

Sermon on the Mount – Blessed are the Peacemakers

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MAIN VERSES

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Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Just how quickly we turn into a minority when we release the children. What a blessing. Something I'm proud of. So we're continuing our message theories through the Sermon on the Mount, and we're still in the Beatitudes. I don't think we've ever done a series straight through the Beatitudes before. We've done some of them, but hopefully it's been edifying, and hopefully you've been able to see something that causes you to think a little bit deeper about things. And my goal is that you would leave meditating about something, chewing on something, because that's what the Word calls us to do: to meditate on it. In the ancient world, it was something that was discussed openly in communities. And that's a tradition, unfortunately, that we haven't really kept up with. The Word of God is meant to be meditated on. It's meant to be discussed. It's meant to be studied, to ask questions about, to get an idea of the character of this God that is inviting us into this story. And we start the Sermon on the Mount—the most radical sermon ever preached by Yeshua—with blessed, that religious word: blessed.

The Meaning of Blessed

Blessed. And we spoke about how that word, blessed, really means in the context the good life. It's the flourishing life. Oh, the good life, or the flourishing life—or as happy as he who is poor in spirit. Oh, the good life belongs to those who are mourning. The good life, that belongs to the meek. When we discussed meek, it doesn't mean humble in this context. It means afflicted in the biblical definition. It's not a blessing. How are people blessed when they're being afflicted? It's irony Yeshua is using. It's a very Jewish way of teaching. And we go through this list of Beatitudes, and sometimes we think, oh, this is a directive. Like, I need to strive to be poor in spirit. I need to strive to be afflicted. I need to strive to be... And I don't think that's what Yeshua is doing at all. Yeshua is not making a directive. He's making a declaration of who

God is standing with. He's shining a light on the type of people that God is closest to. God is with them, those who are mourning, those who are afflicted, those who are broken. God is with them in how they see that the world is not working. Because these are the type of people that have the clearest understanding of how the world is not working. It doesn't work. Or maybe it works for some, but it doesn't work for everyone. Or else they wouldn't be here.

God's Attention to the Afflicted

It's the thing about the God of the story of the Bible, the God that we serve, Yahweh. We can tell a lot about his character. And in the Bible, God tends to give a lot of attention to those who are exploited, to those who fall through the cracks, to those who are pushed out to the edge. [Psalm 10](#), verse 17 says: We have a clear understanding, at least from the psalmist here, there are men that oppress people, that afflict people, that exploit people for their gain. And it says that anyone who does that, God's going to stop their reign of terror on how they treat these people. We have a history of God hearing the cries of those who are afflicted. [Genesis 4](#): Abel and his brother. Abel is afflicted. He's murdered. And as a result, his blood cries out from the dirt. Something that God tells Cain. He says, "Listen, your brother, I heard it. I hear him. What did you do? It's crying out." Injustice is crying out and I hear it. [Genesis 18](#): God hears the outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah. So God says, "Okay, I'm going to go and I'm going to check it out. These cities. I'm going to see who's making all of this sound, the sound of the people that I am close to. And if these cries are true, I'm going to act accordingly."

Reading the Bible as a Story

Sodom and Gomorrah. So when we begin reading the Bible as a story, and when I say that, I mean like sometimes we like to read the Bible in little sections, or we like to read a little bit here and then we'll jump over in the middle of Psalms, read a little bit and then we'll jump over to Isaiah and have like an encouraging verse that's taken out of a huge prophecy that was meant for a specific people. But that's how we get familiar with the Bible that way. And I love that. I love exploring the Bible. But sometimes in doing that, we forget that it's a story. And we think, oh, all these random books just fell in here in this order and they were written like this. No, this was something that was curated and edited and put together and compiled after the Babylonian exile. It was intentionally framed out this way and everything in it. And when we begin to read it as a story, as an epic, that's giving us a clearer and clearer picture of who this God is and the promises this God is making and why this God is on this rescue mission for humanity, things become a little bit clearer.

