

Chris Murphy

January 26, 2025

Scripture: Matthew 5: 38-48

Sermon Title: Jesus Our Peacemaker

Prayer...

Introduction:

Last week on Monday, January 20th, we celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day. It was also the day of the Presidential inauguration. I was reminded on that day our nation continues to be on a journey.

We are on a journey that seeks to celebrate diversity while working for peace and unity. This was the dream of MLK Jr. It was also at the heart of the teachings of Jesus.

This morning, I will not give a state of the union address, but I will say that I think the role of the Christian Church is to lift up Jesus above all powers in our world. In Jesus, we witness the Prince of Peace who calls us to love across our differences, while working to

protect the most vulnerable. Jesus embodied both strength and gentleness, kindness and courage.

I recently did a short video as the Moderator of the Presbytery for this year. I was asked to give an encouraging message to our churches calling us to pray for our nation and seek peace. Here is the video, which was done the week before MLK Jr. Day....

Let me read the quote again that I shared in this video.

“Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction. So when Jesus says “Love your enemies,” he is setting forth a profound and ultimately inescapable admonition.

— Martin Luther King Jr., Strength to Love

This call to love our enemies is at the heart of the teachings of Jesus and of course King himself learned this from the wisdom of Jesus.

The call to love one's enemy was part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Biblical Scholars agree that the Sermon on the Mount highlights the most important teachings of Jesus.

Friends, as we look at different images of Jesus, I hope we see him especially as a Peacemaker. Jesus loved everyone when he was on earth and Jesus continue to love all of creation today. In John chapter 17 Jesus prayed for unity among his disciples and the future church. Jesus offers peace to his disciples in John 14:27 and is described as the prince of peace in Isaiah 9: 6.

I understand that in our society today it is tempting to identify by one's political identity or possibly by one's national identity. There is a place for patriotism and political belief and support, but as Christians our primary identities are to be followers of Jesus and Jesus in our peacemaker.

Mindi Hynes has been leading a wonderful Adult Formation class the last few weeks on how to do politics differently. The Video series encourages Christians to be non-partisan in nature even while maintaining different political beliefs. One of the first lessons in the video series reminded us that Jesus himself brought together different types of disciples. He had Matthew the Tax Collector, who connected deeply to the Roman powers and Jesus brought Simon the Zealot into his fold, who was part of a movement to fight against Rome and lead a rebellion. Jesus called both of these disciples to a life of peace and a subversive movement that called for loving one's enemies, while also speaking truth to power and working for justice for the most marginalized.

The invitation in this class that Mindi is leading is to become more humble, less partisan, and more open for relationships with people you might disagree with on some issues. The invitation is to humility and kindness even as one holds personal convictions.

After worship today, we will be having our annual congregational meeting. We will highlight some of the positive things happening in our community and mission together. One thing I will mention again is that our church is uniquely situated in Newberg as a Peacemaking church. Our new ministry that we call the Newberg Center for Christian Spirituality is an embodiment of our call to foster peace and deep spiritual wholeness through prayer retreats and other gatherings that use our Peace Garden and church campus.

Our church seeks to build bridges with all churches and organizations in town. We are friends with George Fox, Friendsview, ADEC, Chehalem Valley Cultural Center, Parks and Rec, Chehalem Valley Dance Academy, and other businesses in town. We support public schools, private schools, and homeschooling. I am a member of Kiwanis and Rotary meets on our church property. Three nights a week AA groups meet in our Fellowship Hall helping to

support the spiritual, emotional, and physical health of close to 75 people.

Twice a month our bike ministry welcomes people of many ethnic backgrounds, ages, and economic levels to receive free bikes through our partnership with Love Inc. We gave out close to 100 bikes again this year. Our deacons help us partner with many local missions like Newberg Fish, Habitat for Humanity, and A Family Place helping support individuals and families in need. Our mission partners bring healing and wholeness to immigrants and refugees. We have a special outreach to Ethiopia and also support Bible translation and evangelism to young adults.

Peacemaking is our call as we live out our mission as followers of Jesus. We love everyone and we follow Jesus over any political party or ideological perspective. Friends, let us continue to work for peace and love inspired by the wisdom of Jesus and the example of leaders like Martin Luther King Jr.

Love and peace are the only answers for our world today. Jesus is our peacemaker. He is the one who heals the woundedness of our own hearts and who calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to love our enemies and work to make them our friends. As we make friends, we also work for peace and justice for all people and follow the example of Jesus who was kind and courageous, gentle and strong. Let us pray to embody the peacemaking heart of our Lord. This is our call as individuals and especially our call as the Church that lifts up no other name than Jesus, our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Matthew 5:38-48

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say to you: Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also, 40 and if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, give your coat as well, 41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 42 Give to the one who asks of you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.