

Called Sons of God: Matthew 5:9 and the Teleology of Universal Peace

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Matthew 5:9 declares, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”*

While often read devotionally or moralistically, this single verse bears deep theological weight when viewed through the lens of divine identity, eschatological purpose, and salvific scope. The Beatitude does not merely commend human peacemaking—it reflects an alignment with God's very nature as the reconciler of all creation. In this reading, the promise to peacemakers is not a reward for merit, but a recognition of resemblance: those who make peace are participating in God's own work, and thus are identified with God's household. This paper explores how Matthew 5:9 fits into a broader theological framework supportive of universal reconciliation. We analyze the structure and tone of the Beatitudes, the character of God as revealed through Christ, and the New Testament's vision of peace as a cosmic end-state. The argument is not built on proof-texting, but on theological consistency and the narrative logic of divine teleology. Ultimately, we propose that peacemaking is not merely a moral act, but a glimpse into God's universal intent: to bring all things into harmony, and in doing so, to make all things truly God's children.

Keywords: Matthew 5:9, universal salvation, peacemakers, Beatitudes, sons of God, divine reconciliation, eschatology, teleology, theology of peace, New Testament ethics, cosmic redemption, divine identity, adoption theology, kingdom of God.

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1. Introduction: The Promise in a Beatitude

1.1 Framing Matthew 5:9 in its Literary and Theological Context

Matthew 5:9 belongs to the series of proclamations known as the Beatitudes, which open Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. These statements, each beginning with "Blessed are...", function not as moral exhortations but as pronouncements of divine favor upon particular states of being. They are theological announcements that reverse worldly expectations. In this context, the peacemakers are not merely people who avoid conflict, but those who actively seek reconciliation and restoration. Their "blessedness" is not contingent upon outcomes or recognition in the present world, but upon their alignment with the coming Kingdom of God.

The structure of the Beatitudes follows a pattern: a condition, followed by a promise. But the promise in Matthew 5:9 is distinct in that it is not a reward of comfort or future possession—it is a naming. "They shall be called sons of God" suggests a transformation of identity. In biblical thought, naming is not descriptive but creative. To be called something by God is to be constituted as that thing. Thus, this Beatitude functions not only as an affirmation but as an eschatological declaration: peacemakers are drawn into the familial and ontological space of God.

1.2 Why This Verse Has Been Overlooked in Salvation Discussions

Despite its rich implications, Matthew 5:9 has not played a central role in theological discussions of salvation. Systematic theologies often focus on verses that describe the mechanism of justification, the nature of grace, or the requirements of faith. As such, the Beatitudes are typically categorized under ethics rather than soteriology. This division—between moral conduct and salvific destiny—has rendered verses like Matthew 5:9 peripheral to debates on universal salvation.

Furthermore, the verse's simple structure and devotional tone have contributed to its underestimation. It is often read as a call to peaceful behavior or civic responsibility rather than as a glimpse into God's redemptive trajectory. The idea that peacemaking could reveal or participate in the divine nature—and that this nature tends toward universal peace—remains underexplored. Yet when examined within the broader biblical narrative of reconciliation, the verse opens up a profound theological vista.

1.3 Thesis: Matthew 5:9 Reveals the Divine Telos of Universal Reconciliation

This paper proposes that Matthew 5:9, when read in its full theological weight, discloses the telos—the ultimate aim—of divine action in the world: universal reconciliation. The Beatitude does not merely honor human efforts toward harmony. It identifies such efforts as aligned with the very character of God, who is revealed throughout Scripture as the original and final

peacemaker. By promising that peacemakers will be called sons of God, Jesus invokes the logic of family resemblance: those who act like the Father are revealed to be His children.

If God's identity is fundamentally reconciliatory, then the arc of history bends toward peace, not division. Peacemakers, therefore, are not exceptions but forerunners. Their blessedness is eschatological—anticipating a time when all creation is reconciled to its source. Thus, Matthew 5:9 does not offer a narrow commendation of individual virtue but opens a window into the cosmic endgame of salvation. In this reading, universal salvation is not a doctrinal excess but the necessary outworking of divine peacemaking fully realized.

