



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

Mailing Address : 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701
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January 3, 2010

Theme: Blessed Are the Peacemakers...

Text: Matthew 5:9

When we study human history we discover that there are far too many troublemakers and far too few peacemakers in the world. The harsh reality is that our world knows little or nothing about genuine peace. Those who have tried to be peacemakers have had a discouraging record. The peace we make today is the peace we break tomorrow. In the 20th century WWI was supposed to be the war to end all wars. But then there was WWII. After that war the United Nations was established "To have each succeeding generation free from the scourge of war." That goal has not been achieved, and we should not expect it to be achieved in this age. Jesus said, "There shall be wars and rumors of wars, but the end is not yet." Peace or Shalom in the universal sense will not come to planet earth until Jesus returns. Yet, in the meantime, Jesus has called believers to be peacemakers.

It may be discouraging to know that we will not have universal shalom until Jesus returns. It may be discouraging to know that wars will continue until the end of history as we know it. How can we act as peacemakers as we wait for the return of Christ to the earth? We must think universally and act personally and socially. What does that mean? It means that we understand that God's plan is that one day there shall be shalom over the whole earth. But that day will not come until Jesus returns. In the meantime we act personally by placing our faith in Christ. When we do that we have peace with God because our sins have been completely forgiven. When we have peace with God we can have true inner peace by consciously placing our trust in Him rather than worrying or being fearful. This is acting personally.

Once we have acted personally, God wants us to act socially. Acting socially means that I interact with other people. When we have experienced God's shalom, He wants us to spread it around. We do this by sharing the good news with those who do not believe that Jesus is Lord. All four Gospels end with a Great Commission of some kind. In other words, all four Gospels end with Jesus' command to share the good news with the world. This is the primary purpose of every local church. It is the primary purpose that SPECC exists. How do we go about doing that?

The first step is to pray for people. We might make a list of everyone whom we know who does not know God's peace in Christ. Then we pray for them consistently and continuously that God would work in their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit so that they might be open to the message of God's peace. The second thing that we can do is to sympathize with people. The author of Hebrews says that the sinless, exalted Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. If Jesus can sympathize with us, we can sympathize with those who do not believe. To "sympathize" means, "to be affected with the feelings



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that are affecting another person." So Paul writes that we should, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." A third step we can take is to love people just as they are without expecting them to become like us socially. We must love them just as they are while they are still sinners, because that is how God loved us. This does not mean that we accept sinful behavior; but it does mean that we love people where we meet people—right where they are—just as God loved us.

Finally, we can learn to communicate clearly. We can pray, sympathize, and love, but eventually there comes a time when we must speak. Clear communication means sharing the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection in a way that people can understand. When I was a new Christian, a pastor took me under his wing to teach me how to communicate the good news clearly. First I watched him as he did it. Then he allowed me to do it myself. I am very grateful for this training. Because I have received this training, I am willing to go with anyone to visit someone for whom they have prayed and with whom they have sympathized and whom they have loved unconditionally. If you know of people who might be open to hearing the good news, I will go with you and share the good news with that person. Pray that the members of SPECC will faithfully share the good news with people during 2010!