Sodom and Gomorrah Reconsidered

For example, Sodom and Gomorrah. Why did God destroy them? And I know, growing up, it was apparent. It's because of the gaze. That's why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. And that's a logical assumption based on just reading this story because of the incident that happened with the men of the town and the angels, right? They wanted to force themselves onto the men of the angels. And we gloss over the outcry part. We gloss over that when we're looking at Sodom and Gomorrah. But when someone's crying out, it means someone's being oppressed and afflicted, marginalized. And then when you continue studying cultures in the ancient world, you come across Assyrian sources that speak about how the ultimate way to dominate and set your status above someone else is forcing yourself on them. It was an actual practice that was not necessarily motivated by lust, but by pride, haughtiness, and arrogance. What a horrible act. Horrible act. Rape for the purpose of showing who is in charge. These strangers are in our city. We must show them who the boss is. That's why they came. They chose that as a response to strangers in their city instead of, hey, strangers are in our city. Let's give them some water. Let's break bread. Let's see where they're from. Do they have a place to stay? No, it's the opposite. An opposite of hospitality. Hospitality.

And then you come across the later prophets like Ezekiel in chapter 16 where the Lord speaks and he says, "Behold, this is the guilt of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters were arrogant and they hoarded the food and they lived such carefree, privileged lives. Yeah, this is great. But she did not help the poor and the needy. So they were haughty and they committed abominations before me. Therefore, I removed them from my sight."

So something was happening in Sodom and Gomorrah that had to do with a certain people hoarding food for themselves while others starved. They did not have concern for those that were falling through the cracks. And generally, they were so wrapped up in their bubble of comfort that they didn't even know that people were suffering around them. They chose to ignore it. And when it was exposed to them, they became proud and haughty, arrogant, defensive. And they reacted in ways that hurt people. Sodom and Gomorrah story just took on a little bit bigger picture, didn't it?

God Hears the Cries

There are forced homosexual acts as a sign of domination. There are people suffering who are crying out to God. There are people starving while others don't care. They have plenty of food. This is great. There are people who exist in a place of hell while so many believe they're in

heaven. And these were the cries that God heard. God hears the cries of those that cry out. The good life. The flourishing people. Happy are those who are poor in spirit. Happy are those—blessed are those who are afflicted, the meek, those who mourn, those who thirst for justice to come, those who are oppressed. Happy are those who understand that the world is only working for a few, but it's not working for many. Happy are those who recognize this about the world because God is close to you. Because you have an understanding of what God is going to do. What new creation is going to look like. Because you've seen the other side of it. Yours is the access to the kingdom where the world is made right. Yours is the comfort. Yours is the inheritance to become the land owners and have the power.

Peacemakers and Peace

Happy are the peacemakers, for you are the sons and daughters of God. What a shocking declaration. This guy who just walked down the beach, picked out four teenagers or so as disciples and went and sat down on a mountain and started teaching them this with a crowd of people that was following. That's just radical. Radical. Yeshua is calling out the entire system of the world. He's calling out the nations. He's calling out everything the empire, Rome at the time, thrives on. Peacemakers. What is a peacemaker? Oh, it's someone who's nice, right? Make peace. They got the little sign back in the 60s that was the anti-nuclear warfare sign that everyone thought was an upside-down cross that was broken. If you went to a Baptist church, it was evil, right? No, it was two symbols that were against nuclear war. Peacemakers, people who make peace. We know about that. We know about that. But we also know about peacekeepers, right? You guys know about some peacekeepers? Here's a peacekeeper. This is a picture of the LGM-118 peacekeeper. That was our pride and joy, one of our intercontinental missiles. We carry a nuclear warhead. We're going to keep some peace, right? Right? It'd be like naming your... Okay, if you're older, we don't do this anymore. Thank God. But when I was a child, there were whippings that occurred throughout society in the home. Not saying it took place in my home, but there were whippings. Spankings is much more common. So imagine having the belt. The belt... And naming it the Peacekeeper. Or a bamboo spoon.

Yeah, that was my jam. The spoon was named Shalom because it'll bring about some peace. We're going to remove everything that's causing chaos. Blessed are the Peacekeepers. For those who live by intercontinental nuclear war will die by intercontinental nuclear warfare, right? That's what Yeshua said. Well, he's a sword, but peacemaking through violence doesn't work. That's why this is irony, calling it a peacekeeper, because we know it doesn't work. It just doesn't. It's a Band-Aid. It doesn't work.

