9th Sunday after Trinity
SERIES ON DISCIPLESHIP - SEVENTH BEATITUDE
West Henrietta - 1961
Rolling Meadows - 1963

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 5: 9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

The President shook the nation last Tuesday night with his message on the Berlin crisis and his appeal for more funds to build up our military strength. The greatest scourge ever to afflict the heart and body of man is war. Some years ago the Society of International Law in London reported that during the last 4,000 years there have been but 268 years of peace. The suffering and grief, death and destruction, resulting from these countless battles of history, overwhelms the imagination.

War is beastly! During World War II casualties were about 40 million people. Standing shoulder to shoulder that many people would form a line more than 15,000 miles in length. Think of the grief involved in each casualty. Think of the many fine things that were forever swept out of the world with so many untimely deaths. Think of the pain and disability inflicted on countless others. The beast would not even do that sort of thing. A cartoonist pictured World War II as taking place in a jungle clearing with all the animals watching. They are puzzled and terrified, and some of them are amused. The serpents gaze with savage glee. A giraffe, who has a ringside view, is saying to another giraffe, We must establish a refuge to keep human beings from destroying themselves and becoming extinct. The response was, Why bother? A bewildered monkey comments, So that's what they mean by evolution. Animals will fight for food and protection, but millions of them will not organize to fight millions of others. War is beastly, but still quite unlike the beasts.

War is frightfully wasteful and costly, not only in human lives, but also in money and materials. War is terribly degrading and brutalizing! It releases a torrent of hate and lust and lies that sweeps on in a wave of crime (for at least a generation - even as now) Worst of all, war begets conditions which lead to future wars. It is not necessary to elaborate. Everybody knows that the threat of World War III dangles over our heads like the sword of Damacles. And everybody knows that if the thin thread by which it hangs should break, the resulting death

and destruction would make all former wars look like a molehill by the side of a mountain.

Some 1900 years ago Christ was delivering His matchless sermon in the peaceful and majestic beauty of the mountains. He was telling His audience - and all people of all times - about the only way to true and lasting peace and happiness. The beast in man, that leads to quarrelling and fighting and war and that greatly increases the anxiety of our modern living, distressed Christ too. But He understood it. And He knew how to handle it. In the Seventh Beatitude He gave expression to this thought: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God - or more accurately, they shall be called the sons of God.

As long as man can remember, he has been searching for peace. It is the great tragedy of human history that man, searching for peace in the light of his own ingenuity, has never found it. If one lesson stands out in history, sharp and clear, it is that man cannot by himself find and keep peace. He needs help from above. Before a man can make peace with anyone, he must first have peace with God and with himself.

Peace begins with God. And the peace of God comes into the world through the heart of man, even as all conflicts in human relations and all wars begin in the heart of man. The seeds from which all conflicts and wars come are tiny little things that lie in every heart: guilt, fear, hate, pride, greed, lust for power, jealousy, suspicion, and enough others to fill quite a catalogue. Guns and bombs, tanks and planes do not make war. It's people: guilt-driven, proud, hateful, greedy people. You may be able for a time to restrain an evil man or a nation bent on evil, but you simply cannot by force change an idea in his mind or an emotion in his heart. But Christ can - not by force, but by love. In the prophecies which told of Christ's coming, He is called the Prince of Peace. A choir of angels added glory to His birth by singing over the fields of Bethlehem about Peace on Earth. God took the initiative. Christ's legacy to His disciples and to all who will love and follow Him includes this priceless treasure: Peace I leave with you.

Christ alone can give peace. Christ lived a holy life and died a terrible death on the Cross as a sacrifice for the sins that make the heart of man evil. His invitation to all mankind is: Come unto Me and I will give you rest and peace. To those who will love Him in faith and serve Him in gratitude He gives complete and instant forgiveness. That is the only solution to the problem of guilt. But that is not all Christ does. He then gives the strength to control the sprouting of the evil seeds of selfishness: hate, pride, greed and all the others. Still more. He plants the seeds of love, obedience, forgiveness, purity, honesty, understanding, contentment and many others. A heart that so rests in Christ is a peaceful heart, even when the storms of life rage all around it and the winds of adversity blow cold.

