

The Healing Of Our Divisions

Rich Nathan

January 28-29, 2006

Life As It Was Meant To Be

Matthew 5:8-9

A number of years ago an author named Mary Karr wrote a memoir called *The Liar's Club*, in which she described her unbelievably dysfunctional family down in Texas. She talks about an uncle who didn't speak to his wife for 40 years. She writes, "Uncle Lee and Aunt Annie stopped talking in 1931 after they got into a fight about how much money she spent on sugar. She got so angry that she got back up on her mule, rode to town, bought a fifty pound sack of sugar, and carried that sack back into the barn where Uncle Lee was shoeing some horses. She took a jack-knife out of her apron, slit the bag open, and let the sugar pour all over the barn."

One thing led to another until one day when Uncle Lee decided to take a saw and saw their house entirely in half. He took planks and covered the raw sides up and moved into one half of their house. His wife lived in the other half house. There the two of them lived, husband and wife, for 40 more years in their separate half houses.

Talk about a physical picture of a divided family!

We have a divided family here in Columbus – the family called the Christian Church. You certainly have heard that a group of 31 pastors chose to file a complaint with the IRS against Rod Parsley's World Harvest Church and Russell Johnson's church, Fairfield Christian. These 31 pastors are seeking to get the IRS to investigate whether World Harvest and Fairfield Christian, along with affiliated entities, should lose their tax exempt status. Further, they want the IRS to obtain a court injunction to stop, in their words, the church's flagrant political campaign activities.

As I read of the action taken by these 31 pastors against fellow pastors and other churches in Columbus, I was deeply grieved. I thought, what a scandal for the Christian church! One part of the church is filing a complaint against another part of the church. Where does 1 Cor. 6.1 fit in to this particular activity?

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1Co 6:1 If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?

What is the view of these 31 pastors of the Body of Christ? Where is the love for the whole Body, including those parts with whom we may significantly disagree?

At the same time, I have been deeply concerned with the over-identification of the Christian gospel with certain political perspectives. It has become common place in lots of Christian media and church rhetoric to talk about the culture war that we're in. I certainly understand the significance of some of the issues that are being debated. So please, don't email me about this.

My concern is that in fighting the culture war with all of our militaristic rhetoric of "locking and loading" and signing up fighters for the cause, the church may win a battle on a particular issue, but lose the war because of the way opponents on these issues are treated. We aren't called to win a war. We are called to win people. And churches who win people, are churches that are meek and merciful. They are churches that welcome a diversity of opinion. Churches that do not require people to be converted to our particular political leanings in order to be converted to Christ. There is only one conversion that is necessary, conversion to Christ!

We live in a world of divided families. We see the Christian church horribly divided. The newspapers are filled with stories of political divisions. Just this past week, the Palestinian political party, Hamas, which has been historically pledged to a policy of destruction of the Jewish State of Israel, won an overwhelming victory in the Palestinian elections. Neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians have been able or willing to acknowledge any acts of aggression by either side. Neither side has been willing to express regret or remorse for past actions. Neither side has been able to apologize or ask forgiveness for victims of either side of the dispute. The desire for mutual revenge has locked the Israelis and the Palestinians into a state of perpetual warfare for nearly 60 years.

But you know, the division we see in families, in the Christian church, and in nations is a manifestation of a division that runs through every human heart. We ourselves are divided, fighting an internal war inside of ourselves. The apostle Paul, nearly 2000 years ago, described this internal division when he said (Rom. 7:15; 22-24):

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Ro 7:15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

Ro 7:22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law;

Ro 7:23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Ro 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Can you identify in any way with Paul's statement? He is describing the universal condition of every man and woman – a condition of internal division that leads to external fractures in every realm of life.

How can our divided worlds be healed? That is the subject of today's talk. I've called this message, "The Healing of Our Divisions." Let's pray.

Today's text: Matthew 5.8-9

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Mt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Mt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.

We read in Matthew 5.8,

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Mt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

What did Jesus mean by "pure in heart?" We need to understand the way "heart" was used by the Jews, who wrote the Bible. Heart, according to the Jews, was not simply an organ or muscle that pumped blood through your body. The heart described one's total person, one's complete personality, our willing, our thinking, and our feeling. The Jews would not have understood the division that we make in the modern world between the head and the heart. They thought of human beings as being one complete whole. The heart is the whole self – you as you really are.

