

Happiness Through Meekness

Matthew 5:5

Pastor John Miller

The teaching of Jesus Christ was unique. I love the word “unique.” “Unique” in the dictionary means “one of a kind; having no equal.” That’s what it says in the New Testament. It says, “Never a man spoke like this man.” No one spoke like Jesus Christ. One of the magnificent things about Christ’s teaching was His use of paradoxical statements like, “The last shall be first,” “Give and it shall be given unto you,” and “He who finds his life shall lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake, shall find it.” Jesus said, “If you want to be the greatest in the kingdom, then become the servant of all.” These are paradoxical statements that really don’t compute with our mind. They are definitely counter to the culture we live in.

Perhaps the greatest paradoxical statement is found in our text today, Matthew 5:5. Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” This is a Beatitude that is so contrary to the world’s view. As we read that we think, Really? Does he know what he’s talking about?!

By the way, this has become proverbial in our world today: the idea of the meek inheriting the earth. But Jesus had a different meaning and a different idea than what we find in the world around us today. How can it be that a meek person could inherit the earth? We would think more of the self-assertive, the strong, the confident, the aggressive. We would think of the survival of the fittest. We think the powerful are the ones who are going to rule the earth. Some of us are going to get trampled underfoot. But notice that Jesus makes it clear in this Beatitude that it is the meek who will inherit the earth.

I think we have trouble with this Beatitude, because we don’t understand what it means to be meek. My prayer is that, as we look at this verse—and we’re going to delve deep into it—you will at least have an understanding of what Jesus meant by what He said by “meek.”

We need to remember that the Beatitudes describe those who are living in the kingdom of heaven. So whatever this meek person is, he or she is a believer in Christ; they are born again. The reason they are meek is because they have been regenerated, or they have been given new life by the Holy Spirit and it has produced this quality within. All of these Beatitudes describe kingdom living.

It’s interesting, as I pointed out in verse 3, that the blessing of the “poor in spirit” is the “kingdom of heaven.” When you get to verse 10, it’s “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” These are the two book ends of the Beatitudes. So verse 3 opens the Beatitudes with “theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” and verse 10 ends the Beatitudes with “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What we have in between these verses are the beautiful attitudes of those who are living in the kingdom of God.

I believe the words “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” are synonymous. When you become a Christian, you are taken out of darkness and translated into light. When you become

a Christian, you are taken out of Satan's kingdom and translated into God's kingdom. You become a King's kid. And "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

I want you to know, as well, that in understanding meekness, you need to back up to verse 3 to see that these Beatitudes are progressive. It starts in verse 3 with the "poor in spirit." What does it mean? It means those who admit they are bankrupt before God. The Bible teaches that "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There is no one righteous; no, not one." Of course, some are bigger sinners, but we're all in sin, we're all separated from God. So we're all poor in spirit. What it means is that there is nothing in us to commend us to God. We can't do anything to merit, earn or deserve God's blessings or favor. We're poor or bankrupt spiritually.

The next step out of this condition is in verse 4: they mourn. "Blessed are those who mourn." So seeing myself as bankrupt before God, I mourn over my condition. The Holy Spirit convicts me of my sin and shows me the judgment I'm facing and my need for righteousness.

The third step in this progression is that I am meek. So poor in spirit leads to mourning, and mourning leads to humility, which leads to meekness. So Jesus now comes to this paradox, and He says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

I want to give you some references to meekness in the Bible. The first one is in Colossians 3:12. Paul tells us, "As the elect of God...put on...meekness." That means that all Christians are to take on meekness. In 1 Timothy 6:11, Paul is writing to a pastor, Timothy, and tells him, "But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness," which is "meekness." So all Christians are to be meek, and spiritual leaders are to be marked by meekness. In 1 Peter 3:4, Peter's actually speaking to wives. He tells the women that they should put on the adornment of a "hidden person of the heart," the ornament of a "gentle..."—or "meek"—"...and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."