2. Naming as Ontology: “They Shall Be Called Sons of God”

2.1 Jewish and Early Christian Significance of Naming

In Jewish and early Christian thought, naming is never a neutral or merely descriptive act. Names convey essence, vocation, and destiny. From the opening chapters of Genesis, to name is to exercise authority and to participate in creation. When God names light, day, night, and humanity itself, those names establish reality rather than label it after the fact. Likewise, when Abram becomes Abraham or Jacob becomes Israel, the new name does not describe a moral improvement already achieved; it inaugurates a new mode of existence and a new relational status with God.

Within this framework, divine naming is performative. To be named by God is to be drawn into a role within God's unfolding purposes. Early Christian communities inherited this understanding, applying it to concepts such as adoption, sonship, and new creation. To be called a “son of God” is therefore not a poetic compliment but a declaration of belonging and resemblance. It implies participation in God's household and alignment with God's nature. When Matthew 5:9 promises that peacemakers “shall be called sons of God,” it invokes this deep ontological tradition rather than a metaphorical or honorific label.

2.2 Identity as Bestowed, Not Earned

The structure of the Beatitude subtly resists a merit-based interpretation. The text does not say, “Blessed are the peacemakers because they have earned sonship,” but rather that they will be called sons of God. The emphasis falls on recognition rather than acquisition. This distinction matters theologically. Sonship, throughout the New Testament, is portrayed as something bestowed through grace rather than achieved through moral perfection.

Peacemaking, in this sense, does not function as a qualifying exam for divine adoption. Instead, it functions as evidence of alignment with a preexisting divine orientation. Those who make peace reveal that they are already resonating with the character of God. The naming follows the

resonance. This logic mirrors broader Christian claims that salvation is not a wage earned through correct behavior but a gift that transforms identity from the inside out.

This bestowed identity also carries an eschatological dimension. The future tense “shall be called” suggests a fuller recognition yet to come. The present act of peacemaking anticipates a future unveiling of identity, when what is now partial becomes fully manifest. This future recognition does not narrow the scope of salvation; it gestures toward its completion.

2.3 Peacemaking as Participation in Divine Being

If sonship is fundamentally about resemblance, then peacemaking must be understood as more than ethical conduct. It is participation in divine being. God, as revealed in the biblical narrative, is not a distant adjudicator of conflicts but the initiator of reconciliation. Divine action repeatedly moves toward restoring relationship, healing division, and overcoming enmity. Peacemaking, therefore, is not simply obedience to a command; it is imitation of divine life.

In this light, Matthew 5:9 portrays peacemakers as those who have begun to live in harmony with God’s own mode of existence. Their actions echo God’s action. They do not create peace ex nihilo, but they align themselves with the peace God is already bringing into being. This participatory understanding dissolves the sharp divide between divine action and human response. Peacemakers are neither saviors nor mere moral agents; they are co-workers in a reconciliatory process that originates in God.

Such participation has universal implications. If peacemaking reflects the nature of God, and if God’s nature is not selective but comprehensive, then the trajectory of divine action points toward peace without remainder. The Beatitude thus gestures beyond individual spirituality toward a cosmic horizon. To be called a son of God is to be named into a destiny where peace is not partial or provisional, but complete. In this way, peacemaking becomes both a present vocation and a sign of the future reconciliation of all things.

3. The Divine Archetype: God as the First Peacemaker

3.1 Tracing Reconciliation Themes in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures

The concept of God as a peacemaker is not limited to the New Testament but emerges across the entire biblical canon. In the Hebrew Scriptures, peace—*shalom*—is more than the absence of conflict; it signifies completeness, flourishing, and restored relationship. God is repeatedly portrayed as the one who restores order out of chaos, who leads His people into covenantal peace, and who judges not to destroy, but to heal. In Numbers, God is invoked to “*lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace*”—a benediction that frames peace as a divine gift and a sign of favor.

Prophetic literature expands this theme. Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom, where wolves dwell with lambs and swords are beaten into plowshares, presents peace as the eschatological horizon. Jeremiah laments false prophets who declare "peace, peace" when there is no peace, indicating that true peace must be divinely grounded, not politically manufactured. Throughout, reconciliation is never a human achievement alone—it is initiated, sustained, and completed by God. This prepares the theological ground for understanding the New Testament's vision of Christ as the consummate reconciler.

