

Who was Jesus - Peacemaker or Trouble Maker?

1

Julian Doorey - Sermon - Cavy Bap - 22-1-17

(Mark 8: 27-30; Matt 5: 9, 38-42, 43-45; 10: 34-39)

Play Video: The Outlaw - by Larry Norman (3m 48s) - before PP slide 1.**Introduction**

2

Mark 8: 27-30 - Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way, he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" ²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him...

Who was Jesus? People have asked this for a long time. The disciples had various ideas about who Jesus was - some of them right, some of them wrong. It's an important question. The Jesus we follow, will influence our beliefs, values and commitments. It will also influence how we show and describe Jesus to other people. Today I want to present some ideas for you to think about...

3

Song - The Outlaw - by Larry Norman - 1972 album 'Only Visiting This Planet'

The song presented different ideas and imagery about who Jesus was. *Which do you relate to?*

Some say he was an outlaw that he roamed across the land
 With a band of unschooled ruffians and few old fishermen
 No one knew just where he came from or exactly what he'd done
 But they said it must be something bad that kept him on the run.

Some say he was a poet that he'd stand upon the hill
 That his voice could calm an angry crowd and make the waves stand still
 That he spoke in many parables that few could understand
 But the people sat for hours just to listen to this man.

4

Some say he was a sorcerer, a man of mystery
 He could walk upon the water, he could make a blind man see
 That he conjured wine at weddings and did tricks with fish and bread
 That he talked of being born again and raised people from the dead.

Some say a politician, who spoke of being free
 He was followed by the masses on the shores of Galilee
 He spoke out against corruption and he bowed to no decree
 And they feared his strength and power so they nailed him to a tree.

5

Some say he was the Son of God, a man above all men
 That he came to be a servant and to set us free from sin
 And that's who I believe he is 'cause that's what I believe
 And I think we should get ready 'cause it's time for us to leave.

Group discussion: Look at the song words and discuss in small group...

- What especially stands out for you?
- Who do you say Jesus was / is?

- How do you describe Jesus to other people?

There are many ways to see Jesus, follow Jesus and share Jesus. I will focus on 2 aspects...

Jesus the Peacemaker

6

Blessed are the peacemakers

Matt 5:9 (Jesus speaking)

Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called children of God.

The 'peace' word occurs 140x in the OT, and 90x in the NT (230 total). As the NT is a lot smaller than the OT, this is strong NT focus. The 'peacemaker' term occurs 2x in the NT, but not in the OT. This indicates a bias towards 'peace / peacemaking' as a part of following Jesus.

7

Love your enemies

Matt 5: 43-45

⁴³ You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I tell you, **love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

The 'love your enemies' term only occurs in the NT, spoken by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5, Luke 6). This indicates a bias towards 'peace / peacemaking' as a part of following Jesus.

8

An eye for an eye

As an introduction to 'love your enemies', Jesus replaces the Old Testament 'personal injury laws'.

Matt 5: 38-42

³⁸ You have heard that it was said, '**Eye for eye**, and tooth for tooth.'³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Was the Old Testament law 'Eye for eye' no good? It was in fact very good for what was intended. It ensured justice, it was punitive, allowed for fair retaliation in proportion to the original wrong, and prevented escalation of conflict. ie: Take 1 eye not 2 (justice scales). It was life preserving, enabling a motley group of people around 1000 BC to live in community, functioning in some 'agreed and known way'. It helped prevent further conflict, but was not restorative of relationships.

On the other hand, Jesus made a radical departure from the Old Testament law telling us to be peacemakers, to turn the other cheek, to hand over our coat, to go the extra mile, to give to those who ask, to love our enemy, and to pray for those who persecute us. The New Testament Jesus demonstrated grace, resolving conflict through non-violent peacemaking. This not only helps prevent further conflict (as the Old Testament law also did), but is also restorative of relationships. And that's the huge difference between Old Testament law and New Testament grace. So... I think we can say, Jesus was a peacemaker and wants us to be peacemakers.

