

Matthew 5:9

Fr. Andrew's Bible Study notes for Matthew 5:9.

Matthew: Chpt. 5e The Beatitudes

⁹**“Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. [Mt. 5:9]**

Peace as reconciliation of enemies

Saint Chrysostom: “Herein He not only takes away our own variance and hatred among ourselves, but He requires something more, that is, that we should set at one, again others who are at variance. And again the prize is spiritual: ‘For they shall be called sons of God.’ For this became the work of the Only-begotten, to bring together those that stood apart and to reconcile those who were enemies.” [Ib., *P.G.* 57:190 (cols. 228).]

What is a Peacemaker?

Saint Gregory of Nyssa: “Now a peacemaker is a man who gives peace to another; but one cannot give another what he himself does not possess. Hence the Lord wants you first to be yourself filled with the blessings of peace, and then to communicate it to those who have need of it....Now it is a loving disposition of one’s neighbor....Now who are these? Those who imitate the divine love of men, who show forth in their own life the characteristic of the divine energy....”

Are we “peace-takers or peace-makers?”

“The problem in our world is that we thrive on peace-taking and not peace-making. We will make our own peace even if we have to steal peace from someone else. We thrive on hate rather than love. We’d rather protest than concede. We’d rather sue than forgive. We’d rather dominate than reconcile. And this has got to change. We need to drop the “new normal” and get back to the old normal—when kids played basketball on the driveway after school instead of playing violent video games, when kids talked instead of wearing the ear-buds filled with hateful music; when adults forgave and forget; when spouses worked it out; and when church was your support group and not just your club...”

“...Most people mistranslate the Gospel passage “Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace good will to men.” The more accurate translation is “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will.” See, the peace of God is not a gift granted to everyone (sorry, God is not politically correct). The peace of God is granted to those of good will. God’s peace is a gift, not a birthright. And it is a blessing—something for which we should strive, and something for which we should be grateful. (Fr Stavros Akrotirianakis, Reflections on Sandy Brook Shooting).”

Christ came to make peace between man and God

Chrysostom: “Yes, for this became the work of the Only Begotten, to unite the divided,

and to reconcile the alienated.”

Fr. Hopko: On the Beatitudes:

Christ, the “**prince of peace,**” (*Isaiah 9:6*) gives the peace of God to those who believe in Him. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. (John 14:27) I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace (John 16:33).”

Peace is a fruit of the gift of the Holy Spirit

Saint Basil the Great: “The first fruit of the Spirit is peace and joy. Therefore,...the holy Virgin had received within herself every grace of the Holy Spirit.” [“On Psalm 32,” *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Toal, IV:415.]

Inner Peace between the flesh and the mind

Gregory of Nyssa: “But perhaps this Beatitude does not only regard the good of others. I think a man is called a peacemaker who pacifies perfectly the discord between flesh and spirit in himself and the war that is inherent in nature, so that the law of the body no longer wars against the law of the mind, but is subjected to the higher rule and becomes a servant of the divine ordinance.” [Ib., Sermon 7, 18:159, 164, 165.]

“This is the peace which Saint Paul lists as one of the “**fruits of the Holy Spirit**” (*Galatians 5:22*); the “**peace of God which passes all understanding.**” (*Philippians 4:7*) It is peace understood as “the liberation from passions, which cannot be attained without the action of the Holy Spirit.” (*Saint Mark the Ascetic, 4th c., Two Centuries on Spiritual Law*) The peacemakers are those who have the peace of God in themselves and spread this peace to those around them. (Hopko).”

Christianity brings external conflicts

“The inner peace of God is not the absence of external conflict. The peacemakers of God are not those who are freed from terrific struggles in life, or those who can cause the absence and disappearance of strife among men. Christ Himself did not do this. On the contrary, the Prince of Peace Himself, the Lord who gives strength and peace to His people (*Psalms 29:11*), has claimed that He Himself will be the cause of much conflict among men. “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:34-39; Luke 12:49-53) (Hopko).”

Living Peacefully with Others

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourself, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 32:35) No, “if your enemy is

hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” (Proverbs 25:21- 22) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:18-21)

“In making peace, the peacemaker himself is a son of God like the Lord Jesus Himself, who paradoxically and inevitably is the cause of much scandal and strife. (Cf. Luke 2:34-35, 7:23, 21:18) (Hopko).”

Matthew 5:10-12

Fr. Andrew's Bible Study notes for Matthew 5:10-12.