3.2 Christ's Peacemaking Mission in the Gospels and Epistles

The identity and mission of Christ are presented in deeply reconciliatory terms throughout the New Testament. In the Gospels, Jesus not only preaches peace but enacts it. He forgives enemies, reconciles social outcasts, heals divisions between Jew and Gentile, and commands love even for persecutors. His teachings call for a radical reorientation of the self toward others, grounded in the Father's indiscriminate mercy. Peacemaking is not an optional ethic; it is the expression of divine likeness.

In the Pauline epistles, Christ's death and resurrection are framed not simply as judicial transactions but as acts of cosmic reconciliation. Paul declares that God was in Christ "reconciling the world to Himself," and that Jesus is "our peace," having broken down the dividing wall of hostility. Reconciliation here is vertical and horizontal: between God and humanity, and among human communities themselves. The cross is not just a symbol of forgiveness, but of the violent rupture that love overcomes.

This peacemaking is not just functional—it is ontological. Christ is the image of the invisible God, and if Christ's central action is reconciliation, then reconciliation must lie at the heart of God's nature. The call to imitate Christ is thus a call to participate in the same pattern of peace-making that defines divine life. This leads directly to the universalist insight: if God's identity is reconciler, then reconciliation cannot be limited without violating God's character.

3.3 Colossians 1:20 and the Reconciliation of All Things

Nowhere is the scope of divine peacemaking more explicitly universal than in Colossians 1:20, which proclaims that through Christ, God is pleased "to reconcile all things to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross." This verse expands the field of reconciliation beyond individual souls or human society. It points to a cosmic process, in which all created things are being drawn back into right relationship with their Creator.

The language of "all things" is emphatic and unqualified. It echoes the creation account in Genesis and reframes it in terms of restoration. What was fractured is being made whole, and what was alienated is being gathered. The agent of this restoration is not human striving, but divine self-giving. The cross becomes not a moment of divine wrath but of universal embrace.

Theologically, this sets a trajectory toward universal reconciliation as the fulfillment of God's peacemaking nature.

This vision does not deny judgment, struggle, or delay. Rather, it places them within a larger narrative arc whose end is peace. To read Matthew 5:9 in light of Colossians 1:20 is to recognize that peacemakers are participating in the same reconciling force that moves history itself. Their blessedness is not incidental—it is a disclosure of the future into the present. In this way, the Beatitude becomes a shorthand for the divine plan: a world where all things are reconciled, and all the reconciled are known as children of God.

4. Beatitudes as Eschatological Blueprints

4.1 The Beatitudes as Previews of the Kingdom

The Beatitudes serve as more than poetic blessings or ethical instructions. They function as *apocalyptic previews*—revelations of the inner structure of the Kingdom of God. Jesus speaks in declarative, not prescriptive, language: “Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are the peacemakers.” These are not commands to become these things in order to receive a reward, but proclamations that such people are already aligned with the reality of God's reign.

The structure of each Beatitude couples a present disposition with a future promise. This duality invites a reading in which the Beatitudes anticipate the transformation of the world according to divine logic. Where human societies see weakness, insignificance, or marginality, Jesus proclaims divine favor, exaltation, and inheritance. In this way, the Beatitudes invert conventional hierarchies and disclose the shape of the world to come. They are, in effect, the grammar of the Kingdom written in advance.

Matthew 5:9 fits seamlessly within this pattern. The peacemakers are named as blessed not because they win, dominate, or triumph by force, but because their work reveals the DNA of the future: a reconciled family under God. In recognizing peacemakers as “sons of God,” Jesus is identifying them as early adopters of the coming order.

4.2 Reversal, Revelation, and Fulfillment Logic

The Beatitudes operate according to a distinctive logic—one of *reversal*, *revelation*, and *fulfillment*. First, reversal: they overturn worldly measures of success. The poor inherit a kingdom, the mourners are comforted, the meek receive the earth. This is not a call for sentimental optimism; it is a radical revaluation of human history through divine eyes. In each case, what seems weak or low is in fact the doorway to the highest reality.

Second, the logic of revelation: the Beatitudes reveal the nature of God's justice and mercy in contrast to human systems of reward and punishment. They do not describe how the world works now, but how it truly works in the mind of God—and how it will increasingly work as the Kingdom becomes manifest. This revelatory function gives the Beatitudes their prophetic edge. They pierce through the illusion of worldly power and disclose a deeper order.

