**HOLY SAVIOUR, BITTERNE BIBLE STUDY – WEEK BEGINNING JUNE 21st (Beatitudes 7)**

*We continue to look at what the Beatitudes teach us about Christian character, something which the current crisis may well be helping to shape!* ***Jot down your thoughts about the questions in the spaces provided*** *–* ***and it would be really good to share them with others.*** *Phone, Skype, email some members of your homegroup or a friend and/or email me your thoughts (* brianparfitt@btinternet.com *).* ***Brian Parfitt***

How do you react to conflict or disagreement? Where would you put yourself between ‘Shut my eyes and try to pretend it doesn’t exist’ and ‘I’m always up for a good fight!’?

**This week we are thinking about ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.’ (Matthew 5.9) God is the supreme peace-maker. In the New Testament there are numerous references to ‘the God of peace’.** (See for example Romans 15.33, I Thessalonians 5.23 and Hebrews 13.20.) **Christ died to deal with sin and the separation from God it caused, so that we might have peace with God. God pours his peace into our hearts. We are then called to reflect his character by being peace-makers and so prove to be God’s children. That could be by helping people find peace with God, by sharing the gospel message, and also by helping them find peace with one another, by acting as agents of reconciliation. While Christians have not always been good peacemakers there are excellent examples of this in recent years in South Africa, Northern Ireland and elsewhere.**

**To explore what this Beatitude means we are going to look at some passages from the Bible. *(If it’s helpful you might look at them over a few days, one at a time, rather than all at once.)***

**Read 2 Corinthians 5.16-21.**How has God acted to bring about peace with people who have sinned? What task has then been entrusted to us? How do we go about helping people be at peace with God?

One big division the early Christians were aware of was that between Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) who tended to despise each other. **Read Ephesians 2.11-18.** Here Paul is addressing Gentiles in Ephesus who had become Christians. What does Paul say about the way that both Jew and Gentile come to know peace with God? What is the impact of this on the relationship between previously divided people? How might that be demonstrated in relationships in the life of the church today?

**Read 1 Peter 3.8-12.** How is the character of peacemaking people described in verses 8 and 9? What can we learn from the words of Psalm 34.12-16 quoted in verses 10-12 about the way God is with those who seek peace?

How does Jesus tell us in **Matthew 5.23-26 and 18.15-17** to deal with someone from whom we are divided or who sins? The examples Jesus gives are not ones we can apply to the letter in our situations – can you think of practical ways in which we can be peacemakers in situations we might face, for example,

- in the family?

- in the life of the church

- at work?

- in society?

Look back at what you have learnt from ***each of the passages*** we have looked at. What have you discovered about reflecting the character of the God of peace and being a peacemaker?