Pax Romana and False Peace

Jeremiah 8, 11 through 12, the prophet mentions he calls out a people who want peace, who think that they're living in peace. Peace, peace. Yes, we love peace. And then we stab people in the back. And then we ignore the chaos and hell that's erupting in our own nation. This is Judea. This is what Jeremiah calls out. Or these people who like peace are really peacekeepers and not peacemakers. And Jeremiah goes on to explain how God is so disgusted with them. He says that they're so unashamed of their hypocrisy of claiming to give peace while actually ravaging other people. He's so disgusted by them because they're so unashamed, they don't even have the ability to blush because of how awful they are.

In the Roman Empire, there was a slogan called Pax Romana. It meant Roman peace or the peace of Rome, and it was a piece of propaganda. But it meant to resemble the almost two-century, three-century golden age of the Roman Empire, where the Roman Empire was its strongest, it had expanded the most, and people lived in peace. Well, at least people in Rome, the city, or inside the major cities where the wealthier people lived, not out in the colonies that had been taken over by Rome.

And so what would happen is when an area was chosen to be annexed by the Roman Empire, they would roll into town and they would say, hey guys, Pax Romana, you get to have it now. You get to have the peace of Rome. You get to have the security. You get to have all the things we offer. If you just yield, pledge your allegiance to Caesar, pay your taxes. And then people would be like, oh, what if I don't? He's like, well, I'd hate for something to happen. What would happen? Things happen. Villages burn down. Everyone dies. I don't know. So I think it would be in your best interest for your protection to serve Rome. You see what I mean? We want to bring you peace. It's kind of like we want to bring you freedom, right? We are here for regulated democracy. It's the same thing that Rome did. Peace, peace. Peace is not always peace. Unless you're living in the center, because what happens is violence usually gets pushed out to the edge. But while you're in the center of Rome, eating your grapes, hanging out by the pool, yeah, peace, it's awesome. You don't see it. You don't know it. So you don't acknowledge it.

Peacemakers Insert Themselves Into Conflict

Blessed are the peacemakers. Peacemakers are people that see conflict and they don't run away and hide and ignore it. And they're people that don't take a neutral stance to allow injustice to continue on. Peacemakers are people that see conflict and insert themselves inside of it. Oh, he's so peaceful. Doesn't make him a peacemaker. They insert themselves inside of a conflict

because of their love for both parties. Peacemakers find ways to thwart building walls up. They are the ones that see no need for division because there's always a third way to resolve conflict. Peacemakers are the ones that understand that it's not passive that they're trying to be. They don't ignore what is causing the conflict because they don't want to ruffle feathers. No, they understand God is bringing about something new. They understand that God is bringing about something grand, something right. And they push to find ways to keep people unified and empathetic toward one another. And that also includes speaking truth. It includes calling out injustice. Because as long as there is injustice in the world, there can never be true peace, right?

Is this too heavy of a message? It's too heavy. I'm sorry. We dove into the Beatitudes. I know. It's supposed to be light and fluffy. Peacemakers. Shalom makers. Yes. There's nothing light and fluffy about the Beatitudes. If anything, it's ironic and it's dark. You could even say it's twisted a little bit. It's dark, the radical declarations that Yeshua makes. Because when he said it, he wanted it to shock people. What are you talking about? How am I blessed because I'm mourning the state of the world or I'm mourning someone that was taken from me? Even because of it, it's Rome, because of injustice. I'm afflicted. I'm starving for justice. How is that the good life, Yeshua? He says, man, God's closer to you. You are on the threshold of entering in the kingdom. Like you're the type of people that the doorway's made for. This is hope. You have an advantage. And it's so upside down, just like everything Yeshua brought to the table. But I believe, and I hope you do too, that he's bringing the actual reality of what creation is when we allow God to reign.

