

# The Sermon On The Mount

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3 ESV)*

*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24–25 ESV)*

## **Blessed Are The Meek**

**June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Matthew 5:5**

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Good morning, Redeemer, it is good to be with you all this morning. If you have your Bible with you, would you please open now to Matthew 5:5. We are going to be continuing to work our way through the list of beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount and today we are going to talk about meekness. There has been a clear logical progression from the first beatitude, blessed are the poor in spirit, to the second beatitude that we looked at last week, blessed are those who mourn. We have seen that when we recognize our sinfulness and our brokenness it leads to a place of mourning and repentance. The beatitude that we are zooming in on this week, blessed are the meek, continues that progression.

We have started with understanding who we are, understanding our sinfulness and our wretchedness as the Apostle Paul says. Knowing this, feeling this brokenness, mourning and grieving, not only leads us to a place of repentance, but it also revolutionizes how we interact with God and with others. As D. A. Carson helpfully states:

“Poverty of spirit has to do with a person’s assessment of himself, especially with respect to God, while meekness has more to do with his relationship with God and with men.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World: An Exposition of Matthew 5–10* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 20.

The progression moves from the heart of brokenness and mourning that the Christian demonstrates to how that heart posture changes our relationship towards God and towards the world around us. Hopefully now you have your Bible open to Matthew Chapter 5.

Hear now the Word of the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

(Matthew 5:2-5 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Over the last two weeks, we have begun by making sure that we understand our terms. We have been making sure that we are on the same page and understand what Jesus means when he says blessed are the poor in spirit, or those who mourn. So, we are going to do the same thing today. We are going to begin by asking the question: what does it mean to be meek? Meekness is one of these ideas that we throw around quite often, but we have a hard time actually defining. Just this week in the preaching workshop we had a room full of pastors and we struggled to define Meekness in a single sentence. So, it is worth spending some time unpacking what meekness really means.

As we unpack this question, we will also see what Jesus means when he says the meek will inherit the world. Then we will end with asking how we can grow in meekness.

The first question we must tackle then is:

## **What Does It Mean To Be Meek?**

Before we breakdown what it means to be meek, I think it would be helpful to establish a few things that meekness is not. There is a lot of confusion around the word meekness and the way it is used in the Church. You may hear the term meek and think of “gentle Jesus meek and mild.” We hear that and we often think that meekness refers to weakness.

Meekness does not mean weakness. Numbers 12:3 describes Moses as the meekest man to ever live and we know that he was far from weak. He led the Israelites. He opposed Pharaoh repeatedly. He ascended Mount Sinai when the rest of Israel cowered in fear at the presence of God. Moses was anything but weak. Meekness does not equal weakness. I love the way Lloyd-Jones puts it:

“So it does not mean to be naturally nice or easy to get on with. Nor does it mean weakness in personality or character. Still less does it mean a spirit of compromise or ‘peace at any price’.”<sup>2</sup>

Neither does it refer to simple kindness and niceness. There are people who are naturally kind and easy going. That does not make them meek. Once again, we need to remember that the sermon on the mount is not a sermon on how to get saved, it is telling saved people how to live. It is telling us what people who are in the kingdom of God, what Christians, look like.

If you are a Christian, if you have repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus, then you acknowledge that Holy Spirit did a work in you. He opened your eyes to see your poverty of spirit and to bring you to a place of repentance and saving faith. Meekness, therefore, is a product of the Holy Spirit.

It does not occur naturally.

It is a hallmark, a defining feature of the Christian. It is unique to those who have set their faith and trust in Jesus. It sets the people of God apart from the world. This leads us to the first answer to our question: what does it mean to be meek?

First:

## **1. It means to be Humble**

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<sup>2</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Second edition. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 71–72.

This is the most natural and logical starting place. We have seen that being poor in spirit means recognizing our brokenness. It means being humble and contrite in heart. Humility is the foundational character of the Christian.

It is the natural disposition of someone who realizes that they are nothing, have nothing, and deserve nothing.

