

"Blessed Are the Meek"

Scripture Passages: 1) **Matthew 7:24-27**
2) **Psalm 37:1-11**
3) **Isaiah 11:1-12**
4) **Matthew 5:5**

Rock: We have been talking about building our house on rock. As we all know there are many different kinds of rocks, some are more stable than others. There are areas along the front range of Colorado where building houses is tricky. You can't just dig a hole, pour a normal concrete foundation and call it a day. Often the ground is unstable, it is sliding. In those areas you must dig a series of deep holes, each descending to the bedrock. You then pour those holes full of concrete so that the foundation sits on pillars reaching down to solid rock.

Rock climbers pay attention to what kind of rock they are climbing. Some rock is soft and crumbly, like sandstone. Those types of rock are dangerous. Climbing on some rock can lead to a great fall.

The Third Beatitude: The beatitudes are rocks of wisdom worth building our house on, but they may seem like upside-down wisdom to us. Today's verse is a prime example, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." That piece of wisdom is as counter-cultural as one can get. In our culture meek is not a flattering adjective. We don't send our kids off to school, "Remember to be meek today, dear." June Cleaver didn't even do that.

Inherit The Earth: We gain some insight about the meaning of this passage from the second half of the verse, "For they shall inherit the earth."

In Jesus' final charge to the disciples, a passage we now call the great commission Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Jesus is the ultimate authority, even here on earth. It may appear that the brash, powerful, wealthy, people run the earth, but Jesus says that is not the case. Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Similarly, a little further in Jesus' sermon he taught the disciples how to pray. He taught them to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus makes the connection here between earth and heaven. God is working to bring about a new heaven and a new earth. God is the one with the power, not those who consider themselves powerful. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." What kind of upside-down wisdom is this and how does it relate to our lives?

Translated as Meek: As we often experience, through translation, much is lost. Meek is a word rarely used in our culture and when it is used it would be considered a negative modifier. Again we don't very often hear parents say, "I am so proud of Susie's meekness." Or when we are looking for a job, we don't hear employers say, "We are looking for the best candidate with the personality trait of meekness." When you think of "meek" what comes to mind for you?

I find it interesting that the Greek word here is translated as meek. In Greek the word is "**Praus**". The Greek dictionaries I have translate "**Praus**" as either gentle or humble. Meek is never mentioned. Also interesting is the fact that this word only occurs four times in the New Testament three times in Matthew's Gospel and once in I Peter. So Matthew uses this word while the other Gospel writers do not. After using the word in the third Beatitude, the word next

shows up in chapter 11. We hear Jesus say there, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am *gentle* and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

In this passage “*Praus*” is translated as gentle and is used to describe Jesus, particularly in reference to those who choose to follow Jesus. Jesus is a gentle person to follow.

How many leaders do know you who would be described as gentle? How many bosses have you worked for who you would describe as gentle? Jesus’ leadership is radically different compared to most worldly leadership.

This passage also describes the upside-down nature of God’s Kingdom where the wise and the intelligent by the world standards don’t understand, but those considered infants by world standards do understand the ways of God. This passage is directly connected to the Beatitudes and to our Beatitude for today, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

The third usage of “*Praus*” in Matthew’s Gospel takes place in the description of Jesus Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. Jesus had sent two disciples to retrieve the donkey for the ride into Jerusalem. Then Matthew wrote, “This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ‘Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, *humble*, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

In this instance “*Praus*” is translated as humble and again is used to describe Jesus. Humble is used to describe the king. Again that is completely upside-down radical. How many humble kings have there been through history? How many kings would choose a young donkey as their triumphal entry vehicle? The early Christian theologian Jerome wrote, “For no one possesses this earth here below by gentleness, but only by pride.” 2000 years later would we write anything different?

What we see in Jesus is a poise, a poise not born of having to assert oneself in order to be strong. It is the poise of faith. There is a meekness that is almighty and a gentleness that is strong.

What we see in these two passages describes the nature of Jesus and illustrates the nature of God. These passages vividly illustrate the values of God which are the opposite of our culture. If nothing else, this verse should make us pause. Do we value what God values? Do we value what God values as a church? That is a critical question for us to consider. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Commentators Describe Meek: In Matthew’s Gospel meek equals strong gentleness or poised gentleness. Those are vastly different understandings of the word meek from what we normally think. Eduard Schweizer in his commentary wrote, “In the language of Jesus, the word can hardly be distinguished from ‘poor’. It has echoes of ‘insignificant, lowly,’ and may perhaps best be rendered ‘powerless’. It has nothing to do with weakness; but the strength these powerless ones have is derived from love rather than fear.”

As Jesus looked at the gathering crowd climbing the mountain he saw the people without a voice, the people without power, the people without land ownership. He saw the powerless of the world. But what if they were not powerless at all? What if from a Kingdom of God perspective they had all the power? What if from a Kingdom of God perspective they would

inherit the earth?

Aristotle defined meekness as the mean between two extremes. So he would say that meekness is the mean between excessive anger and excessive angerlessness. William Barclay takes this idea and expands it. So he explains that we could translate the beatitude as, “O the bliss of the person who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time, who has every instinct, and impulse, and passion under control because he/she is God-controlled, who has the humility to realize his/her own ignorance and his/her own weakness, for such a one is a ruler among the people!”

What we realize is that meek describes a person of impeccable character. Thus Paul writes in almost all of his letters to the church something like this, “By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, **gentleness**, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.”

The Message translates the 3rd Beatitude, “You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.”

Dale Bruner writes, “In a world threatened by terrorism macrocosmically and by the destruction of the family microcosmically the great need of the age is gentle-men and gentle-women. The 3rd Beatitude’s people are the hope of God’s earth.”

Conclusion: Are we content with who God has created us to be or are we always striving for something else? Are we people of poised gentleness or do we bully and belittle? Does our power come from love, or do we seek power by lording over others, or thinking ourselves better, or instilling fear in others? When our identity comes from our love of God the Father, our following of Jesus the Son, and our total dependence on the Holy Spirit then we are truly meek and we become the hope of the world.

The world would laugh at us for suggesting meekness as a foundation stone for our lives. Jesus says the meek become the hope of the world. Which truth will we choose? Which foundation stone will be build our lives upon? “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Amen.