Matthew: Chpt. 5f

The Beatitudes

¹⁰**“Blessed are they who have been persecuted on account of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.**

Righteousness and Virtue

Saint Chrysostom: “‘On account of righteousness,’ that means, on account of virtue, for protection given to others, and for piety. For it is always His custom to speak of righteousness as the entire philosophy of the soul, that is the true philosophy (love of wisdom) of the spiritual life of virtue, discipline, and doctrine.” [Ib., P.G. 57:190 (cols. 228).]

Seeing “God” in the flames of one’s suffering

Saint Gregory of Nyssa: “Therefor the great Stephen rejoices when he is stoned from all sides...He too has heard the promise and has seen the hope that corresponds to the things that happen in the world of sense. For he first heard that those who suffer persecution for the sake of the Lord will be in the Kingdom of Heaven, and then he saw the object of his expectation at the moment of persecution. While he was running the race of confessing the faith, he was shown what he hoped for, the heavens opened and the Divine Glory looking down from the transcendent realm on the struggle of the runner that is to say, the Lord Himself to whom the struggle of His martyrs bears witness. Now the standing posture of the Judge of the struggle is an image of the help He gives to the fighter...the same person who ordains the contest also assists His own fighters against their opponents...who could be more blessed?”

The various “forms” of persecution for God’s sake

Gregory of Nyssa: “Blessed are those that are separated from disease for my sake. They are without pains, and so it happens that those who were once sick and now resting in me...Blessed are those who are persecuted by death for my sake...Blessed are those who are persecuted by darkness (sin) for my sake...The same may be said of justice, sanctity, incorruption, goodness...Hence if a man leaves what he used to serve, he attains the dignity of a free man. For the highest form of freedom is to be master of oneself...If therefor, a man who is a stranger to sin is free, and if, on the other hand, the property of kingship is to be self-governing and without a master, it follows that a man who is

persecuted by evils is blessed, because persecution from that quarter procures for him the royal dignity.”

¹¹“Blessed are you whenever they reproach you and persecute you, and say every evil word against you falsely on account of Me.

Saint Chrysostom: “It is as if He said, ‘Though they call you sorcerers, deceivers, pestilent, or whatever else, happy are you.’ What could be newer than these commands? Wherein the very things which all others flee from, these He declares to be desirable; I mean to be poor, mourning, persecuted, and evilly reported....He who is evil spoken of is so far from miserable, but happy. See again the prize: ‘Your reward *is* great in the heavens.’ Now do not be discouraged that He does not mention a kingdom. For although He gives different names to His rewards, yet He brings all into His kingdom.” [Ib., P.G. 57:190 (cols. 228).]

¹²“Be rejoicing and be exceedingly glad, for your reward *is* great in the heavens. For so they persecuted the prophets who *were* before you. [Mt. 5:10-12]

Saint Chrysostom: “Elias was driven out, persecuted, and compelled to struggle with famine....But what is this that ‘they were made to wander’ (planwvmenoi, present passive participle)? They were made to wander like exiles and fugitives, as persons caught and detected in shameless crimes, as those not worthy to see the sun. They found no refuge from the wilderness, but must always be fleeing, must be seeking hiding-places, must bury themselves alive in the earth, and ever be in fear.” [Hom. 28, P.G. 63:254, 255 (cols. 191, 192).]

Conditions necessary for it to be a blessing to be called evil

Chrysostom: “However, lest you should think that the mere fact of being evil spoken of makes men blessed, He has set two limitations; when it is for His sake, and when the things that are said are false: for without these, he who is evil spoken of, so far from being blessed, is miserable.”

The goal of all the Beatitudes is the same – the kingdom of heaven

Chrysostom: “But though you hear not of a kingdom given in each one of the blessings, be not discouraged. For although He gives different names to the rewards, yet He brings all into His kingdom. Thus, both when He says, they that mourn shall be comforted; and, they that show mercy shall obtain mercy; and, the pure in heart shall see God; and, the peacemakers shall be called the children of God; nothing else but the Kingdom does He shadow out by all these sayings. For such as enjoy these, shall surely attain unto that. Think not therefore that this reward is for the poor in spirit only, but for those also who hunger after righteousness, for the meek, and for all the rest without exception.”

Matthew 5:13-16

Fr. Andrew's Bible Study notes for Matthew 5:13-16.