ALL THAT WE HAVE comes from Christ. He created us. He redeems us. He preserves us. Remember that Ephesians 2 says that we were DEAD in our trespass and sin. Dead people don't do anything. They are wholly incapable of contributing to their salvation.

True humility means recognizing the reality of our situation. It means realizing who we are, and it means responding appropriately. When I understand that I am a wretched sinner saved by grace. When I understand that God has saved me, not because of any good in me, but because of his great love and mercy. When I know this, it completely transforms the way I interact with God and the way I interact with others.

Meekness mean being humble and submitting to God. It means no longer living for ourselves, as the Apostle Paul says in Galatians 2:

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20 ESV)

Meekness means understanding that doing life our way leads to death and ruin. It means understanding that we no longer live for ourselves. We live for Christ. We strive to live in his way, to follow his footsteps, to be like him. Meekness means that I am not longer in charge. I don't get to do whatever I want. I don't get to cherry pick which verses of the Bible I want to obey and which ones I can ignore. I don't get to continue living however I want and expect God to give me a pat on the back. Being a Christian, being meek, means humbling ourselves before God, it means following him and sitting under his Word.

And it means that we listen to one another. We touched on this briefly two weeks ago. A significant part of being humble is listening to one another. It means receiving feedback and growing from it. We see Christ's example of humility clearly laid out in Phillipians chapter 2. Jesus is the ultimate display of humility, and he is the ultimate portrait of meekness.

Paul paints a beautiful picture of Jesus' ultimate display of humility and meekness by lowering himself, taking on human form, and dying on the cross in our place. Paul highlights the lowliness of Jesus in the gospel, and he instructs us to have the SAME MIND. He tells us to interact with one another in the SAME WAY that Jesus does.

And he says:

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” (Phillipians 2:3 ESV)

This is one of those things that is easy to say and hard to do.

We have spent the last two weeks talking about the sorry state of our souls. We have talked about we are morally and spiritually bankrupt and in desperate need of God's grace. We have had some hard and honest conversations with ourselves and who we are.

Those conversations with ourselves are FAR EASIER than what we are being called to do here.

I am capable of seeing my sin, by God's grace, I am able to acknowledge to myself that I am a sinner and need to repent. I am able to mourn and grieve my failures and shortcomings that I see in myself.

But if someone else tries to point them out to me, oooh boy that's a different story entirely. If someone else comes up to me and tells me how wretched I am, I am far more likely to punch them in the nose than I am to thank them.

Paul hits the nail on the head in Phillipians 2:3 which we just read. The problem is our selfish ambition and conceit. You see, if I am ruled by my pride. If my opinion of myself is the most

important thing in the world than I will do everything in my power to protect it. I am not going to accept someone else telling me my flaws. I am going to get defensive. I am going to lash out. I am going to project my inadequacies onto others. I may get violent. I will do whatever I need to in order to protect my self image.

That is what we see in the world all around us. We see people pushing others down, trampling over one another in order to get ahead. It's a dog-eat-dog world. You either eat or you get eaten. People will do whatever they have to do to get ahead.

Because they are cultivating and protecting their self image. Because they are worshipping themselves.

But, if I know who I am, if I recognize my failures and shortcomings, If I know that I have been crucified with Christ, I NO LONGER LIVE FOR MYSELF. I am striving to preserve my self-image. I am trying to reflect Christ's image.

If my ultimate goal is to become like Christ, to be transformed into HIS image and bring HIM glory. Then I not only accept feedback and criticism, I WELCOME IT. To be meek is to count others more significant than yourself, it is to listen to what they have to say. It means putting yourself in positions to allow others to speak into your life.

Listen, we need to hear this. We have an overly individualistic culture. We have a natural tendency to think of the Christian life has something that is between me and God. So, we may come to Church, but we are not plugged in. We are not part of the community. We are not exercising the meekness and humility TO LET OTHERS IN. We're not willing to be vulnerable. We are not putting ourselves in a position where other people might see our sin and speak into our lives.