A Vision of New Creation

Peacemakers, peacemakers. The peacemakers, they will find a way where maximum redemption can come out of a conflict. We say amen until it's an actual [Isaiah 11](#) statement. There's a beautiful vision that tries to illustrate the depth of what new creation speaks about—the wolf lying down with the lamb and the kids playing with snakes like Indiana Jones and the whip. It's just awesome, right? The lions become vegan because they no longer, they refuse to live at the expense of another creature. [Isaiah 11](#). And here's also something else that some translations will say. Isaiah envisions a kingdom in which the hostility between nations and the created order of the world will be removed. And the calling is to God's people to become peacemakers. It means beginning the work of ending hostility. That will be what marks the presence of the Messiah. It says in [Isaiah 11](#), that's an indicator of Messiah's reign.

Biblical peacemaking is the cessation of hostilities between not only nations, but individuals as well. Interpersonal relationship. And we do it as a sign of God's in-breaking kingdom into the

world. And again, peacemaking can be corporate. Everybody together, an army of shalom homies, right? Well, that's the calling, right? Love that. Or it can be personal, interpersonal relationships where you can be a peacemaker. And when it's corporate, collectively, as God's people, we're testifying to the universal reign of Yeshua and the power of God being active now. That's our sign that we give the world. When it comes to interpersonal relationships, in those times, we bear witness to the work that God has done within us and that we're choosing to extend to others. But one always goes hand in hand with the other.

The Difficulty of Peacemaking

Peacemaking is hard. If you've attempted to do it or been in a position where you know you should be doing it, you understand that. Because we don't like people who aren't us. If we're going to be honest, I'll be honest, I like people who are just like me because they're easy to get along with, right? Yeah, right? Same opinions, same viewpoint, same life experiences, same worldview. God wanted spiciness with his creation. And so he made everyone a little bit different. And for some of us, most of us, that's threatening. Threatening when we see difference. Because things that we don't understand, well, we get scared of. We get scared of. And things that we're fearful of, well, we tend to evolve that into hatred and anger. And that happens probably more than we think.

Peacemaking is hard because peacemaking requires empathy. And that's something that's not taught in the majority of churches today. I know that was a broad statement. That's my opinion. Empathy. It requires empathy. It requires you to make an effort to empathize with other people that are either in conflict with each other or with you. Not sympathy. You don't have to agree with them. Empathy. It's a seeking to understand why they have the position or why they're acting or why they're saying or why they're doing the things that they do. Empathy. Empathy. What are the motives that are driving that person? I want to understand them. Empathy.

Empathy is that ability, and it's the pursuit to see another human being when you look at another person. Because if you can see another human being that has past experiences, that has a childhood, that may have experienced trauma along the way or may have experienced joy along the way, someone that has experienced life just like you have, or at least in a way, but has a different recipe that made them who they are today, if you can obtain that level of evolution as a human being to give empathy, to find humility in thinking that you're not as special as you want to be, and you make room to connect with another person despite differences, despite opinions, despite points of view, which are typically results of their experiences through life, that's a big deal.

Anger, Fear, and Emotional Regulation

Anyone got a problem with anger? Oh yeah, I get snippy sometimes. Some of us tend to yell and scream a lot, right? And we find ourselves in familiar situations, likely, because we see something wrong and so we yell and scream or we see someone else screaming so we get all screaming mad. You stop screaming! Stop being angry! Ah! And we end up becoming the thing that we don't like. Does that work when you scream at someone who's screaming? Does that ever? Yeah. But we just feel like it will sometimes. Instead of saying they need to stop or instead of asking why they're doing it to begin with. Why is this happening? And if you dare to approach someone calmly and ask them, you may find out that this person gets angry, not because they want to, but maybe they had a childhood with a parent that screamed at them a lot. And as a child, when you're screamed at, do you get scared? Is your value manipulated a little bit? The environment that you may or may not find yourself in is always chaotic. And so as a child, maybe these people never learned how to regulate their emotions.

To go from fight or flight back down to calm and learn how to make that adjustment so when they're older, they can control it and manage it a little bit better. Maybe they never learned how to do that because their childhood was so chaotic. And so they grew up believing that as long as they can control the environment, they can be safe from feeling scared like they did as a child. And now, whenever something does not go right, involuntarily, they find themselves back in the fight or flight mode, survival mode. And the sad part is, it always comes across as them wanting to control people. And now they have likely become their parents because that's all their parents used to do as well. When they screamed and yelled and wanted to control the situation because their parents probably set up the same environment for them and it becomes a cycle. Or we could just say that person's a jerk and do the whole Pontius Pilate thing, wash our hands from doing anything else, and move along with our life. One is easier than the other.

