Sermon Series: The Twelve Marks of Christian Maturity
Sermon Title: You Become a Peacemaker

Text: James 3:7-13 -- For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Introduction: This morning, as we continue in our series "***The 12 Marks of Christian Maturity***," I would like to look at a 6th characteristic of a maturing believer in Christ, but before I introduce our topic, here is a quick review of the first five: ***You Know You're Growing Up When…*** **(1)** You exercise freedom responsibly; **(2)** You stop making excuses for your failures; **(3)** You forgive and forget; **(4)** You value integrity more than image; and **(5)** You learn to delay gratification. Today, I would like to propose another evidence that you're growing up: ***you become a peacemaker***. **Theologian Henri Nowen recognized that those who seek to bring peace are much less common than those who do not, and so he prayed, "*Give me courage to show the dove in a world full of serpents*." One quick glance at a newspaper confirms his perspective.** A while back, a man named ***Steven Slater***, a JetBlue flight attendant, "***flipped his wig … exiting his plane and his career with dramatic flair***," according to **USA Today**. **After a dispute with an obnoxious female passenger over luggage, he returned the insult on the plane's public address system by cussing her out to the shock of everyone else on the aircraft. Then he lowered the emergency chute, grabbed a beer, thanked the nicer passengers on board, and slid into controversy**. Some people hailed him as a hero for refusing to put up with the bad behavior of a customer. They said it was about time that a flight attendant stood up to belligerent passengers. Others, however, did not see the incident the same way. Said one writer commenting on the situation, "…***these are times that call for leaders, not loudmouths, for people who can endure the stress, remain steady and calmly lead people through the difficult times ahead***." I couldn't agree more, and am confident that this is the position of our Lord as well. In **Matthew 5:9,** He said, "**Blessed are the peacemakers. For they shall be called Sons of God**." It is the mark of a disciple of Christ to bring peace. With this thought in mind, then, I invite you to join me as we look at what **the Apostle James, the half-brother of our Lord,** had to say about the subject in our text for this morning. And if you're taking notes, it seems that we can categorize people as either peacefakers, peacebreakers or peacemakers.

HOW TO SPOT PEACEFAKERS (**James 3:7-12 -- For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water**). **What makes someone a peacefaker? This passage describes them as double-minded in that they vacillate in their positions**. One minute they're praising God with their tongues, and the next they are cursing men made in the image of God.

The blessing of God by a human being was a basic part of Jewish and Christian devotion. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DAVID -- **Psalm 34:1 – I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth; AND TO THE APOSTLE PETER -- 1 Peter 1:3 -- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. BLESSING GOD IS ONE OF THE HIGHEST FORMS OF PRAISE AND, THEREFORE, ONE OF THE MOST POSITIVE FORMS OF HUMAN SPEECH**. ***Cursing people*, on the other hand, is an activity that is restricted to the Holy and Righteous God of the Universe. Christians are not to be cursing others**. Instead, we're told in **Romans 12:14 -- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse**. Yet peacefakers are ready to take any position, be it praising God or cursing men, as long as it results in an advantage for them. Peter, himself, was guilty of this. In **Matthew 26:33, 74-75**, he *blessed Jesus by promising that He would never abandon Him and then called down curses on himself rather than be identified with the Lord at His arrest* in **Matthew 26:74**). **This double-mindedness** (i.e. inconsistency) **creates instability**. *As for Peter, it caused him to weep bitterly and flee from his accusers*--**See Matthew 26:75**). **Though peacefakers may claim for themselves wisdom and understanding that brings peace, James likens this kind of inconsistency to fresh and salt water flowing from the same spring, and to a fig tree producing olives or a vine producing figs**. ***You can't have both, just one or the other.***

Barry Lorch in his San Diego Union column, tells the story of a peacefaker who participated in a debate on the floor of the United States Senate about 140 years ago. ***The issue was whether alcohol should be sold in the territories seeking statehood.*** A notoriously anti-alcohol senator, who, according to one description, was so dry he was a known fire hazard, challenged one of his colleagues to state his position on alcohol. Supposedly, his colleague stood up and said this: "***You asked me how I feel about whiskey. Well, here's how I stand on the question. If when you say whiskey you mean that Devil's brew, the poison spirit, the bloody monster that defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery and poverty, yes, literally takes bread from the mouths of little children; if you mean the evil drink that topples the Christian man from the pinnacle of righteousness and gracious living and causes him to descend to the pit of degradation, despair, shame, and helplessness, then I am certainly against it with all my heart***." "***But if, when you say whiskey, you mean the oil of conversation, the philosophic wine, the ale consumed when good fellows get together, that puts a song in their hearts and laughter on their lips, the warm glow of contentment in their eyes; if you mean Christmas cheer; if you mean the stimulating drink that puts the spring in an old man's footsteps on a frosty morning; if you mean the drink whose sale puts, I'm told, millions of dollars into our treasury which are used to provide tender care for our little crippled children, or blind or deaf or dumb, our pitifully aged, and our infirm, to build highways and hospitals and schools, then I am certainly in favor of it. THIS IS MY STAND AND I WILL NOT COMPROMISE***." **Peacefakers are a lot like politicians. They say what others want to hear, but always when it's for their own advantage**.

HOW TO SPOT PEACEBREAKERS (**James 3:14-16 -- But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice**). **Peacebreakers possess worldly wisdom that is born of the wrong motives and produces the wrong fruit**.