I shouldn't have to say this, but I feel like I need to. YOU ARE A SINNER. That's not a surprise. I AM A SINNER. WE ARE ALL SINNERS. We are all beggars telling and reminding one another where to find bread. That is what the Church is.

If you are not meek, if you are not humble, if you are not willing to allow others to see you for who you are you WILL NOT be able to receive and enjoy the fullness of what the Church is. You cannot keep the Church at arms length and expect to thrive in your Christian Walk.

If that is you this morning, I would encourage you to remedy that... immediately. Reach out to a brother or sister in Christ, ask them to walk alongside you, invite people over for a meal, come to life together when it starts up next week, join a prayer group, become part of this community of sinners so that you might experience the fullness of what God has for you.

Being meek means being humble, it means listening and submitting to God, it means listening to one another.

And Secondly:

## **2. It means to be Gentle**

Part of what it means to be meek is to be Gentle. In fact, in Matthew 11:29 Jesus describes himself as Gentle and Lowly in heart. The word translated as Gentle is the same word he uses here in the Sermon on the Mount. Gentleness is an essential ingredient to meekness. They are so closely related that the Bible sometimes uses them synonymously.

A significant part of gentleness means being able to withstand and endure mistreatment and offence without retaliation. When Jesus preached this beatitude, he was intentionally drawing language from Psalm 37. As we look there, we will see this idea more clearly expounded. Psalm 37:5-9 reads:

Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in him, and he will act.

<sup>6</sup>He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,  
and your justice as the noonday.

<sup>7</sup>Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;  
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,  
over the man who carries out evil devices!

<sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!  
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.  
<sup>9</sup> For the evildoers shall be cut off,  
but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. (Psalm 37:5-9)

Do you see the language there? “Those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.” When we combine that with our beatitude it is clear that **the meek are those who wait for the Lord**.

The reward for meekness is also the reason for meekness.

The promised coming of the Lord, the second coming of Jesus, the coming of the fullness of his justice enacted in the world is the reason Christians can be meek now. It is the reason we can be gentle. It is the reason we can endure.

Psalm 37 applies this gentle meekness in a number of ways. It tells us not to fret ourselves over the ones who prosper now, over those who carry out evil. The person who is meek is not distracted by the evil in the world. This doesn't mean that they don't do anything. Rather, I am saying that the person who is meek is not CONSUMED with fixing the world. They are not trying to overthrow the government or establishing the Mosaic Law in Canada. They are not supporting an inordinate amount of their free time posting on social media about how we need to fix the world around us. They are defined by gentleness and focus on what God WILL do.

The person who is meek is not distracted by these things because they know a day is coming when the Lord will set things right. Those who laugh now will weep. The meek, and only the meek, will inherit the earth.

To be meek means to be Gentle. It means to endure offences and mistreatment. It means not retaliating or seeking revenge. We see that in verse 8 of Psalm 37:

“Refrain from anger and forsake wrath!  
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.” (Psalm 37:8 ESV)

Peter picks up on this thread and demonstrates how Christ is our perfect example of this in 1 Peter 2. There we read:



<sup>19</sup> For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. <sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup> When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.  
(1 Peter 2:19-23 ESV)

Jesus bore the ultimate mistreatment upon the Cross. He is the only truly innocent person to ever live. He did only good, and he suffered for it. He was whipped, mocked, beaten, and crucified. He endured more mistreatment than you and I EVER WILL.

And He did not retaliate. He did not threaten. He did not revile.

He looked at the very people mocking and crucifying him and prayed that God would have MERCY on them. He entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He trusted in his Father's plan, in his goodness.

That's what we see in Psalm 37 as well. COMMIT your ways to the Lord. TRUST in him. He WILL act.

We need this reminder. We need to be reminded that God WILL act. Justice WILL be done. The meek WILL inherit the earth. That is a promise, a promise signed and sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ. It is a promised proven through the empty tomb. God WILL act.

So, entrust yourself to him.

You can withstand mistreatment and offence now. You can turn the other cheek. You don't need to get even. You don't need to get yours.