Finally, the logic of fulfillment: each promise points forward. The statements are not fulfilled in the present but in the eschaton—the ultimate completion of God's purposes. The blessings are partially realized in the present lives of the faithful, but they are eschatological in orientation. The future is not unknown; it is unveiled in these promises. This triadic logic—reversal, revelation, fulfillment—marks the Beatitudes as more than sayings. They are blueprints for the destiny of creation.

4.3 Matthew 5:9 as Foretaste of the End-State of Salvation

Within this interpretive framework, Matthew 5:9 emerges not merely as an ethical teaching but as a distilled vision of salvation's final shape. The promise that peacemakers "shall be called sons of God" is eschatological in both content and tone. It points toward a future recognition that reflects an already-present participation in God's life. The peacemakers do not become sons of God by virtue of external validation; they are revealed as such in the fullness of time.

This foretaste carries significant theological weight. If peacemaking is the mark of divine likeness, then the end-state of salvation must be a state of universal peace. In this vision, salvation is not merely escape from wrath or entry into paradise, but reconciliation across all levels: between God and humanity, within the self, among peoples, and throughout creation. Matthew 5:9 hints at this integration without explicitly spelling it out—yet within the wider context of Jesus's teachings and the New Testament's arc, the trajectory is clear.

The Beatitude thus becomes a window into God's ultimate desire for the world. It does not describe a limited class of the saved, but a qualitative reality that God intends to bring about universally. If all who are reconciled are sons of God, and if God's will is to reconcile all things, then this verse serves as a veiled promise of universal salvation. It does not argue the point—but it sings it, quietly, like a song whose melody haunts the future.

5. Peace as Teleology: What God Ultimately Wills

5.1 Peace as the *Telos* of Divine Action

To speak of peace as the *telos* of divine action is to assert that reconciliation is not a peripheral or contingent aspect of God's will, but its very culmination. *Telos*, in theological and philosophical usage, refers to the ultimate end or goal toward which all movement tends. When

Scripture presents God as a reconciler, healer, and restorer, it is not merely portraying divine preference, but revealing divine purpose.

Peace in this vision is not simply the cessation of hostilities, but the restoration of wholeness. The biblical notion of *shalom* carries connotations of completeness, harmony, health, and right relationship. When Jesus blesses the peacemakers and identifies them as sons of God, He is not suggesting an ethical achievement so much as pointing to their alignment with this divine movement toward wholeness.

Every act of divine self-disclosure in Scripture—creation, covenant, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and new creation—can be read as a movement toward reconciliation. Even divine judgment, often viewed in opposition to peace, can be understood as a refining fire whose ultimate purpose is restoration, not annihilation. Thus, peace is not a secondary theme, but the very arc of divine intentionality. God is not merely a judge, teacher, or king, but the one who brings all things back into unity through peace.

5.2 From Individual Virtue to Cosmic Reconciliation

In moral theology, peace is often treated as an individual virtue—something cultivated through patience, humility, or nonviolence. While this is not incorrect, it is incomplete. The biblical witness consistently expands the scale of peace from personal disposition to communal life, and ultimately to cosmic reconciliation.

This movement from the personal to the universal is essential. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus does not separate the internal from the external, or the individual from the communal. The peacemakers are not isolated moralists but agents of Kingdom reality. Their actions are eschatologically significant. What begins as an inward disposition toward harmony becomes a social practice, and finally a metaphysical principle reflective of the structure of divine purpose.

The Apostle Paul pushes this even further. In his letters, reconciliation through Christ is not merely for individuals, but for all creation. Human divisions—between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free—are not simply bridged for pragmatic coexistence, but abolished as part of a new creation. The same logic extends to creation itself. The groaning of the cosmos in Romans 8 is not the cry of the doomed but of the expectant. The final vision is not escape, but renewal. Thus, the individual pursuit of peace becomes participation in a cosmic trajectory.

5.3 Echoes in Isaiah, Revelation, and Pauline Theology

The theme of universal peace resounds across key biblical texts, forming a coherent vision of what God ultimately wills. In Isaiah, the promise of peace is foundational to the prophetic imagination. The vision of the wolf lying down with the lamb, the child playing safely near the serpent's den, and nations streaming to Zion to learn war no more—these are not mere poetic

ideals but eschatological declarations. The peace envisioned is structural and total, rooted in the reign of a just and righteous God.