Finding Empathy in Conflict

If you can find a place where you would explore empathy of another human being that is in conflict with you or someone else, I think you'll be surprised about how well you can actually connect with them. It changes the way you approach a person like that. You don't see them as enemies anymore. You have an understanding, and that understanding may be something you disagree with. Everybody hear that? Just because you empathize with someone and understand their motives doesn't mean you're agreeing with them. It's good, right? Everyone is there with me.

I say that because whenever you're picking sermon examples, usually I pick—I love studying history and I love studying history specifically, like it's not taught in schools about American history. And so I get excited about stuff. So we'll just see.

You don't see them as an enemy anymore. You see them as a person that does things because they understand things a certain way, right or wrong. And the point is, peacemakers are called the children of God because they have been formed by this world to not be naive to the pain and violence and trauma and conflict and what the real only solution is. And that is refusing to allow it to continue no matter what. That's hard, but that's what Yeshua calls. And that's hard, and some say it's impossible.

And we're so trained to profile the things that we're afraid of. When something's new, it's different. We don't understand it. Fear, hatred, line in the sand, us versus them. Easy, easy. It's so much easier to strip someone's humanity away so that we can justify having hate towards them or judging them for the sole purpose of making sure we're on top. That's Sodom and Gomorrah kind of stuff, by the way. It's the same thing.

The Confederate Flag: A History

During the short-lived organization of the Confederate States of America—I think the CSA lasted about half the time that President Barack Obama was president—one flag of the CSA, which was the official flag of the Confederate States of America, looked very similar to the American flag. Another flag began to gain popularity, and there are different takes in the history, but it did. And it was a flag that had a St. Andrew's cross on it and little white stars that represented all the states that had joined the Confederacy, that had seceded. We call it the rebel flag today, or we call it just the Confederate flag today. But it was specifically the battle flag. And the reason why it was the battle flag is because, allegedly, the original, the actual CSA flag was too hard. It could get confused. So no one knew what was going on. So we'd shoot each other. We didn't know who the enemy was, so the flags are similar. So they began carrying this, what we call stars and bars, into battle.

And after the war, the flag all but disappeared. It was never really flown publicly anymore because it lost the war. I mean, you don't do that, right? Why would you? And it would be as people had funerals or there were tributes or memorials, the flag would be raised in public, such as the 1913 Gettysburg Reunion, where soldiers of the North and South came back together in peace to kind of celebrate peace. Old men hugging each other, sitting next to each other, talking about the battle, whatever. And they would raise it during those times. But it

wasn't displayed publicly. It was so rare that in 1930, Senator Coleman Livingston, or Blease, he had to have the Daughters of the Confederacy to make him a flag because he wanted to display one in his office as memorabilia. There weren't any available for him to put up. They just didn't—they don't—they weren't popular except for memorabilia.

The Flag's Political Weaponization

And looking back through history, we find that there was an uptick in the popularity of the flag once again. But it didn't really happen until the late 1940s. In 1948, we blame it on the result of the Dixiecrat Revolt, when Strom Thurmond led a walkout of white supremacists, white southerners, from the Democratic National Convention to protest President Truman's push for civil rights. "I walked out! We don't want this." And the Dixiecrats began to use the Confederate flag as a political symbol at that point of rebellion towards the civil rights movement. And the reason why they chose the battle flag of the CSA and not the actual flag of the CSA—well, they felt the battle flag was most appropriate out of the flags to raise during the civil rights movement because they felt like they were going to battle again. And this incited popularity of the flag throughout the public, increasing its visibility and becoming directly associated with white supremacy and racism. That's where the connection really became solidified.