9

Peace / Peacemaking - what's involved?

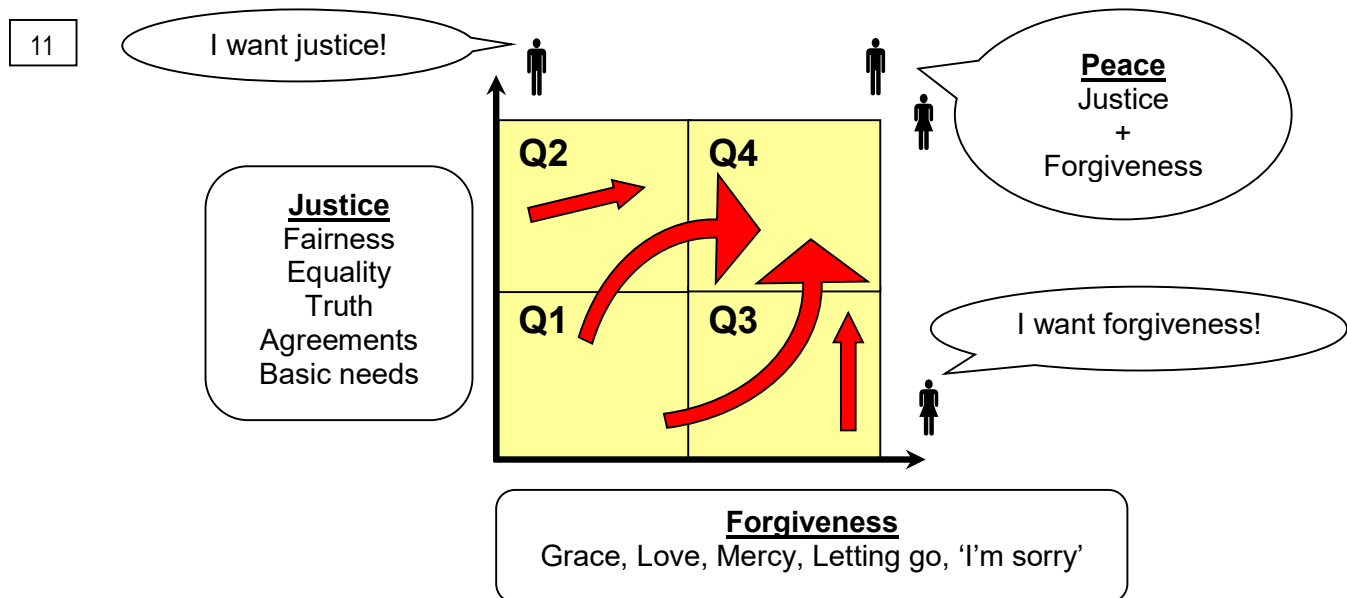
What's involved in peacemaking? I can't recall the Bible exactly defining 'peace / peacemaking' anywhere. We need to think carefully about this. I and others suggest:

- Peace = being in a right relationship with God, people and the earth. (cf Genesis 1 & 2)
 - Peacemaking = restores the right relationship with God, people and the earth.
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- Peacekeeping = limits conflict by avoiding contact or discussion (better than conflict).
 - Peacemaking = restoring relationships is the goal eg: community (better than peacekeeping).

- 10 Focusing our discussion to peacemaking between people, whether that be in our home, at work, in church, or between countries - what are the conditions required for peace? I and others suggest peace requires a relationship based on justice and forgiveness.
- Justice = fairness, equality, truth, agreements, meeting basic needs (of the poor) - the plan.
 - Forgiveness = grace, love, mercy, letting go, learning to say I'm sorry - fix up later.

Both of these conditions are required for peace to happen. One on its own won't work...

