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Revd Asangba! Thank you for your graciousness. It is indeed a privilege to be here. In December 1990, we worshipped in the Ao Naga Church in Kohima, when we visited Nagaland to celebrate the 70th birthday of my late father-in-law.

28 years ago I was a very young man, and was very humbled to be asked to share from the Word of God; I feel just as humbled now, Rev. Asangba, to be encouraged to share once again from the Word of God.

I am married to a Naga lady and I am grateful for your generous welcome to receive me as an adopted son of Nagaland. Both our children have taken the best of Nagaland and Orissa (my ancestral roots), and we are grateful to God, that the blessing of their grandparents on both sides of their family, has made them active citizens in the Kingdom of God, and active citizens in the world in which they live.

Our church has been practicing memorising Scripture, starting with the Beatitudes, and I would like to share with you, a short reflection.

As Jesus went through Galilee teaching, preaching and healing, crowds followed. The crowds were not a few hundred, they were in the many thousands!

Matthew sets the scene in the opening verse of chapter 5, *“One day as He saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.”*

The crowds were taking up a lot of Jesus' time and He is concerned, the disciples were not getting one-to-one personal time with Him, so He climbed up a mountainside and called His disciples to gather around Him and He started teaching them in the old fashioned way of using the surrounding countryside as a visual aid, as a source for illustration and example.

Looking at the gathering crowds, seeing them, knowing what is in each person's heart, He says to the disciples at His feet, *Among these people are those who are so poor in their spirit, they are completely drained of courage and strength, but you know what, they are blessed because all of the resources of the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs*

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to have and enjoy. There are also those who are mourning, who deep in their soul, longing for someone dearly loved, perhaps a relationship not yet realised, or maybe a precious relationship lost. Guess what? They too are blessed, because I assure you, they will be comforted and they will know the deep joy of being consoled!, and so on. In a few short verses, Jesus describes the human condition, and tells the disciples, no matter who you are, what the circumstances of your life, everyone has access to God's blessing in their time of need.

There is one Beatitude which for many years has grabbed my attention. If Jesus would choose one Beatitude to summarise both, His mission on earth, and our calling in life, it would be: *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called Children of God!*<sup>1</sup>

It is important at the outset to recognise, Jesus is not teaching His disciples to first **become** peacemakers, and then God will grant them the title of "Children of God", God would pin a badge recognising them as "Children of God".

Many people have **tried** to be peacemakers. World leaders, Church leaders, captains of industry, leaders in science and medicine, and many others have **tried** to be **peace-makers**, stepping into difficult, often impossible situations, to bring peace.

The Swedish industrialist, Alfred Nobel, who invented dynamite, was horrified his invention would bring death to people and destroy land, he set up the Nobel Peace Prize to reward those whose work brought the greatest benefit to mankind. He wanted to be a peacemaker, but **being** a peacemaker does not automatically make a person, "a son of God"!

Some people are known as **architects** of peace, who design a system by which peace might be achieved. Most times the system breaks down and a fragile peace is lost.

Some people are remembered as having **master-minded** peace. The peace they offer to opposing groups, however, is not from the **Master's Mind**, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:9

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opposing groups cannot accept it because they know the offer of peace cannot be kept alive.

Some people want to be remembered as one who **initiated** peace, but once again, their efforts lack authority because it comes from the human heart and mind, and therefore cannot be sustained.

We have a very wrong idea that **we** can bring back the peace God established in creation, by **doing** things to please God.

But the human heart is inclined to do things for personal advantage, because we do not trust our fellow human being to do the right thing for us!

Today, all across the United Kingdom, Nagaland is made famous. In a few hours from now, in graveyards, in villages, towns and city centres across the United Kingdom, where a memorial cross is planted and the names of those from that town or village who went to war and never returned is written on the stone, people read the "Kohima Epitaph".

We were at the Kohima War Graves this morning, all 11 of us, on the 11th day of the 11th month, to see for ourselves, and read aloud to ourselves, those famous words inscribed in stone, **"When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today"**.

Blessed are the peacemakers, who went to war believing, war will bring peace, we give thanks today, they through death, are at peace.

Blessed are the peacemakers, who stayed at home, mostly young women who whispered in the ear of their beloved the parting words, "Be safe my Darling; stay safe, and come home!", we give thanks for their sacrifice which was just as painful.

Blessed are the peacemakers, who were born into families without a father, because their father did not come back from the theatre of war, or perhaps he did, but the pain of his suffering was so great, he did not want talk about it anymore, some even discarded their belief in a loving and caring God.

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Peace escapes us, because we do not practice being sons of God. And we are not peacemakers, because we are not at peace with our Master!

The real reason peace escapes us, is because we have not been transformed by our Master!

We think and hope, covering up our old lives with new clothes, others may respect us. It does not take long for those who know us and know us well, to see through our new clothes and discover:

- the yellow undershirt of cowardice
- the red scarf of stained blood
- the green hat of envy
- the purple shirt/blouse of self pride
- the sky blue jacket of fantasy living: who I could be, what I could have...
- and underneath it all, the black coat of deceit.

Jesus said it as simply as He could, it is the sons of God who are, in fact, peacemakers.

How do we become sons of God? First be at peace with your Father in Heaven through repentance. Jesus made this possible on the cross.

Second, be at peace with your family, your parents, your spouse and your children. I address men, we men are a proud people and our society tells us we must control our family. The Bible teaches us, we men must be controlled by the Holy Spirit; only then can our wives learn to trust their husband's leadership, and husbands practice loving their wives as Christ loved the Church.

Finally, be at peace in your community; let everyone see how you live life as a transformed child of God, and people will ask you to teach them to live like a son of God!

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As the world remembers Kohima this morning, and reads the Kohima Epitaph, *When you go home, tell them of us and say, "For your tomorrow, we gave our today"*, may I encourage you to realise, here in your midst, you have the great message of peace the world needs to hear, and you can be peacemakers to the world, *As you go home from here today, tell anyone you meet, "For your tomorrow, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, gave His today!"*

May it delight our Father in Heaven, to bring you into repentance and clothe each of you with a new identity as His Son, His Daughter, and then may it please Him to trust you to be His peacemaker, for the world to see the glory of Your Father. The only sustainable peace there is, is the Peace of God, free from worry and freed of doubt; God's peace is far more wonderful and satisfying than the human mind can understand.

Blessed are you, God's peace-makers! He will keep your thoughts and your hearts at rest, as you live your life trusting in Christ Jesus.

***Blessed indeed are all peacemakers!***

**AMEN.**