

Blessed Are the PeaceMAKERS

February 1, 2026

During one of Carrie Fisher's periods of sobriety, an interviewer asked her if she was finally happy, and she said: "Happy is one of the things I am most days."

I've been carrying that line around with me this week. Not happy all the time. Not happy in some denial-soaked, silver-linings-only, toxic positivity way. Just: happy is ONE of the things I am, most days.

Anne Lamott picked that line up this week as she reflected on the sheer messiness of being alive in a time like this—a time of real terror and real tenderness existing side by side. Deportations and cuddling kittens. Fascism and the beauty of gently falling snow. Protest signs and school field trips. Grief and gratitude all swirled together like when you order a mixed grill and get both your favorite seafood and some things that you're just going to push to the side of your plate.

And I thought: Yes. That's it. That's the spiritual weather so many of us are living in right now. Because here we are again, gathered as God's people, while the news from Minneapolis and other places sits heavy in our bodies. While ICE raids ripple fear through immigrant communities. While some of us are showing up to work, making dinner, caring for kids or elders, laughing at a show, and then suddenly feeling ashamed for laughing at all.

As if joy were a betrayal. As if rest were complicity. As if tenderness were a distraction from justice.

So today—after a couple of very prophetic Sundays—I want to offer something a little different. Not an escape. Not a softening of the truth. But a word that nourishes our souls so we can keep going. And it comes to us from Jesus, standing on a hillside, looking out at a crowd that knew oppression intimately, and saying something utterly counterintuitive: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Not blessed are the peace-keepers. Not blessed are the ones who keep things quiet. Not blessed are the ones who smooth things over so the comfortable can stay comfortable and nothing will really change.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

That distinction matters—especially now. Because peacekeeping is about maintaining order, even if the order is unjust. Peacekeeping says, "Let's not rock the boat." Peacekeeping says, "Now isn't the right time." Peacekeeping says, "Be patient," when patience is being demanded only of the oppressed.

But peacemaking? Peacemaking disrupts unjust tranquility. Peacemaking refuses to confuse calm with justice. Peacemaking names harm truthfully—and then insists on a different way forward.

That's exactly what Micah is doing in our first reading. God calls the people into court. The mountains and hills are summoned as witnesses. And then God asks a devastatingly simple question: "What have I done to you? How have I wearied you?"

The people respond with anxiety: What do you want from us? More sacrifice? More offerings? More performance? And God answers with words many of us could recite from memory: “What does the Holy One require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly. Not one without the others. Not justice stripped of compassion. Not kindness emptied of courage. Not humility that turns into silence.

This is not a checklist for moral superiority. It’s a rhythm for a whole life. And here’s where I think many of us are struggling right now. We are living under conditions of persistent chaos and ongoing trauma. And when trauma persists, our nervous systems start to believe that we must always be “on.” Always vigilant. Always informed. Always outraged. Always ready.

But our bodies and spirits were not made for that. Some of you have named to me—out loud or quietly—that you don’t know how to hold everything anymore. That you oscillate between wanting to show up for every cause and wanting to crawl under the covers. That you feel guilty when you rest and exhausted when you don’t.

There’s wisdom for this, actually, from grief counseling. It’s called the dual process model, and it teaches that healthy coping requires oscillation—movement back and forth. There is loss-oriented work: protesting, mutual aid, calling representatives, donating, checking on neighbors, staying informed, standing in solidarity with those being crushed. And there is restoration-oriented work: crafting, cooking, dancing, praying, laughing, watching something silly, letting a five-year-old tickle you until you can’t breathe, moving your body, making soup.

We are not meant to choose one. We are meant to move between them.

Anne Lamott says, “Life is a mixed grill.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

And peacemakers, it turns out, are people who know when to stand in the streets and when to sit down and breathe. People who refuse both despair and denial. People who understand that justice work without spiritual nourishment eventually turns brittle—and that spirituality without justice turns hollow.

Nadia Bolz-Weber puts it this way: “There’s a lie that tender people are especially prone to believing: that if I really loved the world, I’d be able to carry it.” But none of us can carry it all. Each of us can carry some of it.

Bolz-Weber tells the story of ICE setting up in the parking lot behind a Lutheran church in Minneapolis this week, not realizing the quilters were there that day. The women confronted them, asking if they were proud of what they were doing—and suggesting that, if so, they should go set themselves up in front where more people could see them.

They left.

She goes on, “So maybe peacemaking in a heavy world doesn’t mean absorbing its full weight. Maybe it means setting down what isn’t ours, and lifting the one small, specific thing that is.

Tending a body. Telling the truth. Making enough soup to feed yourself—and pouring a little extra into a jar to drop off for a neighbor. Showing up to a demonstration even if you've never been to one. Loving fiercely where your feet actually are. Taking a video of anything you see that's unjust, even if your hands are shaking. Resisting despair and all its empty promises.”

In preparing for our Adult Education class this morning, I ran across the work of Dr. Carl Ellis Jr. and, in particular, his “Biblical Approach to Protest.” He reminds us that peacemaking looks like telling the truth without dehumanizing the people you’re telling it to. It looks like refusing ad-hominem hatred while still naming real harm. It looks like holding the moral high ground—not by being polite, but by being righteous in the deepest sense: doing right by God and by one another.

Jesus does not bless the passive. He blesses the courageous. But notice this, too: the Beatitudes are not instructions. They are blessings. Jesus doesn’t say, “Try harder to be poor in spirit.” He says, “Blessed are you when you already are.” He doesn’t say, “Go manufacture grief.” There will be enough of that in life. He says, “Blessed are those who mourn.” He doesn’t say, “Work yourself into exhaustion for justice.” He says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst”—because hunger itself tells the truth about what matters.

And then: “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Not because they will fix everything. Not because they will win quickly. But because they belong to God. They bear the family resemblance. Which means this, friends: You do not have to carry the whole world. You do not have to be everything to everyone. You do not have to choose between tenderness and resistance.

Happy may be one of the things you are, most days. Angry may also be one of the things you are, most days. And so might be grieving. Hopeful. Afraid. Determined. All of it can belong.

So if today you are weary, receive this blessing as nourishment. If today you are ready to act, receive it as grounding. If today you are distracted by the very real things going on in your life, receive this as permission to deal with what you need to deal with.

And if today you feel torn between joy and outrage, hear this good news: God is not asking you for more sacrifice. God is asking you to stay human. To do justice. To love kindness. To walk humbly. To make peace—not by keeping things quiet, but by telling the truth in love, resisting despair, and lifting the small, specific piece of the world that fits your hands.

Blessed are you. Blessed are we. And blessed is the work ahead—because it is God’s work, and we do not do it alone.

May it be so. Alleluia and Amen.

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Micah 6:1-8; Matthew 5:1-12
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