

Blessed are the Meek

Matthew 11:28-30, Matthew 5:5

This morning we continue our series on the Beatitudes...these kingdom life principles of our Lord. To believe that the true blessing of God comes to those who are identified in this passage. The Beatitudes of words of blessing and promise. Today's beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Inherit the earth...what a wonderful thought, that in a world so torn up by politics, hatred and violence, that the ones who need to become the beneficiaries of this world are called the Meek. This has been a great day of worship as we have celebrated the diversity of culture and the variety of nations that express our uniqueness but also our oneness in the Lord. That we come from many different places and backgrounds, but we gather in one spirit to worship together as the family of God. Perhaps a picture of "inheriting the earth" as we come in spirit of thanksgiving and praise.

Blessed are the meek? Who are they? And in this world who wants to be them? I mean there are some characteristics of the Christian life I may want to strive for, but I'm pretty sure meekness isn't one of them. The characteristics of compassion, faithfulness, perseverance, those I understand, but meekness, that's a whole different story. Meekness makes us think of weakness. Meekness makes me think of being pushed around, of being stepped on like a doormat...and if you're going to make it in this world, it seems in contrast to what this culture has taught me...like it's more important to be successful, to be in control, to take charge. We are told that these are the important characteristics to live by.

Christian humorist, J. Upton Dickson wrote a book entitled Cower Power. He wrote that he was thinking about founding a society of submissive people that would be called the Doormats. It was an acronym that stood for: "Dependent Organization of Really Meek and Timid Souls". Their motto was: "The meek shall inherit the earth – if that's okay with everybody. Their symbol: The yellow traffic light.

So there is that line of thinking that meekness is about weakness. But when we look at the Scriptures we realize that nothing could be further from the Biblical

Blessed are the Meek

understanding of meekness. It's not about weakness...really the opposite is true. Meekness describes a strength of character that is willing to surrender to the will of God and be strong enough to be patient and gentle. That was the character seen in Jesus. He submitted to his heavenly Father's will and lived a life of faithful obedience that enabled him to show compassion, courage, and self-sacrifice even when his enemies were at their worst.

So hear the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." This is the kingdom life for Jesus' followers. Jesus invites us to follow him: "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And notice this instruction: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your soul." Rest for your souls, how much we need that in this crazy world. This is the key question: Are we following Jesus or the way of the world?

It does make a difference whom or what you are following. It makes me think of the story of the woman who was driving through Oregon over the Cascade Range when she ran into a snowstorm and became very frightened. As she slowly drove on, she peered ahead and saw a snowplow. She thought to herself: 'What luck. I will keep as close to the snowplow as possible while it clears the snow from the road. At time the heavy snowfall almost cut off her view, but her faithful guide kept leading the way. After a long period of time, the snowtruck stopped and the driver got out and walked over to her car. He said to the woman: "Lady, where are you going?" She replied: "I'm on my way to central Oregon." With an air of disbelief the driver of the truck said: "Well, you're never going to get there following me. I'm just trying to plow this parking lot!" That's humorous illustration, but we get the point. It does make a difference whom you follow. We can follow the One who said: "Learn of me." Or we can be drawn into the ways of the world and find out that our life is just going in circles.

A study of this beatitude reveals that the blessing and promise are found with similar expression in Psalm 37:11. "But the meek shall possess the land and delight themselves in the abundance of peace." The word used for "meek" in this beatitude is close to the meaning of "poor in spirit" found in the first beatitude.

Blessed are the Meek

Remember we said “poor in spirit” focuses on the attitude of the heart. An attitude of humility that is a challenge for us to live by in this world. I like how James Howell says it in the book we are studying, The Beatitudes for Today: “The cultivation of a holy meekness in our souls is the most daunting, uphill (or, better should we say downhill!) struggle. The meek are humble, and although life in the world can be humbling, no one out there celebrates humility.” The meek, like the poor in spirit are those who stand empty-handed before God, saying: “God, I recognize, that you are the source of all that I need, and want to live with a humble dependence upon you.” I am trusting that this God will meet the needs of my life.

Moses is described in the Bible as someone “who was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.” And throughout the Bible God honors those who might seem powerless or weak because they have come to recognize their true source of strength. I think of Gideon and the Midianites, David and Goliath, the prophet Jeremiah and Isaiah.

I can't help but think of the apostle Paul as he talks about his faith, the way he sees his relationship with God. You remember his testimony: “I've learned to be content, no matter what my circumstances.” “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” And “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory.” I hear these words of Paul and I realize these are not statements of arrogance, but statements of meekness. Paul believed his strength came from his dependence on the Lord. That seems to be the secret. My inner strength comes when I surrender control. When I may even feel weak, I can be strong. Meekness is not wimpiness, but a strength that comes from putting my trust in God.

Not my strength, but God's. When I humbly trust in God's leading rather than having to call the shots, rather than having to have it my way, rather than trying to live only on my terms. This isn't about building our kingdom, but God's kingdom.

This is a challenge isn't it? We have to confess that we have often lived with selfish attitudes and we've tried to identify it as Christian behavior, but Christ calls

Blessed are the Meek

us to a different perspective. Living as Christ calls us to live. Meekness requires strength, a strength of character. A willingness to stand up for the principles of our faith. Meekness isn't one of those qualities you show off, it is a part of who we are disciple of Jesus. Blessed are the meek. Meekness is being able to be patient when others spew their anger and agenda. Meekness is being able to put aside our own needs for the needs of others.

I read one definition of meekness that said: " Meekness is the ability to take praise without conceit and blame with resentment."

Blessed are the meek...the man who dreamt of a society that is not divided by skin color. He walks, and marches, and preaches for racial harmony. His name was Martin Luther King. Blessed are the meek. A woman labors among the poorest of the poor in the streets of India, caring for their bodies and nurturing their spirits. Her name was Mother Teresa. Blessed are the meek.

The meek can be found among the countless people of faith who recognize their dependence on God. The teenage girl or boy who is willing to stand up to their convictions and find courage in their faith, even when others will ridicule or pressure them. The business person who does not get caught up in measuring success by material wealth or prestige and find ways to give his or her resources to others. The person working in the soup kitchen, the thrift shop, the food pantry, the person who visits the sick and afraid in the hospital, the one stands up for the poor and oppressed, the one who shares life with those who feel all alone.

The person who can handle offense or insult without lashing out in attack or retaliation. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Those who come in humble trust, who look to the God who cares for them and seeks to give witness to that kind of faith by the way they live. Jesus invites us this morning..."Come to me, learn of me...for I am meek and lowly of heart."