In 1951, Representative John Rankin, he was very outspoken in segregation. You've got to stay apart. And he proudly announced that he had never ever seen as many Confederate flags in all of his life floating around Washington during these last few months of all the protests and everything. This is when this flag became popular in the nation. In 1961, again, as a type of protest against the laws being passed to force states to treat non-white people equally and to begin undoing the structure of racism that we had created such a strong foundation for, South Carolina raised the Confederate battle flag on top of the dome of the state capitol building as a sign of protest. And it remained there generally for the next four decades until the year 2000, when it was taken down from the dome, but still flown on the property. And it would remain there for another 15 years until 2015, when it was finally removed from the Capitol estate.

Now, this is just history. I know the flag means a lot of different things to a lot of people, but this is the history of the flag. This is how it became popular. This is why you saw states fighting to include the flag into their new state flag. This is why it's flying on government buildings. It's the same reason why we have Confederate statues that were built long after the war was over in the southern states. It's a form of propaganda.

The Black Panthers and Constitutional Rights

In 1966, a group of individuals formed a political organization that sought to prevent violence in Oakland, California and surrounding areas. And their mission was to provide needs to the community for free that would otherwise not be able to be obtained in their neighborhoods. The main objection for why this group started was to prevent police brutality that had plagued black communities in the area, in the Oakland area. And they were hoping to thwart that threat of the constant presence of police coming in and just brutalizing their neighborhood. And so this group said, "Hey, it's legal to open carry, right?" We love some open carry down in the South, right? Love some open carry. And so they began to carry guns around. Maybe we should carry guns as casually as the police do. Then we'll see what happens when they come to the neighborhood to start trouble. And an organization known as the Black Panthers for Self-Defense was born. And here's one shot of them and the type of political activism they did.

What's amazing is that when white folks did this not too long ago, in government buildings carrying big AR black rifles and everything, freedom was cheered on, patriotism, right? But when anyone else does it, it's scary. It's uncomfortable. We don't like this. We don't like other people having the same rights we do. I'll give you one guess. You know gun people—I like guns, or grown up liking guns—if there's one place you're not going to get the accessories for your gun that you want, which state is it going to be? It's California. I'll give you one guess when laws begin to be passed restricting guns and gun accessories in California. It's when the wrong type of people started exercising those rights.

Fighting an Unjust System

Now, the Black Panther Party—they dropped the "for Self-Defense" part later—was not just about self-defense. They dropped that part later. It was about fighting against what they perceived was an unfair and unjust system that had plagued the country. To dismantle the structure of power in the U.S. and to fight against large corporations, big pharma, big food. They are manipulating their power and exploiting the working class people. So they were against that. They were against exploitative power from the top.

The chair of the Black Panther Party in Eleanor's chapter was Fred Hampton. And what Fred did, and this is just history. Everybody good with history? We're okay. Everybody still with me? All right. We have flags. We have Black Panthers and guns. We've ticked all the boxes. It's good. Fred Hampton had a vision for the mission that the Black Panthers were attempting to implement. Again, they saw things that they felt they needed to fix.

Building an Unlikely Alliance

And it wasn't simply prejudice against skin color. It was an entire structure where that prejudice was used as a tool to divide people and to make sure it pushed people down to the bottom of the pyramid. But he had a vision. He says, "You know what? There's other groups around here that may not share the same prejudice or the same level of prejudice that we do, but they have the same mission. So I wonder if we can make a coalition of like-minded people for the sake of the mission, even though we'll have different opinions about stuff, even though we have different viewpoints."

So he reached out to two groups: the Young Patriots of America and the Puerto Rican group, the Young Lords of Chicago. And these groups had a lot of differences from each other. But they were all determined to fight on behalf of the poor and the working class. That was their mission. But there was a problem. The Young Patriots are from the South, the Appalachian area. So they migrated up to Illinois, Chicago area, and they were demeaned by the privileged class there as just a bunch of dumb hillbillies. White Southerners in the 60s in Chicago. And the thing that was a problem is they did have racists in their group, but the biggest issue is they flew the Confederate battle flag as their symbol. So you have an all-black, generally, organization, a Latino group, and a white group. And again, the white group had this one issue—they love this flag. But Fred Hampton, the chair of the Black Panthers in this area, chose to endure that because together he felt they were stronger in their mission collectively. So they ended up working together. This coalition, called the Rainbow Coalition, worked together to try to solve problems they saw in their community.

