

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Matthew, the 5th chapter, verses 1 – 9. This is our third week in our seven-week series on the beatitudes, Jesus's sermon on the mount. Today our focus is on the meek.

Mt 5:1-9 5 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

NIV

Jesus opened up his heart and fully poured out his mind upon us here in today's scripture through the beatitudes from his sermon on the mount. Our Lord's intimate teachings to *us*, with no barriers between. To **US**, *his* disciples, *his* laborers, the people who are to be the *right-hand people* in **HIS** task. The lessons contained in the Sermon on the Mount, is no *chance piece of teachings*. They are the grave and solemn utterances of central things, core characteristics of our Christian existence. Living in God's blessings by *following Christ*. As we have discovered, the word blessed in these beatitudes doesn't just mean emotional happiness, it's referring to the *favor* of God *upon us*. The benefits of God's grace, and to have this favor, this grace, **this** is the *blessed life*. *This* is the truly *happy life*. What we need to realize here, is that this sermon is much greater than we think. It is the *official teaching* of Jesus; it is the *summary* of the teaching which Jesus habitually gave to *his inner circle*. The Sermon on the Mount is nothing less than the *concentrated memory* of many hours of heart to heart **communion** between the disciples and their Master. A heart to heart *communion* from *our* master, to *us*.

We are entering now into the third blessing of the beatitudes where Jesus declares in Matt 5:5 **Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.**

This is an amazing promise from our Lord, that he gives us. We have learned how the characteristics of the beatitudes describe the true character of his disciples. We have learned from the previous two blessings about our *poverty of spirit* and our *mourning* that is to come from our sin. How we are to be brought low, before we can be brought high. Once we have reached that level of spiritual poverty, and *true mourning* for our sin is achieved, humility is created within us and the resulting fruit that is produced, declared in today's blessing, is *meekness*. It's very interesting that Jesus even uses the very same word meekness, of **himself** in the Gospel of Matthew, the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter, beginning in verse 28 he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. "

Jesus himself is meek. So, what is this meekness? In our modern English idiom, the word meek is hardly one of the honorable words of life. Nowadays it carries with it an idea of spinelessness, and subservience, and mean-spiritedness. It paints the picture of a submissive and ineffective creature. I looked up the definition of meek in a modern Dictionary; and interestingly enough we find two distinctively different definitions.

The first definition is - humbly patient as if under provocation from others. The second definition is – overly submissive or compliant; spiritless, tame. Two very different ideas, isn't it? So, which is the biblical one? Clearly the first one is much more aligned with scripture teachings about meekness. Being meek is not being a pushover. Being meek is not being the "Yes man" that says yes to everyone. The scriptures define that kind of person as a "people pleaser." Rather, the meek person demonstrates meekness by *bearing* with *others*. Bearing *patiently* with others. Paul asks us urgently, and fervently in Eph 4:1-2 " I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love " When we are meek, it helps us bridle anger and frustration when we are sinned against. If you are meek, you will be slow to speak and quick to listen. You withhold judgement until you have all the facts. You will be careful to demonstrate love towards others even when they don't demonstrate love towards you. You will be exceedingly patient with others if you are meek. Meek people also forgive, this is the second beseeched of us from God through Paul in the very last verse of Eph 4, verse 32 " Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. "

Remember the meekness of Jesus Christ as he went to the Cross, as they spit in his face, they reviled him, they cursed him, they blasphemed him. He did not revile them, but like a gentle lamb he did not open his mouth. Jesus weathered the greatest opposition to himself. The question brothers and sisters is will we weather great opposition to ourselves and do so with meekness?

It so happens that the word meek- in Greek – *praus* (prah-ooce') was one of the great Greek ethical words. Aristotle claims it to be a virtue, and had a great deal to say about the quality of meekness. It was Aristotle's fixed method to define every virtue as the mean between two extremes. On the one hand, there was the extreme of excessiveness; on the other hand, there was the extreme of defectiveness; and in between there was the virtue itself, the happy medium. Aristotle defines meekness as the mean between excessive anger, and excessive angerless. As Aristotle saw it, meekness is the happy medium between too much and too little anger. And so the first possible translation of this beatitude is; BLESSED IS THE PERSON WHO IS ALWAYS ANGRY AT THE RIGHT TIME, AND NEVER ANGRY AT THE WRONG TIME..

But when is the right time to be angry, and when is the wrong time to be angry? We can say that it is never right to be angry for any insult or injury done to us personally; *that* is something that no Christian must ever resent; but that it is often right to be angry at injuries done to other people. Selfish anger is always a sin; selfless anger can be one of the great moral dynamics of the world.

But the Greek word for meekness, ***praus*** (prah-ooce') has a second standard Greek usage. It is the word for an animal that has been domesticated, which has been trained to obey the word of command, which has been learned to answer to the reins. It is the word for the animal which has learned to accept control. So, the second possible translation of this beatitude is: BLESSED IS THE PERSON WHO HAS EVERY INSTINCT, EVERY IMPULSE, EVERY PASSION UNDER CONTROL. BLESSED IS THE PERSON WHO IS ENTIRELY SELF-CONTROLLED.