The Book of Revelation, often misunderstood as a catalogue of destruction, ultimately culminates in the same peace. The chaos of judgment gives way to the descent of the New Jerusalem, a city without tears, without death, and without a temple—because God is present with His people. The healing of the nations by the leaves of the tree of life is a striking symbol of restorative peace. The end is not annihilation but reconciliation; not abandonment but intimate dwelling.

Paul's writings reinforce and systematize this vision. In Ephesians, Christ is described as having “broken down the dividing wall of hostility” and “creating in Himself one new humanity.” In Colossians, the reconciliation of “all things” through Christ's cross is presented as the logical conclusion of divine initiative. Peace is not a side effect of redemption; it is its heart. For Paul, the telos of God's action in Christ is not merely individual salvation, but the reconstitution of the entire cosmos in harmony with its Creator.

Taken together, these texts offer a sweeping vision in which the peacemakers of Matthew 5:9 are not only morally admirable—they are the advance emissaries of God's eschatological purpose. Their actions, aligned with the divine will, anticipate a time when peace is not the exception but the universal condition. In this way, the Beatitude opens out into a doctrine of reconciliation that spans creation, history, and eternity.

6. Counterpoints and Clarifications

6.1 Exclusive Readings: Merit-Based Identity and Bounded Salvation

A common counter-reading of Matthew 5:9 interprets it as an exclusivist statement: only those who make peace will be called sons of God, and therefore only those who meet this criterion are saved. This interpretation draws from a framework where salvation is understood as conditional—dependent upon certain moral, spiritual, or theological qualifications. In this model, “peacemaker” becomes a boundary marker, distinguishing the redeemed from the condemned.

Such a merit-based approach may appear to preserve moral seriousness, but it introduces theological tension with the broader witness of Scripture. The New Testament repeatedly portrays salvation as a gift of grace, not a wage for ethical achievement. Moreover, it risks distorting the Beatitude itself, which does not say that peacemakers *become* sons of God through their works, but that they *shall be called* sons of God—suggesting a revelatory, not transactional, framework.

Additionally, the merit-based reading can flatten the depth of the peacemaking identity. If peacemaking is reduced to a checklist for personal righteousness, its deeper theological resonance—as participation in the divine life—is lost. The Beatitude then becomes a moral gate rather than a window into God’s universal intention. An overly bounded reading thus limits not only who is saved, but what salvation means.

6.2 Does Peacemaking Require Prior Salvation or Enact It?

A further tension arises when considering the relationship between peacemaking and salvation: does one need to be “saved” in a prior sense before one can be a peacemaker, or is peacemaking itself a form of salvation in action? Traditional soteriology often insists on a sharp distinction: salvation comes first (through faith, grace, or sacrament), and moral transformation follows. In this view, peacemaking is a fruit, not a root.

Yet the structure of Matthew 5:9 complicates this binary. The Beatitudes as a whole do not present a clear chronological sequence, nor do they specify preconditions. Instead, they describe those who are already blessed—people in a certain state of being or action—and link that blessedness to a future manifestation of divine favor. The implication is that peacemaking is not the result of a prior legal status but an embodied alignment with divine reality.

If we understand salvation as union with God and the restoration of identity, then peacemaking can be seen not as a precondition or consequence of salvation, but as its *enactment*. To make peace is to live in the grain of the Kingdom; it is to begin participating in the reconciled order that salvation will ultimately consummate. This interpretation allows for a more organic relationship between faith, action, and identity, without collapsing them into a single causal chain.

6.3 Why Universalism Is Not Moral License

Perhaps the most frequent objection to universal salvation is the concern that it undermines moral responsibility. If all are eventually reconciled to God, what incentive remains for righteousness, repentance, or virtue? This critique assumes that fear of exclusion is the primary engine of moral behavior and that universalism must inevitably lead to complacency or indulgence.

This concern, however, misreads both the nature of universalist theology and the moral logic of the Gospel. Universal salvation does not mean the absence of transformation—it means that transformation is guaranteed. It is not a claim that all paths are equal or that justice is irrelevant, but that God’s reconciling work will not fail. It does not deny judgment, but interprets judgment as purifying rather than terminal.