A Vision for Change

These are the positive things of these groups. Free healthcare clinics in poor neighborhoods. They also observed that kids were going to school hungry and not doing well in school, and they said, "Hey, I wonder if we feed the kids before they go to school if they'll actually do better in school." So collectively, they opened up free breakfasts for anyone in the neighborhood that couldn't afford breakfast or couldn't eat breakfast before they went to school. This was the coalition. Together, they stood against injustice, police brutality, and the system that they perceived their viewpoint as being responsible for intentionally keeping the poor at the bottom of the neighborhood, if you will, the pyramid, to benefit the rich.

But there was one stipulation for the Young Patriots that Hampton had, and it says, "Listen, you need to renounce racism. You can fly a flag, but you need to renounce racism. That's going to be a problem for us." And they said, "Okay, we will, because we understand that that's a part of what we're trying to dismantle." So they did.

An Uncomfortable Symbol

Here's a photo of Black Panthers sitting beside the Young Patriots at a meeting. Some of you seem shocked. Why have I never heard about this in school? There's a reason. Here is a very uncomfortable button that depicts partnership between the Young Patriots and the Black Panthers. Some of y'all don't know how to feel. What do we do with that? What do we do with that?

When asked, "Hey, Fred, how can you stand next to such a symbol of hate and divisiveness?" Fred responded saying something along the lines of, "Listen, if we can use that symbol to progress the mission"—in his view, their goal of waking people up to the reality that the system that is hurting Black people is also hurting white people and Hispanic people and Asian people, because it's a war against the poor and the working class, and racism is the tool that does it. He says, "Listen, if we can utilize and leverage this symbol to wake people up to that reality, let's use it."

I thought this would be a good example because I struggle with it. I struggle with it. How? We just appropriate their symbol of hate and leverage it for our benefit. I don't even know how to feel about that. If we can use this symbol—this symbol that at the time was the primary symbol that encouraged resistance to the civil rights movement—if we can use this symbol to progress the ultimate goal, then we'll gladly do it.

A Brotherhood Formed

A brotherhood was formed. They did not agree on everything. Of course, lots of different opinions and ideologies. But they formed a coalition, not necessarily an alliance—a coalition working together. And the Young Patriots ended up retiring their use of the Confederate battle flag out of sheer respect for this Black militant resistance group and how Fred had a vision that they could never comprehend of what unity and working together would look like. Young Patriots also became extremely diverse. It wasn't just a white organization by the end of it. It didn't last very long. It was very diverse because they understood the mission, or at least their ideology, and how it called all people.

When Your Enemy Isn't Your Enemy

I want to talk about history. I'm not trying to praise the Young Patriots, the Black Panthers, or the Young Lords. I don't agree with all the things they did or all the ways they wanted to implement the things that they wanted to implement. But I understand it. I understand it. And

my point is: sometimes your enemy is not your enemy. Sometimes your enemy is not your enemy. Sometimes someone having a different viewpoint or a different opinion or a stance is not your enemy. You don't have to draw a line in the sand. You don't have to stick a post-it note that says "them" on everybody that has a different opinion—us versus them.

Have you tried to ask what their motives are? Because if you do that, then guess what? It works both ways. You're no longer a threat. And maybe you can actually talk about the issues that are causing conflict and be a peacemaker. Again, holding Fred Hampton up as an example of a peacemaker—probably not the best, well-rounded, discernment example—but this instance I thought was valuable because I appreciate it. And when you come to a place where you're no longer a threat to someone who has destructive and wrong views, maybe you can show them why they're wrong.

And that doesn't mean excusing injustice. Never do that. The deal was: if the group renounced racism, they can work together. But they still flew the flag. I don't support working with racists. I don't support working with people that oppress others. I don't support working with people who want to exploit and manipulate other people for their gain. But what I am pointing out is: if the Black Panthers can work with a rebel flag-flying group of white Southerners, and they can find a way to make peace between their differences and opinions, what is the excuse that we carry as so-called Christians? Because our reputation is just hating anyone that the news tells us to. And I think if we dare choose to resist making people objects of our judgmentalism, maybe we can see them as human beings. And maybe we can show the world that we follow the Prince of Peace in doing so.