I realize I could have not picked that verse. I'm not trying to bash the ladies. But I've always loved that statement there where he's talking about the Christian wife, and she's struggling to submit to a husband. In the context, it's an unbelieving husband. Her husband's not a Christian, and it's very difficult for her. But Peter says that what you need to do is put on the ornament of a "meek and quiet spirit." And then Peter says that in God's sight, that is very valuable; it's very precious and it's of great price.

So all Christians are to be meek, all spiritual leaders are to be meek, wives are to be meek, and they're to be submissive unto their husbands.

Now what does it mean to be meek? What does it mean to be a meek person? If the meek are blessed or happy, we should want to understand what it means to be meek. First, let me explain what it does not mean. Meekness is not weakness. When we hear the word "meek,"

we think of a milk-toast kind of a wimpy guy who doesn't stand up for his rights. If he's in line, he always gets at the back of the line. "Go ahead of me; that's okay. I'll let you go first." He's just kind of a sissy. (I hate to use that word, because it's such a sensitive thing today.) Just know this: it's not easy to explain meekness in our "politically correct" culture that we live in today. (Have mercy on me.)

But let me explain something. There are two people in the Bible who are actually called meek. One was Moses and the other one was Jesus. And neither one was weak. Moses takes the Ten Commandments and breaks them. And he goes into Pharaoh's court and rebukes Pharaoh and says, "Let my people go!" This guy was a man's man; he was courageous. Meekness is not weakness.

Jesus was a meek person. He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart. If you come to Me and get yoked to Me, you'll find rest for your souls." We see Him going into the temple and overthrowing the money changers and taking a whip and driving them out. Jesus, by no means, was weak. He was a man's man. And meekness is not just an attribute for women. It's also an attribute for men. Men and women are both to be meek.

Nor does meek mean naturally timid or shy or just naturally nice. You meet some people who are really nice naturally or easy-going. Remember that none of these Beatitudes are natural. They are all supernatural; they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Then what does it mean to be meek? It is hard to define in one word, but the Greek translation of the adjective word "meek" means "gentle, humble, submissive, to be easily imposed on, to be considerate or courteous." All of these words describe a meek person. Some translations actually have, "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth." Meekness speaks of submission and humility. My favorite definition of meekness is simply "power under control." It doesn't mean weakness, so you're strong, but it means self-control. It means that you are controlled in how you submit to God and how you submit to others. Meekness has that double aspect in being submitted to God and to others.

A meek horse is not a weak horse. A meek horse is a horse that is broken and trained and obeys the rider. Now I don't do horseback riding. I love horses; they're beautiful animals, but they're big and they can bite and they can step on you and they can throw you off. The last time I went horseback riding it did nothing I wanted it to do. It had a mind of its own. At least a car will turn left or right or go or stop. You can turn it off and get off of it. But my horse wouldn't cooperate. I said, "By the grace of God, I'll never ride a horse again." Now a horse that has the power to throw the rider off but obeys the rider is a meek horse. Not a weak horse but an obedient horse. So meek means power under control.

I don't often quote Matthew Henry, but I think he describes so beautifully this ancient commentator. He says, "The meek are those who quietly submit themselves before God to His Word and to His rod, who follow His directions and comply with His designs and are gentle toward men." That is such a great description. They submit to God and His Word and His

discipline. They follow God's directions and comply with His designs and are gentle toward others.

I believe that a meek person is basically one who actually says:

"Have Thine own way, Lord.

Have Thine own way.

Thou art the potter; I am the clay.

Mold me and make me after Thy will.

While I am waiting yielded and still."

Those words to that beautiful hymn come from the heart of a meek person. "Have Your way, Lord. Mold me and shape me. I'll be what You want me to be. I'll go where You want me to go. I'll do what You want me to do." We don't resist Him. We don't fight against Him. We're like that horse that is obedient. We submit to God. That's what it means to be meek and to have meekness toward other people.