It is important to see that Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart." He does not say, "Blessed are the pure in doctrine," or even "blessed are the pure in head." Doctrine and head are important, but so many churches stop with purity and doctrine, straining every little theological gnat. As a result, many people stop with purity in intellectual notions. So long as I can correctly articulate a particular version of theology, I am okay. But the "I" that is blessed by Jesus is not the "I" that merely assents to correct doctrine. It is the entire self, the entire "I".

The Columbus Dispatch, sometime before Christmas, printed a series of articles concerning the faith of individuals in Columbus. Something like 85% of all the residents in Columbus call themselves Christians. An overwhelming majority of residents in Central Ohio assent to the idea that Jesus is the Son of God that he was born of a virgin, and rose from the dead. So, is Jesus pronouncing a blessing on the overwhelming majority of Central Ohio? No. He is saying blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are those whose total persons are pure.

What does purity mean? Purity means unmixed, unalloyed. We talk about pure gold, pure maple syrup, pure spring water. It means nothing else other than complete integrity.

Another way to think about purity is undivided. When Jesus speaks of a pure heart, he is taking aim at the problem of the divided hearts within us. Do you see a problem of a divided heart in you, friend? One part of you wants to follow God. You want to obey him. You want to love him, but another part of you just wants to do your own thing. One part wants Christ to rule, but another part will not give up control. Do you see the problem of a divided heart?

Christ is taking aim at all hypocrisy, all cover ups, all the divisions in our person. We have so many divisions. There is a division between who we are in public, and who we are in private when no one is looking. Have you ever seen a division between who you are when no one other than God can see? Maybe when you are traveling? You are in a city and no one else knows you. Do you see a division in your behavior in different settings? You are one way when you are at work; another way when you are at church around church people. You may use totally different language in different settings. You may tell different jokes. You may even dress differently with one group of friends versus another group of friends.

Jesus is taking aim at all the ways that we are chameleons, just taking on the local colorings.

What does he mean by purity of heart? He is taking aim at all of our fake veneer Christianity. Does anyone here ever feel like you are just playing games with God? You are not utterly sincere in your prayers. You are utterly sincere in your worship. You are saying one thing with your mouth and doing something else with your life. God wants to burn up in us every false thing, every sham, and every mask that we wear.

You know, friends, there is a reason why we've created the church culture that we have. We tried to create a church here at Vineyard where people are free to be authentic, to be ourselves, to take off our religious masks and find real healing for who we really are, not who we pretend to be.

How does a person become pure in heart? Some of the purifying of our hearts is done entirely by God at his initiative. You see, Jesus Christ will not settle for anything less than entire absolute purity of heart. He wants to skim off and burn every sham, every form of hypocrisy, and every false thing out of our lives. He wants to destroy all the idols in your life and not leave any standing.

Do you know the way that he deals with everything false in our lives? He sometimes sends opposition our way. He disciplines us with opposition at work and difficulties in our families. Christ puts us in financial trials. He allows stress to come into our lives. You say: Rich, where did you ever get the idea that the pain in our lives may be sent our way by God to purify us? Consider some of the following passages, friends:

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Malachi 3.2-3

Mal 3:2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

Mal 3:3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,

God sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. It has often been said that the way a refiner knows that the refining process for silver or gold is completed is when they look at that molten silver or gold and see their own reflection. That is what God wants to see in your life and in my life. He wants to see his own reflection. He wants to see the image of Jesus Christ in you so sometimes he turns the heat up so that he can skim off all the dross and all the slag.

Where do we get the idea that God may send trials into our lives to purify us? Consider 1 Peter 1.6-7,

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1Pe 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

1Pe 1:7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Have you considered that God wants to use your present circumstances, the difficulties you are facing, to do something in your heart? Don't just pray for deliverance from difficulties, pray for transformation through difficulties. I really want to underline this point with you.