Matthew: Chpt. 5g

¹³**“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt should become insipid (μωρανθῆ = tasteless, dull, foolish), with what shall it be salted? For it is no longer good for anything, except to be cast out and to be trampled underfoot by men.**

Saint Kyril: “Let there be salt in you, that is, divine words which bring salvation, but if we despise, we become without savor, and foolish, and utterly useless.” [Ib.]

Blessed Theophylact: “This is what the Lord means: ‘I indeed want every Christian to be useful and full of savor, not only those entrusted with the grace of teaching....But also the lay people are to be useful to their neighbor....By saying, ‘Neither for *the* land nor for manure is it fit,’ the land implies that which receives benefit, while manure implies that which gives benefit. Wherefore when one is unable either to receive or give benefit, he is utterly worthless and cast out.” [P.G. 123:402BC (col. 945).]

¹⁴**“You are the light of the world.**

⁴***In Him was life, and the Life was the light of men. [Jn. 1:4]...⁹That was the true Light, which gives light to every man coming into the world. [Jn. 1:9]***

Light illumines error of every type: false teaching, death, sin, illness,

Saint Chrysostom: “He calls death and error, ‘darkness.’ For the light which is the object of our senses does not shine in darkness, but apart from it. But the preaching of Christ has shone forth in the midst of prevailing error, and made it vanish. And by having come to be in death has He overcome death, so that He has recovered those already held by it. Since then neither death nor error can overcome it, since it is bright everywhere and shines by its proper strength, he says, ‘The darkness overcame it not.’ For it cannot be overcome, and will not dwell in souls which wish not to be enlightened.” [Hom. 5, P.G. 59:39, 40 (col. 58).]

Light given to all but not received by all

Saint Chrysostom: “But if ‘He gives light to every man coming into the world,’ how is it that so many continue unenlightened? For not all have known the majesty of Christ. How then does He give light to every man? He gives light to all as far as in him lies. But if some who are unwilling should close the eyes of their mind (spiritual nature), and refuse the rays of this light, their darkness is not from the nature of the light, but their own wickedness when they turn themselves away from the light.” [Hom. 8, P.G. 59:48 (col. 65).]

Communion with God brings the Light

Saint Gregory of Nyssa: “We shall become as the light, in our nearness to Christ’s true light, if we leave this dark atmosphere of the earth and dwell above; and we shall be

light, as our Lord says [Jn. 9:5, 1:9], if the true light that shines in the dark comes down even to us—unless, that is, any foulness of sin spreading over our hearts should dim the brightness of our light.”

A city situated on the top of a mountain cannot be hid. ¹⁵“Nor do they light a lamp and put it under the bushel, but upon the lampstand, and it gives light to all those in the house. ¹⁶“Thus, let your light shine before men, that they might see your good works, and might glorify your Father Who *is* in the heavens.

Saint Bede: “Is it not possible that He wanted to give us an example, so that, when we perform acts of virtue, we would avoid the vice of boasting and, most of all, avoid human praise, lest our good deed be deprived of the gift of heavenly reward as a result of the empty favor of the general public? Yet we should be aware that, if our good deeds are worthy of imitation, they cannot be hidden, but will be revealed for the purpose of fraternal (brotherly) correction, by divinely arranged plan....For no one should judge that what was said means that when we perform good deeds we ought to avoid the sight of our brothers,...since our Lord said, ‘Let your light shine before men, that they might see your good works, and might glorify your Father Who *is* in the heavens [Mt. 5:16].’ This indicates that we should seek from the works which we show to our brothers not their praise, but advance in virtue.” [Ib., 56.]

On God as “Light”

Saint Gregory Palamas: “According to the promise of the Savior they saw the kingdom of God, that divine and ineffable light. The great Gregory the Theologian called it divinity, saying, ‘Light is the divinity manifested to the disciples on the Mount’ [St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* 40.6, *P.G.* 36:365A]; and Basil the Great called it divinity, saying, ‘A beauty of the truly mighty One is His intelligible and contemplated divinity’ [*Homily on Psalm 44*, 5, *P.G.* 29:400C]. Basil the Great also says that light is the beauty of God contemplated by the saints alone in the power of the divine Spirit. And so he says in turn, ‘Peter and the sons of thunder saw His beauty on the mountain, surpassing the brightness of the sun in its radiance [cf. Mt. 17:2; Lk. 9:29]. And they were deemed worthy to receive with their eyes a foretaste of His advent’ [Ib., *P.G.* 400CD]. Saint John of Damascus called the light a natural ray of the divinity,...and wrote: ‘The Son without beginning, begotten from the Father, possessed from the divinity the natural ray without beginning. And the glory of the divinity became also the glory of the body’ [*The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, Ch. 146, pp. 251-253.]