In order to do that, we first are "poor in spirit," we "mourn" and then we are "meek." Let me go back to verse 3, "poor in spirit." It means my relationship to God; that I'm bankrupt. That results in "mourning" over my own sins. "Meek" is how I relate to God and others. So meekness has a two-fold aspect: toward God and toward others.

I want to look at those two categories. Our meekness toward God is submitting to God, letting God have His way in our hearts and in our lives. It's actually saying, "God, have Your way." It's simple; you're totally consecrated and totally submitted to God's will. I encourage you to everyday say, "Lord, take my thoughts and take my attitudes and take my hands and take my feet and take my mouth and all that I am. My marriage, my job, my children and everything—Lord, I give it to You. Have Your way." That's what it means to be meek before God.

Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God." We love that instruction from that psalm. I think it describes the meek man or woman. In the Hebrew that phrase "Be still" literally means, "Take your hands off." I love that. Someone said:

"With thoughtless and impatient hands

We tangle up the plans

The Lord hath wrought.

And when we cry in pain, He saith,

‘Be quiet, man, while I untie the knot.’”

We get all tangled up in our own affairs. “I’ve got a husband, and he needs fixing.” So you roll up your sleeves, ladies, and you try to whip them into shape. “I’ll fix him! I’ll straighten him out!” Or maybe your wife isn’t what you think she should be, so “I’m going to fix her! I’m going to get her going!” God says, “Take your hands off.”

There are some of you who actually need to take your hands off your marriage problems. You need to give them to God. You need to take your hands off, be still and know that He is God. Maybe it’s your finances. He says, “Take your hands off.” Maybe it’s your health. You need to say, “Lord, I just give it to You. I take my hands off these things and put them in Your hands.” I love what the Scripture says: “Casting all your cares upon God, for He cares for you.” So to be still means to be meek before God and let Him have His way in the affairs of your life. Take your hands off them.

Meekness toward God is also submitting to His Word. So in my relationship to God, in meekness I trust Him with my life, and I submit to His Word without disputing, without complaining, without murmuring and without grumbling.

James 1:21 tells us to “...receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.” The word “soul” here could be translated “your life.” With meekness you are to receive God’s Word. When you open your Bible daily and you read God’s Word, do you say, “Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.” And when you read something in the Bible, do you obey? Are you willing to be what God has called you to be? Or do you say, “That’s not for me. Let’s go to the next page”?

I sometimes joke when I’m doing marriage teaching and it says, “Wives, submit to your husbands.” The wives are thinking, That was written before my husband was born. If he were around when Paul wrote that, he probably would say, “No. Let’s take that out, because this guy’s really messed up.” No.

When we read something we don’t like, such as forgiving your enemies and treating people with kindness and we say, “That’s not for me, because you don’t know what that guy has done to me,” we need to submit to the authority of God’s Word. You receive the Word with meekness, and it’s able to save your life.

As I said, Moses was meek. Number 12:3 says, “Now the man Moses was very humble...”—or “meek”—“...more than all men who were on the face of the earth.” He wasn’t weak. He was meek; he was obedient to God. And he was used by God.

Jesus, in Matthew 11:29, said, “...I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” There are so many more examples in the life of Jesus. But I love when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane. To me, Gethsemane is such a powerful episode in the life of Christ. Jesus went deeper into this olive garden, and He laid on His face and prayed in agony. He sweat great drops of blood. You remember what Jesus prayed in light of going to the Cross?

He said, "Father..."—or "Abba"—"...if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," thinking of the Cross, the pain and the shame and the sin that was going to be placed upon Him. "Is there any way man can be redeemed without Me suffering and dying?" He closed by saying, "...nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." That's Jesus meekly and obediently submitting to the will, the purpose and the plan of God the Father.

Are you submitted to God? Have you taken your hands off? Are you obedient to His Word? When you open the Bible or hear a sermon on Sunday, do you say, "Speak, Lord. I'm listening"? Whatever God says in His Word, are you ready to obey?