Friends, one of the greatest sources of purity in our lives is pain. Pain of all types – the pain of rejection, the pain of being misunderstood, the pain of loss, the pain of betrayal, the pain of grief, the pain of loneliness, the pain of separation, the pain of financial hardships, the pain of not bearing fruit in ministry. Let me share with you one of the great secrets of emotional and spiritual growth. You can write this down. This is one of the most important lessons you can ever learn in living a successful life. Emotional growth and spiritual growth is largely a function of how you respond to the pain of life.

Marty Liquori was, until the year 2001, the last high school runner in the US to break 4 minutes in the mile. He did it back in 1967. Following his running for the US in the Mexico City Olympics, Marty Liquori opened a chain of athletic shoe stores. Then he faced his greatest race ever – a battle against chronic lymphocytic leukemia, a cancer that attacks the blood supply. Liquori has been, so far, successful in battling this cancer, but he is realistic. He said in an interview: "The key word is chronic. The cancer in my life will come back."

Since discovering that he has cancer, he has reordered his life. He is doing some things that he truly enjoys including playing music. Listen to Liquori explain his experience.

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"It all falls under the gifts that cancer can give. Once you have that wakeup call you find you don't do things because they pay well, or because someone said you should. Without the diagnosis, none of this would have happened."

The gifts that cancer can give. I could never say those words having never gone through cancer. But it is amazing that some people who have gone through cancer have said the very same thing. Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France seven times! He wrote in his book titled, *It Is Not About The Bike*, that knowing what he knows now, if he had to choose between winning the Tour de France, and having cancer, he would choose cancer.

You see, these men know that the secret to a successful life is how we respond to pain.

Friend, if you find a person who regularly avoids pain and chooses the easy route, a person who avoids the pain of studying and chooses instead to play, a person who avoids the pain of loneliness and medicates it away by watching TV, or partying, or another relationship, or sex, if you are a person who simply avoids the pain of hard work, or avoids the pain of encountering that challenging relationship – you will remain spiritually and emotionally immature. Pain avoidance will always cause you to shrink as a human being.

The way to the enlargement of the soul, the way to a pure heart, in short, is to face your pain, frankly acknowledge before God, "I am hurting." "I am bored." "I am lonely." "I am afraid." "I am angry." "I am disappointed." But I will not medicate it all away. Instead, I am going to turn to you, Jesus, and be transparent with my pain. This is your part to play in purifying your heart. Bring your pain to Christ. Keep bringing your pain to Christ until it is as natural to bring your pain to Christ as it is for you to breathe. Until with every heart beat you are saying, "Jesus, I am grieving." "Jesus, I am bored." "Jesus, I feel empty, be my satisfaction, be my healer, be my companion."

Turn the TV off. Hang up the phone. Allow yourself to feel what you are feeling and bring it to God. That is the way to purity.

Why should we desire to be pure in heart? Because Jesus pronounces a blessing. He says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, because they, and they only will see God." If you have impurity in your life, you limit your intimacy with God. That is the bottom line.

Francois Mauriac, a French Catholic writer, wrote a book called, *What I Believe*. In it he describes his battle with sexual sin and sexual temptation intimately. He said he thought that getting married would deal with sexual temptation. It didn't. He thought that getting old would deal with lust in his life. It didn't. He discovered that the only way that he was able to finally put lust to death was by recognizing that only if he was pure in heart would he ever see God. We limit our intimacy with God by retaining impurity in us. Seeing God, this is the great promise of scripture.

What does it mean to see God? We all love seeing beautiful things. There is a book out called *A Thousand Places To Visit Before You Die*. I've had the privilege of seeing beautiful things. I saw the Taj Mahal in the light of a setting Indian sun. I saw its growing red marble, marble that looked like it was on fire. I've seen the Sistine Chapel ceiling at sunrise. I've sat in front of Rembrandt's painting of the Prodigal Son in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. I've sat and drunk in Rembrandt's painting for hours. I've stood under waterfalls in Maui. I've seen the birth of my children. One of the most beautiful sights I've ever seen was seeing my wife, Marlene, on our wedding day come down the aisle towards me. She melted me with her beauty.

