

Becoming a Peacemaker



Fra Angelico, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 1442, Fresco

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As we see in this fresco by the Italian artist Fra Angelico (1395-1455), Christ and his disciples sit at the center of the composition, forming a circle of fellowship. Christ's right-hand raises in a gesture of teaching, referring to the theme of the work: Sermon on the Mount. One of the related texts to the theme is "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthews 5: 9). I invite viewers to reflect on the theme of becoming a peacemaker with this image. I believe true peace can only be found in the Prince of Peace—Jesus Christ. Sitting a little above his disciples, Christ is depicted as a teacher and judge of all. The image invites viewers to become participants in the learning community with Jesus and his disciples.

Becoming a peacemaker, we first must make peace with God and others. By saying "becoming" means the peacemaking process is a continuing effort worth a lifelong pursuit. Romans 5:1 says, "Having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". Being justified by faith means by accepting Christ as a personal savior and Lord of life. When we have a right relationship with God we will have Christ's likeness in how we think, talk, and live.

In this turmoil world we live, especially in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic, there is hardly true peace within oneself until Jesus reigns over the person's heart. With faith in Christ, real peace became a possibility in our world. On a personal level, true peace cannot be attained until one accepts faith in Jesus and his saving work.

My husband and I accepted pastorship in one of the Mennonite churches in the Taipei area a few years ago. The three key statements of the Anabaptist core values are: Jesus is the center of our faith. Community is the center of our lives. Reconciliation is the center of our work. Our conviction towards these values is getting stronger during the past years. To make peace is not to compromise or to avoid confrontation. During the Reformation era, the Anabaptists arose

as a small group of believers who attempted to put into practice their understanding of the teachings of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount in terms of being pacifist, no matter what the cost was.

As depicted in the painting, the disciple sat around Jesus and listened attentively to Christ's teachings. Jesus told them, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God." As modern disciples of Christ, we, too, must act as peacemakers. In a world that hungry for peace, we must choose to reconcile the conflicts in our personal relationship. The road to peace begins in our hearts and in our relationship with others. Shalom means peace, a status of completeness or fullness. Christians, therefore, are called to serve each other in peaceful way and resolve to avoid possible conflict. The peacemakers will bring reconciliation in a world overrun with unrest.