Secondly, meekness has an aspect toward others. If I am meek toward God, it's going to manifest itself in meekness toward others. How does meekness manifest itself in my human relationships? Number one, it humbly bears injuries. A meek person humbly bears injuries. If I'm "poor in spirit," mourning over my sin and it's produced meekness, I'm not going to freak out when people mistreat me or come against me. I don't get angry. I don't have malice or hatred. I don't take revenge.

Remember when King David was fleeing from his rebellious son, Absalom? He fled from the palace, and Shimei came out and started to curse David, throw rocks at him and do those evil things toward David. One of David's men said, "I can go over to him right now and take his head off." If I were David, I'd say, "Yeah! Go for it!" (Pray for me.) But I love what David said. He said to his servant, "No. It's the Lord. It's from the hand of God, and I'll receive it gladly."

So even when people come against you, God knows and God is in control. Say, "What does God want to show me, and what does God want to teach me in this?" Opposition, sickness, ill health or difficulties can all be God trying to get your attention. So we always need to say, "Lord, show me and teach me what You want me to learn."

The second way meekness manifests toward others is that it forgives others. A meek person is a forgiving person. Ephesians 4:31-32 is a great text for married couples. It says, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

When he says, "Be kind," it's closely related to the concept of being meek. A meek person is a kind person. And because it brings self-control, we can show kindness and courtesy toward others. So in my relationships, I need to put away wrath and bitterness and anger and then to be kind and forgive, because God has forgiven me.

Thirdly, meekness manifests itself by not recompensing evil for evil. It doesn't pay evil for evil. When Jesus had been spit upon, was mocked and ridiculed and hung on the Cross and had been crucified, He looked upon the jeering crowd and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That's meekness. That's the Son of God personifying meekness in submission and obedience to God and submission to what God allowed in His life. We need

that in our lives: we need to submit to God and to His rod, as well as to His Word. “Whatever You want to do, whatever You want to teach me, I am humbly submitted to You.”

I want you to turn to Psalm 37. When Jesus spoke this Beatitude, He was quoting Psalm 37:9-11. The psalmist is David. He said, “Evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord...”—which is a meek person—“...they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more.” In other words, God is going to take care of wicked men. We don’t need to worry. “But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” They’re going to find peace and happiness because they waited on the Lord. So Jesus is actually quoting in His Beatitude from verses 9 and 11. Scholars say that Jesus was quoting from the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

I want now to go back and begin at Psalm 37:1 and show you seven marks of a meek person, leading up to the verses Jesus quoted. Verse 1 says, “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.” Now here’s the first characteristic of a meek man or woman: they don’t fret. In other words, they’re not freaking out. Why? Because they’ve taken their hands off, and their lives are submitted to God.

Notice the second mark of a meek person, in verse 3. “Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.” So mark number one is they fret not, and mark number two is they trust in the Lord. My dear brothers and sisters, if you trust in the Lord, God will take care of you. I promise you that. God will take care of you, if you trust Him, if you put your faith in Him.

The third mark of a meek person is in verse 4. “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” So you’re not fretting, you’re trusting the Lord and you’re delighting in the Lord. In other words, your whole focus is in loving Him, serving Him, obeying Him, drawing near to Him. Your whole life is one pursuit. Our next Beatitude is “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and they shall be filled.” So your passion is to delight in God.

Then notice the fourth mark of a meek person in verses 5-6. They commit their way to the Lord. “Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.” So you don’t fret, you trust in the Lord, you delight in Him and you commit your way to the Lord. Again, you take your hands off.

Mark number five is in verse 7. “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.” So you’re waiting on God. That’s the meek person.

All of these characteristics describe meekness. You don’t fret, you trust in the Lord, you delight

in the Lord, you commit your way to the Lord, you rest in the Lord.

Then lastly, verse 8, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm."

From that point, David then flows to verse 11: "But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

So Jesus is actually drawing from Psalm 37. Do you know that Jesus read the Bible? And Jesus quoted the Bible. If Jesus read the Bible and quoted the Bible, we should do the same thing; He's our example.