But whatever beauty you've seen, friend – manmade beauty, nature's beauty, multiply this to the nth degree and you are still not approaching the promise of this verse:

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Mt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

This was the faith of Job in Job 19.25-27,

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Job 19:25 I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
Job 19:26 And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
Job 19:27 I myself will see him
with my own eyes—I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

This is what we are ultimately going to see according to Revelation 22.4,

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Rev 22:4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

Have you met people who seem to see the hand of God everywhere? God was there in the hospital. They see God weaving together things at work. They feel

God's leading and direction. Do you know, friend, even right now you can see God through the eyes of faith. If your heart is pure, if you are getting cleaned of your idols and healed of the division, you can start seeing Jesus Christ in the faces of the poor. Matthew 25:37-40,

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Mt 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?"

Mt 25:38 "When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?"

Mt 25:39 "When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

Mt 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

If you never see Christ in the face of the stranger or beggar, you never see Christ in the straggler, the one with his hand out, you never see Christ even among his people, if you never see Jesus Christ, or feel his leading, it may be an internal thing in you and in me that our hearts are not pure. They are divided so we pray with the psalmist Psalm 86:11,

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Ps 86:11 Teach me your way, O LORD,
and I will walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear your name.

We go on and read in Matthew 5:9,

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Mt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.

The sign that the kingdom of God has broken into history and into our lives is the healing of divisions, divisions in our heart and divisions in the world.

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Mt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.

What is peace? It is more than inner tranquility. It includes that, but inner tranquility is not enough. It is not enough to sit meditating in the corner and say: I have done my part by making myself peaceful. Peace is more than an absence of war. Peace includes the absence of war, but it is more than that. From a biblical perspective, from the Jewish Old Testament perspective, peace, where we get the word "shalom" means "life as God intended it to be."

This is where we started this series. As a result of the fall, the sin of our first parents, the whole world lives upside down. But God broke into the world in Christ. In Christ, God brought a whole new world order called The Kingdom of God. In Christ the healing of this broken divided world is beginning to happen. God's intention in Christ is to create a whole new breed of humanity who live right side up lives in an upside down world. Peace is life as God intended it to be. Shalom. It is right side up living.

Peace is wholeness. It is health. It is well-being in all realms – ecologically, with the world, relationally with others, psychologically with ourselves, spiritually with God. It is wholeness and healing and the ending of divisions in all realms.

What is peacemaking? Let me tell you what it is not. Peacemaking is not plastering over cracks, pretending that everything is okay when it is not okay. Jeremiah used a similar metaphor in Jeremiah 6.14,

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Jer 6:14 They dress the wound of my people
as though it were not serious.
'Peace, peace,' they say,
when there is no peace.

A peacemaker is painfully honest about the status of relationships. A peacemaker admits that there are problems, that there are failures. A peacemaker admits that he or she is at odds with someone; that we have tension in a relationship. A peacemaker doesn't play pretend. Peacemakers refuse to say: Peace, peace. Everything is okay when everything isn't okay. That's the mark of dysfunctionality.

What is peacemaking? Pope John Paul II said, "Peacemaking gets beyond the symptoms of war. Peacemaking means getting to the root causes of war and eliminating the causes."

Peacemakers are people who don't just cut the weeds off at the surface. Peacemakers dig out the roots of the weeds so they don't come back. Therefore,

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peacemakers are evangelists.

If you want to make peace, share your faith. Peacemakers are witnesses to Christ. Friends, a major cause of unrest and hostility and broken relationships is that we human beings have turned our backs on God. The witness is a person who brings good news of peace. 2 Cor. 5.20 is one of the greatest peacemaking messages in the history of the world.

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2Co 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

I want you to underline in verse 20 the words: Be reconciled to God. It is three little words in Greek; four words in English. Be reconciled to God. This is the greatest peacemaking message ever stated. Be reconciled to God. Your life is in a turmoil. You lack peace inside. You are anxious. You are not sleeping well. You are confused. Everything around you is chaotic. Your family is a mess. Your finances are a mess. Your relationships are strained.

Here is the good news of peace. Be reconciled to God. Right now you have your back toward God. Turn around. Repent. Face God fully. Get off the throne and turn control of your life over to God.