- ***Peacebreakers are motivated by selfishness.*** They harbor "**bitter envy**" and "**selfish ambition**." The former refers to the kind of jealousy that people display when others challenge their ideas. The latter means "***faction,***" and refers to a group of people forming a cohesive, usually contentious minority. **Factions are born out of people not getting their way. That's why the NIV translators refer to it as selfish ambition**. For peacebreakers, it is their way or the highway. Where does this worldly wisdom that is so self-centered come from?
  - **It comes from the world**. **It is earthly in that it is limited to what man can deduce about life apart from spiritual truth**. It is the wisdom of **Jonadab**, the friend of **Amnon** who counseled him to force himself on his sister, **Tamar** in **2 Samuel 13,** in spite of the shame it brought to her. This kind of wisdom

says, "***By hook or crook I will get what I want***." Or to put it another way, "***Get forgiveness, not permission.***"

- **It comes from our fallen nature**. The term "**unspiritual**" is used to refer to wisdom that comes from corrupt desires and affections (**Jude 18-19 -- They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." 19 It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit**).
- **It comes from the Devil**. He tempts us to doubt God's wisdom and accept his own, just as he did in the Garden of Eden when he tempted Eve (**See Genesis 3:1-5**). PEACEBREAKERS ARE ALWAYS MOTIVATED BY SINFUL DESIRES.

- **Peacebreakers produce disorder and every evil practice**. Because they don't care what happens to others, PEACEBREAKERS will often take the path that creates confusion, disturbance and even rebellion. What they produce is '***good for nothing***.' That's what the word "***evil***" means here. It has absolutely no redeeming value. **Peacebreakers are always up to no good**.

  Take the event recorded in Acts 16:16-24, as an example. When the owners of a slave girl whom Paul delivered from demonization realized their hope of making money was gone, they stirred up the people of Philippi to persecute Paul and Silas. The men were seized and dragged into the marketplace to face the authorities. Their accusers said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar 21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." 22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. What was their motivation for bringing Paul and Silas before the magistrate? The owners of the slave girl were seething in anger over a lost investment. Instead of rejoicing that she had been set free of spiritual bondage, they could only think of themselves and their loss of income. THIS IS HOW YOU IDENTIFY A PEACEBREAKER. HE'S IN IT FOR HIMSELF AND DOESN'T CARE HOW HIS ACTIONS IMPACT ANYONE ELSE. (Review: Peacefakers are double-minded; peacebreakers are self-centered.)

HOW TO SPOT PEACEMAKERS (**James 3:13 -- Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom; James 3:17-18 -- But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace**). They possess heavenly wisdom that is born of the right motive (*humility that comes from wisdom*) and produces the right fruit (*a good life that produces good deeds*).

- **Peacemakers are motivated by the pursuit of purity**. This means that what they do is both "**innocent**" and "**morally blameless**." The seven words that follow describe what purity looks like in those who are peacemakers.
  - **It is peace-loving**. Peacemakers don't perpetuate conflict; they resolve it.
  - **It is considerate**. Peacemakers are gentle in their dealings with others.
  - **It is submissive.** Peacemakers respect the views of others on non-essential issues (i.e., example—style of worship)
  - **It is full of mercy**. Peacemakers demonstrate compassion for others. It's following the way of the Good Samaritan who sacrificed much to take care of a seriously injured, who probably would not have done the same for him had the situation been reversed (**Luke 10:36-37 -- Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy"**).
  - **It is full of good fruit**. Peacemakers are known by the good fruit they produce.
  - **It is impartial**. Peacemakers do not have favorites because they are completely loyal to God.

- **It is sincere**. Peacemakers are not merely pretending to care. THESE ARE THE QUALITIES THAT DEMONSTRATE WHAT PURITY LOOKS LIKE!

Peacemakers produce a harvest of righteousness. Righteousness cannot be cultivated in the context of human anger, but it can grow in an atmosphere of peace (**James 1:18 -- And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace**).

So, when you have a conflict, what steps should you take to become a peacemaker? Here are four that I recommend.

- **Move toward the person, not away**. Christians build bridges, not walls. The Bible tells us to pursue peace (**See Psalm 34:14**). This means that those who work for it often have to take the initiative.
- **Work together, not apart**. Whenever possible, we collaborate with others to resolve conflict (**See Romans 14:19**).
- **Speak truth, not opinions** (**See Ephesians 4:15**). Truth stands on its own and does not need someone to argue for it. When truth is spoken in love, any resulting argument is not with the one who shares it, but with the truth itself.
- **Cultivate love, not shame** (**See John 16:8**). Shame is a strong emotion caused by a sense of guilt. It is beneficial when it comes from God the Holy Spirit to the sinner. However, man-imposed shame never produces a good result.

Conclusion: You know you're growing up when you become a peacemaker, not a peacefaker or a peacebreaker. **Alfred Nobel, a Swedish physicist, created dynamite. His intentions were awesome when he invented it.** He wanted the explosive to be used constructively to make life better for everyone by clearing land for roads, buildings, tunnels etc. The problem was that people took his creation and used it destructively—to kill people and to make war. **So depressed was Mr. Nobel that his good invention was being used to promote conflict that he took $9,000,000 of his own money, put it into an account and began to award people for promoting peace**. We call it **the Nobel Peace Prize** and those who receive the award become internationally known as ***Nobel Peace Prize winners***. This list of past winners includes ***Jimmy Carter***, the organization ***Doctors without Borders*** and ***Yitzhak Rabin***, the former Prime Minister of Israel. **They received this honor because they were promoting peace instead of war.** Did you know that God is looking for some Peace Prize winners as well? These are folks that He can bless and award by calling them Sons of God because they're making peace a priority, just as Jesus did.