So Jesus is telling us that we are meek when we fret not, trust in the Lord, delight in the Lord, commit your way to Him, rest in the Lord, cease from anger, forsake wrath and then the meek will inherit the earth.

Let's go back to Matthew 5:5. My second and last question is, "What is the last and paradoxical reward for being meek?" What blessing comes to the meek? They are "blessed." Remember that the word "blessed" means "O, how happy." It has the idea of the smile of God, the approval of God, the favor of God. I like the idea of the applause of God. God is clapping for you. When you are poor in spirit, when you mourn over your sin, when you are meek, God claps for you and you have the approval of God. That's what brings happiness: when you know you are pleasing God, you have a happy heart.

Sin leads to sadness. Holiness leads to happiness. People who go into sin thinking that they're going to be happy, end up being empty. People who submit to God and surrender to His will are people who have the joy of the Lord and the peace of God in their heart. So the first reward of the meek is that they are blessed or happy.

The second reward of the meek is that "they shall inherit the earth." The "they" there is emphatic. It means "they and they alone." The emphasis is on "they." In other words, only the "poor in spirit," only those who "mourn," only "the meek" are blessed and happy, live in the "kingdom of heaven," shall be "comforted" and "shall inherit the earth."

Now when shall the meek inherit the earth? My job as a pastor is to always convey the meaning of the text; not to impose my ideas on a text. I'm convinced that what Jesus is talking about is when He comes back in His Second Coming. We'll inherit the earth when Jesus comes back, because we're coming back with Him. This is a can-you-dig-it point. It's going to be so awesome! It's going to be so amazing! By the way, I will ride a horse then. I'm coming back, and it's going to be glorious! We're going to be the manifested sons and daughters of God. And all the wicked will be eliminated on earth, and righteousness will cover the earth as waters cover the sea. And Christ the King will reign.

We're not going to be worried about who the President of the United States is or whether there are more Democrats or Republicans. Jesus Christ is going to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords on planet earth. Trust Jesus that it will happen. What did He say in John 14:2-3? "I go

to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

So when Jesus comes to earth and the earth is renewed, creation is set right once again and He reigns, we will reign with Him. It will be the millennium, the kingdom age. There will be peace on earth; there will be no more wars, for Christ the King will reign.

I love John Newton’s song Amazing Grace, but my favorite stanza is the one that says,

“When we’ve been there ten thousand years,

Bright shining as the sun,

We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise,

Then when we first begun.”

That’s awesome! Billions and billions of years, if you can think in time, and it’s only one day in eternity. We have eternity to inherit. I love it when Jesus said, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

So we may be mocked, we may be criticized, we may be ridiculed, persecuted and put down, Hollywood may not like Christians and the world may not like believers, but we’re the children of God. And one day we will inherit the earth.

You ask, “Well, Pastor, how do I become meek?” Again, you have to go back to verse 3. You have to see yourself as spiritually bankrupt or “poor in spirit”; you have to “mourn” and admit that you’re a sinner, verse 4; and verse 5, submit, trust and receive God in meekness. Only the born-again can be meek, as Jesus describes them.

My question to you is, “Have you been born again?” Are you really a Christian? Do you see yourself as poor? Do you mourn? Are you meek before God? Are you submitted to God’s purpose and plan, rod and chastisement in your life?

If you haven’t trusted Jesus Christ, you need to do that today. Coming to church doesn’t make you a Christian. Believing in God doesn’t make you a Christian. It’s trusting Jesus, Who died for you. It’s putting your faith in Christ. It’s not enough to just be a good person. The Bible says that “Your righteousness is as filthy rags” before God; you’re bankrupt. The Spirit of God begins to convict you, and “If you hear His voice, harden not your heart.”

If God is speaking to you and you know that when you die, you won’t go to heaven, you know that you’re not a Christian—you may just be professing but not possessing salvation—you need to be born again. Jesus died on the Cross for your sins. He was buried and rose from the dead. No one becomes a Christian until they personally, individually invite Christ to come into their heart to be their Savior and trust Him as their Lord.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.