The most fundamental division in the world is the division between us and God. The root problem is vertical, in other words. You can't solve family problems, your problem in your marriage, you cannot solve your problems with your boyfriend or girlfriend, you can't solve your internal problems unless you deal with your root problem, which is your relationship with God. If you are at war with God, you will be restless. When you are at war with God, you are going to be unhappy. When you are at war with God, you can't get beyond yourself, or your own needs. If you are at war with God, then you are going to be at war with people around you.

When you see a person experiencing all kinds of relational problems and everywhere they go, there are torn relationships and torn friendships, and problems with parents, problems at work, problems with bosses, and problems with employees, and problems with their finances, and problems with their sleep – we have to get down to the root. The root problem is that they are at war with God. So here is the peacemaking message: Be reconciled to God!

Peace with God can be yours as a gift. This is the meaning of the cross. Christ made peace between God and us by satisfying the demands of God's law by becoming the curse for our disobedience, by defeating all of our enemies. He conquered everything that is opposed to us and in his death, Christ made peace between us and God. Now, you and I need to receive that peace by confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord and living under that reality. Christ is Lord and you are not!

Do you live with that reality? Right now, with whatever is going on in my life, Christ is Lord. He governs everything and I do not. I am not in control, but Christ is and that gives me peace. Do you share that reality with others, friends? When was the last time you performed the role of peacemaker by sharing your Christian faith? When is the last time you said to another person, "The real issue

is not that you are at war with your Dad. The real issue is not that you are at war with your spouse, or your boss, or your past, or yourself, or your emotions. The real issue is that you are at war with God. You need to be reconciled to God." Have you said that or something like that to anyone recently?

Peacemakers are evangelists.

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Peacemakers are disturbers of the status quo.

Peacemakers are not people who just let sleeping dogs lie. Peacemakers disturb the ground by digging out the roots of the weeds, all the causes of conflict. Often when you seek to make peace, you are going to encounter trouble with the establishment and trouble with the church.

E. Stanley Jones, the great missionary to India, once said, "People hate to be disturbed even for the better."

Dom Helder Camara, the retired Archbishop of Brazil, once said, "When I feed the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why are the poor are poor, they call me a communist."

See, we always disturb the status quo when we start asking questions about root causes of conflicts. What is the cause of the education gap between people living in the city and people living in the suburbs? What is the cause of the economic gap between Blacks and whites in America?

Peacemakers are disturbers of the status quo. They ask unsettling questions and they come up with answers that the establishment may not like, including the church.

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Peacemakers are beatitude people.

It is not a natural quality to be a peacemaker. It is a sign that the kingdom of God has broken into your life when you wage peace. Peacemaking is not a natural quality. I've said that about all the beatitudes. Jesus is not talking about the kind of person who says, "I would do anything to avoid trouble." He is not talking about the appeaser, the peace at any price person, someone who is easy going, who has no sense of justice or righteousness. He is talking about people who are characterized by the beatitudes.

Peacemakers are people who are poor in spirit. They are humble. They mourn. They grieve over their sins and they grieve over the condition of the world. They say, "This is not the way it is supposed to be, that everyone who has problems in their marriages get divorced." They are meek. They are not proud or self-

righteous. They don't stand above others. Peacemakers are not folks who pretend to be able to correct everyone else from a position of superiority. They are pure in heart.

You cannot make peace with your spouse, or peace with your parents, or your kids, if you have a bunch of hidden agendas and cover ups and buried lies. Peace comes out of an undivided heart, a pure heart, a heart that is transparent. When someone walks in light with God, they can make peace with others.

Peacemakers are beatitude people. They are characterized by the first six beatitudes. This stuff builds upon itself and Jesus underlines this notion that you can't make peace unless these other qualities are in your life by saying:

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Mt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

The TNIV's translation may be unfortunate in this case. The NIV reads:

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Mt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called Sons of God.