The moment we say that though, knowing that it is not US that is in control, but God that is in control, we see immediately that that translation needs change. It is not so much the blessing of a person who is self-controlled, because we know that is beyond our capacity; rather it is the blessing of the person who is completely *God*-controlled, for only in his service do we find our perfect freedom, and in doing his will do we find our peace. Meekness is acting humbly towards God and men.

How do we demonstrate that humility towards God? We submit to the providence of God in all things. No matter what the circumstances the meek person recognizes God's control, God's power or authority, and God's wisdom in whatever he ordains.

The one who is meek is able to say whatever my God ordains is right. It's easy to believe in the sovereignty of God on paper, but it can be difficult to believe in the sovereignty of God in the trenches, can't it? We sometimes want to question "is this really wise what he is doing? Is he really caring about me in this? Is he really working good in this?" *These* are the temptations that come into our minds naturally, but the meek person is able to *maintain faith* that God is wise in whatever he ordains. He is right.

Secondly the meek person submits to the word of God. So, when the scriptures are brought to bear, you humbly receive it, take it as something for you, and you practice it. Hebrews 4 tells us that the word of God is sharper than any double-edged sword, that its designed to pierce, that its designed to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart, that its designed to drill in to us. In other words, the Word of God is a surgical instrument on us. But when the word is *preached*, or when we *read the bible*, are we thinking about that? Are we remembering that the word is designed to *pierce*, and to speak to *us* in particular?

Do we ever challenge or question “is this speaking to *me*? Is this meant for *my* situation? Is this meant to pierce *my* heart?” This is the temptation we get sometimes. To think that the Word is speaking about everybody else’s situation but ours at that particular moment.

But if we are meek, and humbly receive the Word we are going to be looking to receive something for us. We are going to be saying “ I *know*, I just **know** there is *something* in the word for **me**, *here*, that I need. The meek person says I know that the word of God speaks to me. Right here, right now.

Meekness contains gentleness towards men, and the attitude of **humility** toward God, which springs from the *recognition* that **God is in control**. This humility that is born from meekness is critical, because without humility, there can be no such thing as love; because the very beginning of love is a sense of unworthiness. Without humility, there can be no true religion, for all true religion begins with a realization of our own weakness and our need for God. Without humility, we can’t *learn*, or be *teachable*, because the first step to learning is the *realization* of our own ignorance. Ignorance, a lack of knowledge is only a bad thing if we choose to do nothing about it. How can we be teachable if we are already convinced of our own knowledge? No one can teach a person who already knows everything.

We can only become a mature Christian when we realize that we are the creature and God is the creator, and without God we can do nothing.

We must realize that meekness is due to a person's conscious choice. It is *strength* and *courage* under control, coupled with *kindness*.

Meekness is a *fruit of the spirit* when we are genuinely lead and guided, by the spirit as Paul declared in Gal 5:22-23 **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

Now, the promise that Jesus gives us here is huge. The meek will inherit the earth. This is literally a world class promise. Right? You get the whole earth! This is something we want to set our sights on, this is exciting! An often-forgotten teaching of scripture, is that we are not *just* looking forward to heaven conceived as a spiritual staple, we are looking forward to the new heaven, and the new earth. Our final destination is not just heaven as a spiritual state, our final destination is a renewed earth reunited to heaven, the dwelling place of God, perfectly united together. Our final destination is a physical existence, in a resurrected body. 2 Pe 3:13 **13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.**

Are you looking forward to that new earth without sickness, without war, without famine, without sadness? *This* is what *we* are looking forward to.

The earth is already a very beautiful place, isn't it? Even in the fallen state, this is an amazing place that God has created. Try to imagine an earth wherein righteousness dwells, there's no other problems. How much more beautiful might it be! It's something ***amazing*** to think about. And those that *inherit the earth* will be a lot like Jesus. They will be those that are *mEEK*. *Lowly of heart*. *Showing gentleness*, and *patience* with others. So, my challenge to you today is to ask the God of all grace, to make you meek. So that you will humbly submit to God, and walk in humility towards others. In order that you may claim your inheritance, the new, restored earth.

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for the words of Christ,

that help us to see those things that we are truly to desire.

that help us to see those things that are truly important.

We ask that you forgive us for questioning your providence,

for ignoring your word,

and not acting in a humble way towards you,

and our fellow mankind.

We ask that you make us meek so that we will humbly submit to your word Lord,

That we will be those who are humble and contrite,

trembling at your word.

We ask that you will give us this meekness,

so that we will walk in the footsteps of Christ.

That we would demonstrate patience as we deal with others,

and that we would forgive as you have forgiven us.

- In Christs name we do pray,            Amen.