- Some folk say the victim of hurt (person or country) should simply forgive, get over it, move on. There's truth here, but some justice is usually required for restoration of relationship.
- Some folk say justice 'in full' is required or there can be no improved relationship. There's truth here, but often justice 'in full' cannot be delivered for historical wrongs, so some forgiveness is required.



Peacemaking - Justice + Forgiveness Model

'Both / and' model: Peace requires both justice and forgiveness. It encourages a journey of change and growth. eg: A strong 'justice' person in quadrant Q2 needs to become more open and committed to 'forgiveness' in quadrant Q4. Equally a keen 'forgiveness' person in quadrant Q3 needs to become more open and committed to 'justice' in quadrant Q4. Peacemaking aims for both.

- 12 Personal experience of peacemaking
- This peacemaking stuff may sound quite easy, but have you ever tried it? I've tried to do peacemaking a number of times (not just theory). Below are some stories <tell 1 or 2 stories>.

- NZ church: conflict between 2 groups of people.
- Bangladesh national church: conflict between 2 Baptist denominational leaders.
- Bangladesh international church: conflict between leadership.
- Bangladesh street fights: verbal abuse of rickshaw wallahs, face slapping, hitting with sticks.
- Bangladesh mob beatings: suspected thief outside language school.

Peacemaking feels anything but peaceful for the peacemaker. Mobs are scary. But so are ‘important’ people eg: authorities, employers, political leaders, organisational leaders etc. It’s often very difficult to peacemake, seek justice or advocate for another person who isn’t receiving a fair deal or is in a conflict situation. You can ruin your own friendships, your own reputation and your own advancement, by getting involved. Speaking truth to power is scary. Peacemaking often involves trouble making. Peacemaking involves different time frames ~ 40 mins... months... years.

Jesus the Trouble Maker

13 What about Jesus the peacemaker... was he also a trouble maker?

Matthew 10: 34-39 - Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

³⁴ Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law - ³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ ³⁷ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Jesus causes division... between those who follow and those who don’t. Following Jesus will influence our beliefs, values and commitments. This creates differences - within families, between neighbours, at work and globally. I’ve heard Jesus described as...

14 **The Nonviolent Revolutionary - Despite making trouble wherever he went, Jesus remained ever a man of peace** (John Dear - ESA Prism Mag - Jul 2012)

John Dear, a peace activist involved in civil disobedience at US military and nuclear bases, came up with this description of Jesus, and wrote the following... (modified slightly)...

15 “Jesus’s nonviolence was not passive. He did not sit under a tree and practice his breathing. He walked into the face of danger, spoke the truth and sought justice. As far as decent, law-abiding, religious people were concerned, he was trouble. He hung out with the wrong people, healed at the wrong time, visited the wrong places and said the wrong things. His love and justice was active, provocative, public, daring and dangerous.”

“The gospels portray Jesus as the most active person of nonviolence in the history of the world. He taught: ‘Love your enemies. Blessed are the peacemakers. Put down your sword. Be as compassionate as God. Hunger and thirst for justice. Seek first God’s reign and God’s justice.’ As his followers, we are forbidden to support war, killings, executions, nuclear weapons, corporate greed, environmental destruction or violence of any kind.” <not everyone will agree>

“Jesus expects his followers to undertake similar bold action. He would want us to go to our own ‘Jerusalem temple’, turn over the unjust money changer’s tables. Not only would he expect us to be people of contemplative prayer, he would insist that we be people who resist injustice and work for God’s reign of peace, come what may.” <we’re not all John Dear - he sees Jesus a certain way>

Conclusion

16 In 2017, who and what will be the Jesus we follow? How will we show and describe Jesus to other people? How will we invite other people to follow Jesus? The Jesus we follow, will influence our beliefs, values and commitments. I’ve suggested Jesus was both a peacemaker and trouble maker. Will we also be peacemakers and trouble makers - working for justice and forgiveness - strengthening and restoring relationships in families, between neighbours, at work, in church and globally? Although we all follow Jesus, we will follow and share him in unique ways.