In this light, peacemaking is not optional simply because salvation is assured. Rather, it is *necessary*, because it reveals and accelerates the divine purpose already in motion. The moral seriousness of peacemaking remains intact—not because it earns salvation, but because it anticipates and cooperates with it. Universalism does not erase the importance of virtue; it elevates virtue to a form of participation in the final reality. In this framework, Matthew 5:9 becomes a call to live now what will be true then—not to escape consequences, but to embody the character of God in advance of its universal manifestation.

7. Synthesis: The Moral Shape of Divine Victory

7.1 Peacemakers as Anticipatory Citizens of the Kingdom

Peacemakers are not merely virtuous individuals operating within a broken world; they are the advance emissaries of a redeemed world already coming into being. Their work of reconciliation is not ancillary to divine history—it is anticipatory. In seeking peace, they are aligning with the telos of creation and manifesting the character of a world reordered by God. In this sense, peacemakers embody a form of citizenship that is not rooted in earthly nation-states, but in the eschatological Kingdom.

This anticipatory citizenship is marked by its countercultural visibility. It resists retaliation, refuses domination, and undermines enmity by absorbing it. The work of the peacemaker is costly because it reveals a deeper allegiance—to the future order of God rather than the present order of violence and fear. When Jesus declares them “blessed,” He is not merely praising them, but identifying them as those who already inhabit the values of the world to come. Their sonship is a preview of universal adoption, a signal that God’s household is expanding and that reconciliation is not an isolated event but a coming norm.

7.2 Peace as the Mark of Final Belonging

If peace is the aim of divine action, and if peacemakers are called sons of God, then peace itself emerges as the distinguishing mark of final belonging. In this frame, salvation is not a label conferred arbitrarily, nor a legal status granted through external compliance, but a lived participation in the logic of divine love. Peacemakers do not earn their belonging—they disclose it. Their conduct in the present moment mirrors the future orientation of redeemed existence.

This understanding reshapes common assumptions about who belongs to God and why. The boundary of belonging is not located in doctrinal affirmation alone, nor in ritual observance, but in participation in God’s reconciling work. To bear the mark of peace is to echo the character of the Father. The final state of salvation is not defined by separation, but by shared likeness.

Those who dwell in peace are not outliers—they are prototypes of what all creation is destined to become.

The radical implication of this vision is that peace is not just a byproduct of salvation; it is its defining characteristic. The identity of the saved is not secured through avoidance of wrath but through identification with mercy. Thus, final belonging is measured not by exclusionary boundary but by inclusive transformation. The sons of God are revealed by their resemblance, not their pedigree.

7.3 Toward a Theology of Merciful Identity

At the heart of Matthew 5:9 lies an invitation to develop a theology of identity shaped not by fear, exclusion, or moral conquest, but by mercy. The sons of God are those who resemble their Father, and the Father is merciful, reconciling, and just. To be named by God is to be drawn into that likeness, and that likeness is most clearly seen in those who pursue peace.

This theology resists both moral relativism and moral legalism. It recognizes that identity is formed in relationship—not only with God, but through our imitation of God’s posture toward the world. The merciful identity of the peacemaker is not simply an internal disposition; it is the fruit of a life bent toward the healing of rupture. Such healing does not deny judgment, but reframes it as restorative rather than retributive. God’s judgment becomes the exposure of all false identities and the invitation into the true one: sonship through peacemaking.

This vision extends beyond personal salvation to encompass a cosmic anthropology. The human being, made in the image of God, is destined for likeness with God, and that likeness takes shape in the economy of mercy. Universal reconciliation, then, is not the flattening of all distinction, but the fulfillment of all identity in the light of divine mercy. In such a world, to be saved is to be drawn fully into the identity of the peacemaker, and to be called—finally and forever—a child of God.

8. Conclusion: Peacemaking and the Family Resemblance of God

8.1 Rereading Matthew 5:9 as Universal Invitation

When revisited through the lens of divine teleology, Matthew 5:9 is not a narrow commendation of a moral elite but a universal invitation into the likeness of God. The Beatitude’s structure—“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”—is not conditional but declarative. It reveals what God values, what God enacts, and what God is drawing all creation toward.