Keep Your lamps burning

Saint Gregory the Great: “Excess is given to the name ‘loins.’ We gird our loins when we curb all physical excess through self-restraint. But since it is a small thing not to commit evils if one is not also eager to labor at good works, He immediately added, ‘and let your lamps be kept burning.’ We hold in our hands burning lamps when we show an example of light to our neighbors by good works. Purity is of no value without good works, nor do good works avail us without purity.”

Matthew 5:17-21

Fr. Andrew's Bible Study notes for Matthew 5:17-21.

Matthew: Chpt. 5h

¹⁷“Do not begin to think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I came not to abolish, but to fulfill.

Saint Chrysostom: “He brought to pass those things that had been written about him in the law and the prophets. When he drank the vinegar offered him on the Cross, he said, “It is finished” ...he fulfilled the law when he completed the mystery of his passion the once prefigured mystery of the paschal meal... ‘For Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7).”

¹⁸“For verily I say to you, until the heaven and the earth shall have passed away, one iota or one tittle in no wise shall pass away from the law, until all shall have taken place.

Saint Chrysostom: “Now what He says is like this: ‘It cannot be that it should remain unaccomplished, but it is needful for the very least thing therein to be fulfilled.’ Which thing He Himself performed, in that He completed it with all exactness. And here He hints to us that the fashion of the whole world is also being transformed. Nor did He set it down without purpose, but in order to arouse the hearer, and indicate, that He was with just cause introducing another discipline; yes indeed, the very works of the creation are all to be transformed, and the race of man is to be called to another country, and to a loftier way of practising how to live.” [Ib., P.G. 57:207 (col. 242).]

Blessed Theophylact: “Some say that the Greek letter *iota* and the tittle (accent or punctuation mark) signify the commandments of the law (in Greek numerals, an *iota* followed by an accent,

Ι υ, is the number 10). But others say that they indicate the Cross, for the *iota* is the upright beam and the accent the transverse beam of the Cross.” [P.G. 123:26DA (cols. 192, 193).] Still others say (Origen) that the *iota* (i) of the Greeks and that which is in Hebrew *yod*, can symbolically be said to represent Jesus, since the beginning of his name is written with the *iota* and in Hebrew with the *yod*.

¹⁹“Whosoever then shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens.

1. These verses are read for the feast day of a Father (Teacher) of the Church

Saint Kyril: “There are in the world many heresies, false apostles, and false teachers,

who...adulterate the language of the sacred proclamations, and multiply blasphemous words....These, resisting the champions of truth, persecute those whose choice it is to hold sound doctrine, and who defend the divine glory....”

²⁰“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness should exceed more than *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, in no wise shall ye enter into the kingdom of the heavens

Saint Ambrose: “Let us seek some secret of a deeper understanding. The fig tree is in the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, which He gave for the plunder of the nations. Thus, He Who caused His vineyard to be plundered, also here commands the fig tree to be cut out, so that the comparison of that tree with the Synagogue is fitting [Is. 5:7], because just as that tree, abounding in perishable leaves, defrauded its owner’s hope, through his vain expectation of a longed for crop, so also in the Synagogue, while its teachers, barren in works, nevertheless glory in words, as if profuse foliage, the empty shadow of the law swells.”

²¹“You heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘You shall not murder,’ and whosoever shall murder shall be liable to the judgment. ²²“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother without just cause shall be liable to the judgment.

¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a manslayer, and you know that every manslayer has not eternal life abiding in him. [1 Jn. 3:15]

Matthew 5:22-30

Fr. Andrew's Bible Study notes for Matthew 5:22-30.

Matthew: Chpt. 5i

I. The consequences of not cultivating the beatitudes ~ Christ fulfills these teachings in His life.

Chrysostom: “...the fashion of the whole world is also being changed. Nor did He set it down without purpose, but in order to arouse the hearer, and indicate, that He was with just cause introducing another discipline; if at least the very works of the creation are all to be transformed, and mankind is to be called to another country, and to a higher way of practicing how to live.”

²²“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother without just cause shall be liable to the judgment.

Chrysostom: “...because this passion (anger) is even useful, if we know how to use it at the suitable time. See, for instance, what great good was wrought by that anger of Paul, which he felt against the Corinthians, on that well-known occasion; and how, as it delivered them from a grievous pest, so by the same means again he recovered the people of the Galatians likewise, which had fallen aside; and others too beside these.