The TNIV takes away the gender bias. But they may be missing Jesus' point. You see, in Jewish thought the word "son" sometimes means "partaker of the character of." You see, in Jesus' day, if someone called you the son of a pig, they wouldn't be saying something about your parents. They would be saying something about you. They are saying you share the habits and character of a pig. A Son of God, then, is a man or woman who shares the character of God who is the God of peace. You share the character of Christ, who came into the world to make peace. Colossians 1.19-20,

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Col 1:19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,
Col 1:20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

It is the role of the Christian, the Christ follower, to orient our lives toward making peace and spreading peace wherever we go. Christians are not professional critics. Christians are not false-finders. Christians are not supposed to be mean. We should not sound like we are on the war path. Here is how Christians are described in 1 Peter 3.11,

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1Pe 3:11 He must turn from evil and do good;

he must seek peace and pursue it.

Here is how Christians are described in Hebrews 12.14,

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Heb 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Here is how Christians are described in Romans 12.18,

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Ro 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Christians are people who look for ways to bring people together instead of dividing people apart. When we see a fire, we Christians try to pour water on the fire. If you are the kind of person who when there is a little fire – when there is controversy, when people are at odds – you pour gasoline on that fire – you love to separate people, you love when people are at odds – then it is doubtful that the kingdom of God has ever broken upon you.

But you know, it is costly to wage peace. Peace with God cost the life of the Son of God. It is costly to wage peace. It costs something to humble ourselves enough to apologize when we've done wrong.

One British pastor, Canon Frayling, who helped to bring about a measure of peace and reconciliation between the English and Irish in the conflict in Northern Ireland once said, "To apologize is not to demonstrate weakness. Rather, it requires a particular kind of courage and statesmanship which transcends politics." He was listened to by Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, who chose to make one of his first official acts a public apology to Ireland for the role that England played 150 years ago in the Irish Famine that claimed over a million lives. Tony Blair had the courage to reopen the inquiry into Bloody Sunday, an event that had taken place a quarter century before when 14 civilians in Derry were killed by British paratroopers.

It is costly to humble ourselves and to apologize. I wonder what would happen in America if President Bush went in front of the leadership of the NAACP and apologized for America's racial history? What if he called churches across America from whatever stripe and denomination to a day of national repentance and racial reconciliation. What if President Bush's apology and this Day of National Repentance and Reconciliation was followed by concrete deliberate acts of good faith and reparations – massive expansion of job training programs, massive expansion of investment both public and private in the inner city, huge increases in scholarship help for minority citizens of our country. What if America and its leadership took our racial history seriously and decided to transcend

politics by taking the costly step of apology and repentance. You think that would make a difference? Think it would help?

It cost to apologize even at a personal level because we risk failure. We risk misunderstanding. We risk being treated with total disregard and disrespect. When we apologize to someone, we can't demand that they forgive us. We are just hanging out there. They may turn their backs on us. They may believe that we are liars, that we have some ulterior motive. It is costly to make peace. It is costly for you to go through counseling with your spouse when you don't want to go, just to make peace. It is costly to forgive someone who hurt you, just because you are called to make peace.

It is costly to not speak, sometimes, isn't it? If you want to be a peacemaker, there is the cost of biting your tongue a lot. Oh, I so much wanted to say such and such. I wanted to tell them off. I wanted to give them a piece of my mind, but God has called me to peace and so, I bit my tongue.

It is costly to listen. It is costly to take the initiative, to be the first one to reach across the divide and to say to someone from who you are separated, "I want to renew our relationship. I want us to take whatever steps we need to take to heal the division between us."

The healing of our divisions. That is what the kingdom of God is all about. Let's pray.

The Healing Of Our Divisions

Rich Nathan
January 28-29, 2006
Life As It Was Meant To Be
Matthew 5:8-9

I. Healing Our Divided Hearts

- A. What Did Jesus Mean By “Pure In Heart?”
 - 1. The Meaning Of “Heart”
 - 2. The Meaning Of “Purity”
- B. How Does A Person Become “Pure In Heart?”
 - 1. God’s Work
 - 2. Our Work
- C. Why Should We Desire To Be “Pure In Heart?”

II. Healing Our Divided World

- A. What Is Peace?
- B. What Is Peacemaking?
 - 1. What It Is Not
 - 2. What It Is
 - a. Peacemakers Are Evangelists
 - b. Peacemakers Are Disturbers Of The Status Quo
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- C. What Does Peace Cost?