



Westminster
Presbyterian Church
NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

Kingdom Living: Blessed are the Meek
Matthew 5:5

“When he saw the crowd, Jesus went up on the mountain and his disciples came to him, and he taught them saying, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.’” These are the first two beatitudes. Blessed are those who are “poor in spirit,” those who live in God’s grace and their lives are an expression of God’s grace. And blessed are those whose hearts are broken by the things that break God’s heart.

I hope these two beatitudes are posted in a place where you see them regularly and where you can memorize them and meditate upon them and prayerfully ask God to work in your life to make us all poor in spirit and people who mourn.

I put all three of the opening beatitudes on the bulletin cover this morning so you can take them home and have them listed on one piece of paper.

Today’s text is the third beatitude, **“Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.”** Now be careful with this one, for language changes over time, and the word “meek” may mean something other than what you have in mind. For example, I looked up some synonyms for meek and what came up did not fit. Meek does not mean timid or docile or mild. The meek are not the doormats of society who simply get along with everybody.

For example, J. Upton Dickson was a fun-loving individual who said he was writing a book entitled *Cower Power*. He claims to be the founding president of a group of submissive-type people, who called themselves The DOORMATS. That stands for "Dependent Organization of Really Meek and Timid Souls -- if there are no objections." The DOORMATS whose motto is: "The meek shall inherit the earth -- if that's okay with everybody."

Actually meekness is a powerful virtue. Its slogan is not “The meek shall inherit if it is alright with everybody.” Rather its slogan would be, “Keeping

my ego in check, in order to call attention to the grace of Jesus Christ.” A meek person is one who is willing to put down their own rights and accolades to work with God’s people for the greater good of everyone.

One of my favorite movies is “Ike.” It is about the days in the life of Dwight Eisenhower when the Allied forces were preparing for D-Day. After watching the movie for the first time I read Eisenhower’s biography from several sources and found that the movie’s portrayal of General Eisenhower was fairly accurate.

He was made the supreme commander of the most powerful army the world had known to that time. He was chosen to be supreme commander because he demonstrated a meek character. He was chosen because he could put his ego aside and make the egocentric military commanders of his time work together as one unit, which was the only hope of defeating Hitler. And Eisenhower humbly understood, that it was his job, to serve each individual soldier under his command by working out a plan that would lead to victory with the least number of casualties, even though his decisions often made him unpopular with the press. His constant focus was to glean as much information as he could from his advisors in order to make the best decisions. But he was not remembered well by many of the strong willed commanders who served under his command.

I understand that British General Bernard Montgomery, who for some would have been the leading candidate as supreme commander, was not chosen because he was too interested in headlines. In contrast to Monty, Eisenhower refused to compete with the other generals for newspaper ink. He allowed the flamboyant generals to take center stage. Yet he was the supreme commander who focused his power and all his energies on the task of defeating Hitler.

William Barclay reminds us that a meek person is one whose strength is under control. He writes about a racehorse as an example. The horse is a beautiful and powerful animal, which is under the control of the jockey. Barclay wants to communicate that a meek person is one who has power and influence, but all his or her talents are placed under the control of Jesus Christ.

The text from Numbers that Robin read earlier says, **“Moses was very meek, more meek than all men that were on the face of the earth.”** Moses’ meekness was shown in his acceptance of what God ordained,

including endless battles with those recalcitrant and disappointing people whom he was trying to lead from Egypt to Canaan, and his acceptance of the immense personal disappointment of not being allowed to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

As with all meek humans, there are times when their meekness is betrayed. No one is always meek. Though Moses was described as meek it was his fierce, out of control temper that caused him to be judged, and thus not allowed into the Promised Land after all his years of service. The story of Moses' temper is another story, but for today, picture meek Moses quietly, if sadly, accepting God's decision. That's meekness. Meekness, for a child of God, means accepting God's will. It is learning what God has in mind and using our strengths to accomplish God's purpose. It is taking our ego out of the center and thinking about the will of Jesus Christ and using our God given abilities to accomplish that purpose. We should be like the thoroughbred, a beautiful and powerful animal under the control of our master.

A trait of a meek person, one who is controlled by God, is that they control their anger. It was Aristotle who defined virtue as the balance between two extremes. For example, take courage which is a virtue that lays between cowardice at one extreme and taking foolish chances on the other. Consider generosity. For Aristotle it is the virtue that lies between the extreme of being a miser and a spendthrift. For Aristotle, the virtue of meekness lies between a person who is never angry and one who has excessive anger. For Aristotle meekness is the right use of anger.

Remember the picture of an angry Jesus in the temple braiding a whip which he will use to chase out the money changers. Jesus got angry when people were cheated, abused, and maligned, particularly the weak, but when he himself was tortured, he did not seek to braid another whip, but when hanging unjustly on a cross, our Lord's prayer was one of forgiveness. Jesus' example of meekness is shown through his anger when people are unjustly hurt, but forgiving when he himself was hurt.

A meek person is angered at what makes God angry. So what is it that makes you angry?

There was a member in a church I served that chewed me out, up one side and down the other, horrified by the fact that when she was called upon to provide a meal for the youth group, she saw the youth director sit on the

back of a chair with her feet resting on the seat of the chair when she taught the lesson. She poked her finger in my chest and said the youth director shouldn't do that. And my first thought was, do you think God is angry about the youth director using a chair in the way for which it was not designed? I didn't say it but I thought it. I believe God saves God's anger for weightier matters.

God as demonstrated through Jesus gets angry when his house of prayer becomes a den of thieves.

God gets angry that people are still starving in a world of plenty. God gets angry when people are evicted and become homeless and most of the population sleeps well at night. Maybe God gets angry when people are selectively ignorant and only get mad when something may hurt them economically, and refuse to believe that the earth is warming due to man-made causes. God gets angry when anyone is not made to feel welcome in the company of God's people. Maybe God gets angry when politics forces a government to shut down and hundreds of thousands of our public servants do get paid. But God does not get angry when his own son is tortured and hung on a cross for our redemption, but God does weep.

What makes you angry?

Blessed are those who have their strength and their anger under God's control. Blessed are those who use their strength for God's purpose and who are angry about the right things.

To be meek is to have every impulse, every instinct, every strength, and every passion under the control of Jesus Christ. The meek are gentle, humble, and at times angry, but angry at the right times and over the right things.

"Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth." I am not sure, but I don't think inheriting the earth this has much to do with property rights. I wonder if inheriting the earth is a quality of life that allows one to enjoy the wonders of the gift of life, and to enjoy God's good creation as God intended. Maybe the promise of meekness, that is inheriting the earth, has something to do with freedom from fear, for our fear is the thief of the joy we sang about in our first hymn. Fear leaves one timid and trembling. Fear taunts us with the unknown, for there is the fear of death, the fear of failure, the fear of tomorrow and it creates cowardly souls.

Courage is an outgrowth of who we are. We are the children of God. It is Jesus Christ that takes away the heart of a mouse and give us the courage to live as God calls us. It is a humble life under the powerful control of Jesus Christ who is in charge of the present and of the future. In putting our trust in Christ we become courageous people and inherit the earth. No longer shall the earth and its fears dominate us, for we follow the one who dominates the earth.

If you are in Christ, and with meekness submit to his plan, you know the ultimate victory and thus are ready to overcome the earth and inherit it, becoming what you were created to be.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Blessed are those who humbly understand they belong to God, and under God's control we become so in tune with our Father in heaven that we become angry at what makes God angry, and we then have the courage to do something about it. And all the joys of this earth will be ours for we shall inherit the earth.