What then is the proper time for anger? When we are not avenging ourselves, but checking others in their lawless freaks, or forcing them to attend in their negligence.”
And whosoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca’ shall be liable to the Sanhedrin; but whosoever shall say, ‘Thou fool,’ shall be liable to the Gehenna of the fire.

How we address one another matters

Saint Chrysostom: “In this place, saying ‘Sanhedrin,’ He means the tribunal of the Hebrews. He says this now to lay down that He might not everywhere be supposed to be a stranger and innovator. But this ‘*raca*’ (something like our, ‘hey you!’ *an Aramaic term of contempt*) is not an expression of great insult, but rather of some disdain and little esteem on the part of the one speaking. Even as we giving orders to a household servant or any very inferior person, say, ‘Away with thee,’ ‘you there, tell such a one’; so they who make use of the Syrians’ language say ‘*raca*,’ putting that word instead of ‘thou.’ But the Lover of mankind, God, uproots also the least slights, commanding us to bestow upon one another proper regard and befitting honor. And that on account of this He might also destroy the greater....

“But to say ‘*moré*’ (Greek for fool, dull, stupid) He adds the fire of Gehenna....Thou hast despised the former command. See what anger produces....‘If you overlook even this, the punishment of the Sanhedrin, and proceed to what is more grievous, I visit you no longer with finite punishments, but with the undying punishment of Gehenna lest after this you leap off to murder.’ For there is nothing more unendurable than insolence; and it above all is able to sting a person’s soul....Think it not a light thing to call another ‘*moré*.’ For when you have robbed your brother of that which separates us from the brutes, and by which we are human beings—the mind and the understanding—thou hast deprived him of all his nobility.” [Ib., P.G. 57:214, 215 (cols. 248, 249).]

On Gehennah

Gehennah is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 28:3 and 33:6, and Jeremiah 7:31, 19:2-6, and appears in many traditional extra-Biblical Jewish writings. After this area came under Jewish control a memorial fire was kept burning there. Later it became a dumping place for refuse, dead animals, and eventually prisoners’ bodies, or the bodies of the poor that were not claimed by any family. Trash fires were kept continually burning there for sanitary reasons. It was like many landfills: a smoky, foul-smelling place with carrion-eating birds circling overhead, and with maggot infested carcasses.

By the time of Jesus this place became a well known metaphor for the fate of those condemned and judged by God. Expressions like “the fiery pit” or the “fires of Gehennah” and “where the worm turns” were equivalent to the unrighteous’ experience of God’s presence. Yet even it was not a place God “sends” people. The fire itself was understood to be how the wicked experienced the Shechinah glory of God, as a burning judgment fire. (Heaven & Hell in the Afterlife, According To The Bible, Peter Chopelas)

²³“If, then, thou offer your gift on the altar, and there remember that your brother has

something against you, ²⁴“leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

A.) Preparation for Holy Communion ~ being at peace with everyone

Chrysostom: “And having declared the peace-maker blessed, He again almost said the same, when He gave command to leave the gift, and hasten to reconciliation with him that was grieved, and about reconciling with our adversary.”

a.) The “kiss of peace” exchanged during the liturgy – a prerequisite to sing “Father, Son, Holy Spirit, the Trinity, one in essence and undivided.”

²⁵“Be well-disposed with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him, lest ever the adversary should deliver you up to the judge, and the judge deliver you up to the officer, and you shall be cast into prison. ²⁶“Verily I say to you, in no wise shall you come out from that place, until you pay the last quadrans.”

Teaching on cultivating a virtuous inner-life of a renewed heart, a new creation

Chrysostom: “Since he who is not stirred up to anger, will much more refrain from murder; and he who bridles wrath will much more keep his hands to himself. For wrath is the root of murder. And you see that He who cuts up the root will much more remove the branches; or rather, will not permit them so much as to shoot out at all. Not therefore to abolish the law did He make these enactments, but for the more complete observation of it.”

²⁷“You heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸“But I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman in order to lust after her did already commit adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹“And if your right eye cause you to stumble, remove it and cast *it* from yourself; for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not *that* your whole body should be cast into Gehenna. ³⁰“And if your right hand cause you to stumble, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Gehenna.

v The highest road to holiness is to cleanse the heart through controlling one’s thoughts so that external manifestations of sins do not occur.

v Cutting off temptations and re-directing one’s thoughts towards cultivating virtue is the method employed for repentance