What's Our Excuse?

Maybe, and I know it's a big maybe—maybe we can actually come to a place where we look different than the rest of the world. Maybe one day. So what conflict is going on right now where you care more about one team than the other? What conflicts are going on right now that you refuse to see other people as equal human beings to ask about motives? What conflicts are going on right now in your life where it isn't us versus them? Because we're not called to play that game. We're called to stand against violence. As Christians, we're called to stand against war. We're called to stand against the pursuit of violence and exercising a power to control other people—lording over all the things that Black Panthers and Young Patriots were against.

Without Guns, Without Violence

The thing is, we're called to do it differently than them. We're called to do it without guns. We're called to do it somehow without violence. We're called to show the world that it can actually be done. This fantasy that Yeshua talks about, this new creation that we all claim we know exists and you can have it if you—yeah, do we? And maybe pretending's enough. In our personal lives, we're called to forgive and bring peace, even if it's at our expense. Why? Because we signed up for it. We signed up for it. We will imitate Christ as he bears all offenses, judgments, and afflictions for the sake of not allowing that evil to continue replicating in the world.

You Can Be the End

And so you have a choice. You can be the end of generations of hurt and pain. You can actually call out the injustice that your community or your parents or your grandparents never called out. You can look at the world and you can call out injustices if you see it, even if the rest of the world doesn't want to acknowledge it. Because if we're called the children of God as peacemakers, then we too should have the ability to hear the cries of those who are crying out and acknowledge them. And I'll tell you what: if we refuse to, then God will call someone else to fill the vacuum that we left open.

You can't get mad when secular organizations fill gaps representing groups all over the world that are crying out because they're secular or they have an ideology or philosophy that's different than yours when you didn't do it. You can't be mad. Don't even. We didn't do it. We allowed a vacuum to get so big that someone else filled it. And now we're going to judge them. We love the taste of hypocrisy because it gives us a taste of both worlds.

The Promise of Peacemakers

And if you choose to embark on such a mission to become a peacemaker, the promise is you will be called the children of God, the daughters of God, the sons of God. And this is a distinguishing marker. How bad do you want to see the visions of [Isaiah 11](#)? How bad do you want others to experience the peace of God that you have? Because it takes sacrifice. It takes humility.

Called to Do It Differently

It takes grace, patience, and it takes mercy. All things that are God-like. Be as your Father in heaven. And so I don't know where you're at today. I don't know what types of conflict you

struggle with in your life. Could be interpersonal conflict between family members or friends, those close to you. Could be conflict in the world, injustice. We're called to stand against injustice. We're called to stand against wrong. But we're called to do it a little bit differently than what the world tells us the rules are to play by. And it's hard. But blessed are those who find a way when everyone says they can't do it. For they shall be called the children of God.

A Time to Worship

Please stand as we conclude services with worship. And I invite you during this time to worship. You can pray, meditate. And if you need prayer today, we have a prayer team, prayer warriors on either side of the stage. And I invite you to take advantage of that. If you need prayer today or prayer on behalf of someone else,

Our Closing Prayer

Alvina Malkeinu, our Father, our King, Father, we thank you for this time where we come together and look over your word. And we thank you for the challenge that your Holy Spirit gives us even in this moment. That we would have the boldness to choose to embody our King. That we would have the boldness to be as radical as King Yeshua, the Prince of Peace is. That we would hold the same shield up as we push through the world for the sake of the kingdom. Father, I ask in the name of Yeshua that we would come to a place where we don't look like the rest of the world, corporately, that we would be seen as ambassadors of heaven on earth, that we would be seen as bringing forth the love and the peace of Yeshua, and that we would not put qualifiers on other people before we implement that peace, that we would be called the peacemakers, and that you would be close to us and near us. As we also expose the reality of the world and the coming justice by your hand. In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen.

In Song and Blessing

Let's sing Shema. Bless you, Father. Shema Yisrael Adonai Ohe Adonai Baruch Shev Kevot Ha'utah Amen. Hallelujah. Shabbat Shalom. Shabbat Shalom.

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