Rereading this verse as a universal invitation does not diminish its ethical seriousness; it heightens it. The call to peacemaking is not restricted to those already “in” the fold, but extends outward as a beckoning into participation with the divine. The verse is not a filter but a mirror. It reflects back to us the shape of God's desire for the world: that all would bear the image of peace, and all would be called God's children—not by exclusion, but by transformation.

This rereading aligns with the broader arc of Scripture, where divine favor continually surprises, and boundaries are repeatedly transgressed by grace. In Matthew 5:9, the invitation is embedded in identity itself: to live as a peacemaker is to begin recognizing oneself as already being shaped by the family resemblance of God.

8.2 What Salvation Looks Like When It Resembles the Father

If God's nature is revealed most clearly in the act of reconciliation, then salvation is not merely transactional or judicial—it is relational and mimetic. It takes the shape of the one it comes from. To be saved, in this view, is not simply to be rescued from danger but to be drawn into resemblance with the Father. This resemblance is not cosmetic but moral, spiritual, and ontological.

When salvation resembles the Father, it looks like the extension of peace across boundaries. It looks like the restoration of enemies to friendship, of the alienated to belonging, of the fractured to wholeness. In Christ, the fullness of God's character is displayed, and that fullness is cruciform peacemaking. The sons of God are those who resemble this pattern—those who do as God does.

Matthew 5:9, then, does more than bless a moral behavior. It outlines the shape of final transformation. Salvation is not merely a status change—it is the gradual conformity of the human being to the reconciliatory image of the Father. In the end, salvation looks like a world of peacemakers, a family gathered not by sameness but by shared participation in the divine act of making peace.

8.3 Final Reflections on Peace as Ontology and Destiny

Peace is not merely a human ideal or religious virtue. It is ontology—it is what is most real in God. And if peace is what is most real in God, then it must also be the destiny of all that proceeds from God. The promise of Matthew 5:9 is not a passing moral insight; it is an eschatological key. It reveals both what is and what shall be.

Peacemaking, in this light, is not an optional behavior for the pious few. It is the active rehearsal of the world to come. It is what humanity looks like when it is fully aligned with its Creator. This is why the peacemakers are called sons of God—because in them, the future is already breaking into the present.

The final horizon of salvation is not simply forgiveness or escape. It is participation in divine likeness. Peace, as both process and outcome, is the defining characteristic of God's kingdom. To live in peace is to anticipate the end of all enmity, all division, all violence. To make peace is to become what God is, and to signal what God intends for all. In this way, Matthew 5:9 becomes not only a Beatitude, but a prophecy of the final victory of mercy.

9. References

Scriptural Sources

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- Talbott, Thomas. *The Inescapable Love of God* — a modern theological treatment emphasizing the universal scope of reconciliation.
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- Secondary discussions of Christian universalism as a theological school and doctrine.
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Patristic Commentary and Historical Antecedents

- Gregory of Nyssa — early proponent of universalist sentiment in the Church, describing an ultimate restoration of all creatures in Christ.
- Historical discussions of *apokatastasis* — the early Christian doctrine of restoration of all things, associated with Origen and other Fathers.
- Historical mentions of universalist thought in early Christianity and its reception by theologians.

Scholarship on Adoption and Naming

- Academic and biblical commentaries exploring the significance of divine naming practices in Jewish and early Christian contexts — for example, commentary on *Matthew 5:9* noting the cultural and theological background of sonship language.
- Works on ancient Jewish naming and inheritance customs as they inform New Testament soteriology and identity language (to be sourced from standard biblical commentaries and extra-biblical Jewish literature).

Contemporary Dialogue on Universalism

- Responses and critiques of universal reconciliation interpretations, particularly regarding *Colossians 1:20* and the limits of “all things reconciled” language.
- Articles and essays that frame the universal reconciliation debate within modern evangelical

theology, including questions about interpretation scope and soteriological boundaries.

- Discussion of universalist interpretations versus traditional exclusivist readings, illustrating interpretive diversity.

The author has published over 4,800 AI-assisted papers at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Douglas-Youvan/research> . Google Scholar has indexed these preprints, and if you want a particular reference, the AI mode of a Google search (Gemini) has efficiently catalogued these preprints.