In our day psychiatrists know a great deal about the human heart, even though they may not know Christ. One of them said, Without peace in his soul a man cannot manage even so simple a task as writing a letter. But with peace in his soul he can face the most terrifying experiences. A European Christian, who suffered much during World War II, confessed, A storm is raging on the sea of my life, but in my heart there is a great calm. This is the peace of Christ.

Let's admit it, there are people in the world so mean and irritating that we cannot love them for themselves alone. It would be the easiest thing in the world to hate them and to return meanness for meanness. But when I have stood close to the Cross and seen Christ's amazing love for everyone, without a single exception - a love that even moved Him to pray for those who nailed Him to the Cross - and then see His kind glance fall on every human being and hear His gentle voice say, These are my children! Love them! Be kind to them! well, I'll try. I know He'll help me.

Shortly after World War I a cartoonist pictured the leaders of the world around the table of a peace conference. Each had brought a portfolio with suggestions for peace. At the table sat also Christ, with a portfolio. I know what was in that portfolio: Love one another, as I have loved you. Someone ridiculed Woodrow Wilson's proposals for peace at the close of World War I by sneering, He

talks like Jesus Christ. As the slaughter of World War II got under way, another commented, If only he had. Christ has spoken. If only all men would listen. If only all the leaders of the world would learn to know and love and serve Christ, putting Him first, then humanity, then country, and finally self, what a weight would fall from the heavy heart of the world.

What can you and I do about it? Dante wrote, In God's will is our peace. While God revealed through Christ that mankind will always feel the scourge of war and know the threat of war, let no man say, War is the will of God. God certainly does not want man to hate and quarrel, to hurt and kill. In the Bible God directly reveals to us that He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Christ said, I am the Truth. God wants every human being to know the truth, the essence of which is His love in Christ. God wants every human being to have a heart that is at peace with Him through love of Christ.

If the world today does not know peace, it is because it does not know God or His Son Jesus Christ. Millions of young Americans and Europeans and Asians are being taught daily that it is quite impossible to believe in God. He is no longer a useful hypothesis. He is the opiate of the people. He is a projection of the father-complex. He is a supernatural gimmick invented to keep society within bounds. God, said Nietzsche, is dead. Let us take heart; it is Nietzsche who is dead, not God. We know our Lord to be a living Lord because we have received His Spirit, and we know He is the Author of Peace because we have heard His Word: These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. It may well be peace in the midst of tribulation, it may be the hush at the vortex of a tornado, but it is still a peace that passes all understanding.

If that peace is yours, you are more than a lover of peace. If that peace is yours, you want more than a quiet and restful life for yourself. If that peace is yours, you cannot cowardly run away from every possibility of conflict nor be indifferent to the threat of war. If that peace is truly yours, you will want to share it. It will show itself in all your relationships with the members of

you family, with the people of your community, with those of other races and nationalities, even with those who insist on regarding you as an enemy. All will see it, and many will want to share it with you. The peace in your heart will be contageous.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. The meaning of Christ is clear. Like father, like son, we say. God the Father gave the very best He had - His own dear Son - to make peace between us and Himself. Having tasted of that peace, we are to do the same. It is about time we got excited about the Good News. It still is Good News, isn't it - God and man are reconciled? It is about time we got excited about the love of Christ and His death for us and for our salvation. It is about time we started really proclaiming this Good News to our friends and relatives and neighbors. It is about time we got excited about world missions. What good will all our luxuries and possessions be, if within minutes they are blown to bits by a nuclear warhead? War has not come yet. The world is still standing and the doors are still open to proclaim the Gospel of Peace through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the task of the sons of God - true Christians - you and me - to bring this peace to the hearts and lives of men everywhere. God will help us, and our labor will not be in vain!

Amen.