Now to be clear, I am not saying do nothing. The emperor does not bear the sword in vain. If you're being abused, then CALL THE POLICE. Make use of the laws and protections that God has put in place. Meekness does not mean passivity.

It is a matter of emphasis and general disposition. Are you a person who is easily offended? Are you getting caught up in unnecessary fights and conflicts? Are you able to look past a passive aggressive comment from a co worker or family member? Do you feel the need to get a jab in of your own? Or are you a person who is Gentle? Who commits their cause to the Lord and trusts in him? Who knows that vengeance is the Lord's. Are you able to let things go?

The person who is meek is like a horse running with blinders on. Their eyes are so fixated on their destination, they move towards it without wavering, they do not feel the need to retaliate or respond to every slight and offence. They demonstrate a gentleness that comes from fixing their eyes upon Christ.

Being Meek means being gentle.

And thirdly,

### **3. It means to be Patient**

We have touched on this briefly already. The reward for meekness is also the reason for meekness. Patience is another essential ingredient to meekness. We see in Matthew 5 that the meek will inherit the earth. We see in Psalm 37 that those who wait on the Lord will inherit the land. Those who WAIT.

Waiting implies patience.

Our waiting and patience are fueled the inherent assurance that is contained with this promise. There is a confidence in knowing how the story will end.

Again, this only really make sense when we understand that this sermon is describing who Christians are and how they behave. When we put our faith in Jesus, when we recognize our need and come emptyhanded to the Cross to receive grace through faith in Jesus, we are united with him. We become children of God as he is the Son of God. We become co-heirs with him as Paul says in Romans 8:

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8:16-17 ESV)

We will be glorified WITH Jesus at the end. We will be lift up. We will receive all that is promised to us as children and HEIRS of God. The meek will INHERIT the earth. We will be given what is promised to us through Christ.

Being meek means trusting in that. It means being CONFIDENT in that. In means being patient and trusting God as we WAIT.

So often our faith isn't patient. So often our faith looks timid and shakeable. We are like boats tossed to and fro on the waves of life. We are good at being confident when things are good. We are good at being at peace when things are going well. It is easy to wait when things are good.

We are like Peter when Jesus calls him to come out to him on the water. We start well. But when we see the winds and the waves. When life gets hard. When suffering comes our way. We doubt. We lose our confidence. We prove that our trust, our faith, is lacking.

We are people who leak. We are people who forget. We know these truths. We know the wonderful promises of scripture that have been given to us. This is why we need church; we need to sit under the Word of God. We need to sing of these amazing truths to one another and to God. We need to be reminded of what IS TRUE.

It is TRUE. It is a FACT. It is an OBJECTIVE REALITY that the meek WILL inherit the earth.

We can be patient. We can wait BECAUSE OF THIS TRUTH.

Listen to how the Apostle phrases this exact truth slightly differently in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3 we read:

“So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, <sup>22</sup> whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, <sup>23</sup> and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:21-23 ESV)

All things are yours. All things. In life or death, present or future, ALL are yours.

Ainsley and I have been blessed with a wonderful daughter Eleanor. I am not sure if you have had the pleasure of meeting Eleanor yet, but she has a large personality and a lot of energy.

Ainsley and I will often joke with one another that it's Eleanor's world and we're just living in it.

Jesus is saying it is OUR WORLD, everyone else is just living in it.

I love the way Lloyd-Jones says this.

“The meek already inherit the earth in this life, in this way. A man who is truly meek is a man who is always satisfied, he is a man who is already content.”<sup>3</sup>

There is a contentment that comes from understanding and internalizing these truths. When we meditate and dwell on these promises from God, it provides reassurance and contentment. It is the secret that the Apostle Paul talks about in Philippians 4:11-13:

“for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:11b-13 ESV)

I have learned the secret. I can be content in all situations.

Listen friends, we can be content in ALL situations, at ALL times, we can do ALL things, because we know that ALL things are ours in Christ. That's the secret.

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<sup>3</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Second edition. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 74–75.

