped then and there.

And by trusting in Jesus and His resurrection, now Jews and Gentiles found themselves on common ground. They, together, were formed into a “new humanity” – God’s New Creation people – and a foretaste of what Heaven itself is all about. He is equally available to each and all. We all meet in Him.

That’s called “making peace.”

## **Winning the Peace**

### **Winning the Peace:**

#### **[Slide 10]**

Jesus calls you and me to do the very same thing. Whenever we join Him in restoring God’s Creation by “winning the peace,” we show ourselves to be God’s children, sons and daughters of God. That’s how it works in God’s family. So how do we “win the peace”?

First and foremost, keep Jesus in the center of your life. He is your Peace.

Second, remember that sometimes the fight has to stop with you. You don’t need to have the last word. Jesus took the whole weight of human hostility and evil upon Himself on the cross. The fight stopped right there. We can do the same in our little world. We don’t have to make that negative post on Facebook or other social media platforms. We don’t have to get all caught up in the latest political or social outrage. We can take the hurt and injustice to Jesus.

Finally, you have a bigger assignment than simply fighting against all the things that are wrong with the world. You are called to be a *peacemaker*. You are a peace-builder, part of God’s construction crew that is working on His New Creation.