I can be PATIENT. I can WAIT and TRUST in the Lord because I ALREADY HAVE all things, I am merely waiting for the fullness of that promise to come.

So, trust the Lord. Commit your ways to him. Be JOYFULLY PATIENT as you wait for the Lord. He WILL act. The meek WILL inherit the earth. Amen? Amen.

We have seen that meekness means being humble, it means be gentle, and it means being patient. We have also seen that these things are completely and utterly UNNATURAL for us. Because of the fall, we are naturally proud people. We want to be the gods of our lives. We want to do whatever we want whenever we want. And we are prickly. We are easily offended and easily distracted by insults, slights, and mistreatment. And we leak, we forget God's promises and his truth. We are prone to doubt him and his word. We struggle to wait and trust in him.

Knowing that, knowing our natural disposition, leaves us with the question:

## **How Can We Grow In Meekness?**

The Truth is, to grow in meekness, to grow in any of the beatitudes means that we first need to grow in the Holy Spirit. A rising tide floats all boats and as we grow in the Holy Spirit all of these different aspects of the Christian life will grow as well.

The bad news is we can't do this on our own. When we try to do it on our own, we are like someone trying to push a boat through the sandy beach towards the water. We grunt and push and strain, but we end up digging into the sand and getting nowhere. But, when the Holy Spirit comes, when the tide comes in, the boat is lifted by the waves and our efforts become exponentially easier.

The good news is we are not alone. We have the Holy Spirit. This is why the beatitudes begin with blessed are the poor in spirit. We did enter God's kingdom on our own and we do not remain in it on our own, we do not grow in it on our own. The power that worked in us, the Holy

Spirit working in our hearts to receive the Gospel through faith by grace DWELLS WITHIN US.

2 Peter 1:3 says:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness,” (2 Peter 1:3a ESV)

God has given us EVERYTHING WE NEED for life and Godliness. We have all that we need to grow in meekness, in humility, gentleness, and patience in the Lord. Peter goes on in this passage to say that, because of this truth, because WE ALREADY HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED, because of this, we are to MAKE EVERY EFFORT to supplement our faith with virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, and Godliness.

So, the question for us this morning is how do we supplement the Spirit’s work in us? How do we make every effort to grow in meekness?

The answer, in a nutshell, is PERSPECTIVE. We need Perspective.

We need to zoom out. We need to see the big picture. We need to look forward to the second coming of Jesus. When we are reminded of this truth, when we are reminded that Jesus WILL come again, that he will right EVERY wrong, he will wipe away EVERY tear, he will bring his perfect justice and righteousness, when we remember that we are encouraged. We are fuelled, equipped, and empowered to live with gentleness and patience. We are able to turn the other cheek. We are able to pray for those who persecute us. We are able to bless those who curse us. We are able to STAND FIRM to the end. We are able to play the long game.

The reward for meekness is the reason for meekness.

So, we zoom out. We see the big picture. We see what God is going to do and we see what God HAS DONE. THIS is why we start with being poor in spirit and with mourning. It is why we need to understand the depth of our depravity and sin. We need to feel that. We need to own that. We look back on that and realize that we were DEAD in our sin.

BUT GOD.

God intervened. He brought life to our dry bones. Through HIS grace and HIS mercy, we have been given new life in Christ Jesus. This is the beating heart of our meekness. It is the source of our humility.

When we zoom out, when we see the big picture, when we gain PERSPECTIVE, we are able to see WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM and WHERE WE ARE GOING. That is how you grow in meekness, by understanding this truth, by meditating upon it, by resting and rejoicing in it. We grow in meekness by growing in our understanding and appreciation of where we have come from and where we are going.

Meekness is the humility, gentleness, and patience that comes from knowing who we are, where we are going, and how we get there in Christ.

That's the secret: IN CHRIST. Christ is our perfect example of meekness. He is the source of our own meekness. HE is the reward for meekness. HE is the reason for meekness. It is all about him. So, come. Know him. See him. Worship him. Imitate him. Know what HE rescued you from. Know who you are in him. Know where he is bringing you.

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.

Let's pray together.