

Meek Not Weak

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[0 : 00] Okay, we're going to go back this evening to the Beatitudes, and we're going to look at Matthew chapter 5 and verse 5, but we'll read the first few verses of chapter 5.

Again, it's part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes which we're going through one at a time. And there will deliberately or otherwise be some overlap with this morning.

I'm making my confession already, but I hope that's a meaningful and spirit-filled or spirit-led overlap because there is a similarity in the themes between anger and meekness as opposites in many ways.

So Sermon on the Mount, chapter 5, seeing the crowds, he went up on a mountain, and when he had sat down his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them saying, and we've looked at these first couple, blessed are the poor and spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

And we're looking at that last of the Beatitudes that are on the screen there, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Now there is within each of us a longing for permanence, absolutely unequivocally.

[1 : 20] There is a longing for permanence in our lives, and we often live as if we're permanent, as if we will always be.

Even though that we know we're going to die someday, we live as if we're not going to die. We live as if we are permanent beings, and we find non-existence or impermanence very difficult to comprehend and very difficult to understand.

And so in this life we look for that sense of permanence in everything, don't we? We look for it whether it's in a relationship or in a marriage or in a house that we can call home.

You know how good it is to be in a house that you call home, that sense of permanence is great going away in holiday, but you come back to a house that you call home, and you recognize how good and how precious that is, or friendships which are permanent for you, friendships that you might not always have in terms of seeing people, but when you meet with them again there's a sense of permanence about it, and we equate sometimes that permanence with the people that we know and love.

I watched a film last week, it's a great film, if you can get over the violence, shouldn't really say that after speaking about anger this morning. But it's a war film and it's a film called Fury, about a tank guy, Brad Pitt I think is in it.

[2 : 52] But it ends up basically that he's the only guy that survives this attack on this tank and the war and American forces in Germany.

All his colleagues who were always there all die in the last battle as it were, apart from him, and the end of the film is him being taken into a first aid truck and being driven away.

I felt a great sense at that moment of the film is meant to end with him having a sense of guilt about leaving these colleagues that have fought with him to die and to rot in that tank and around that tank while he moves away.

There's a great sadness, a great pathos about that moment, but it's as if he's abandoning these people who he thought would be his permanent friends, always there, come through many a battle and yet there's that guilt of moving on and the impermanence of that moment.

It was very powerful, I'm not sure of that, what it was meant to convey but that's what I got from it.

And very often we put all our energies into self-preservation, whether it is through relationships or career or legacy or keeping healthy at all costs because that's what matters.

[4 : 14] And that for us, and for many people today who are not believers who don't have a Christian faith, many people will be focusing their lives in an all-consuming way on permanence, on maintaining their health and maintaining their youth or maintaining their lives at all costs and God may get relegated or not be considered at all.

And sometimes we can act like that as Christians and use God like a genie that we take out of the bottle and allow us to live the life we want, the way we want it and preserve the way we are without recognizing his concept of permanence.

And that is because of the sin of pride and pride within us always drives us towards autonomy, always drives us away from dependence upon God, always drives us towards being self-made and somehow, if not theologically and not even philosophically, but practically denying our mortality and the truth of God's word.

And that is what pride does. Pride always seeks security and permanence its own way, usually through reaching the top of the pile.

It's assertive, go-getting, it's self-confidence, it's ambitious, it's often making a legacy at the expense of others. Now, a great practical example of that, almost a parody of that, would be the candidates on the apprentice.

[5 : 59] They would be a perfect example of people who are seeking their own success with their own heightened egos and blowing their own trumpets to a kind of in a almost humorous, unrealistic way.

I'm not sure what they genuinely think about themselves, but it's anything, but it's the opposite in other words of meekness. What you see in a program like that and what you see in a lot of people's lives is the opposite of meekness.

And that's what we're going to be looking at this evening, because the message of the gospel of Jesus is very different. It's different from the ideological thinking of many of the colleagues, many of the philosophical foundations that people have in life and of secular philosophical thinking for sure. But it's also something we battle with in our own hearts is the reality of what Jesus requires of us as followers of Him. Because remember, the beatitudes are the blessings He bestows on those who have already put their trust in Him and how they live their lives, how we live our lives, how you and I live our lives.

So the Christian is to be someone who displays meekness in their life. And that's the command, that's the blessing, that's the beatitude that we have here, blessed our the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

[7 : 31] It's a characteristic, as we've seen with, we've mentioned earlier, like the fruit of the Spirit, it's a characteristic that should be in every believer. It's a mark of the Holy Spirit.

It's a mark of a transformed life, just as the fruit of the Spirit is. Not just the odd one in here now and again, but all of them to a lesser or to a greater extent. And that meekness comes from confessing, as believers, our weakness before God and relying on His strength to keep us from falling, as we illustrated a little bit with the children.

It's accepting His diagnosis of failure and confessing that. And that's why it comes after the first two beatitudes, which speak about that attitude of mind, which enables us to be meek, so you've got the poor in Spirit and those who mourn.

And we've looked at them, and we've seen how these spiritual characteristics enable us then to become people who are meek. Now meekness in the Bible is not, as the title of the sermon suggests, weakness.

Meekness is a great characteristic, it's a great word, and it's, and you know this, and I know you know this, and I've told you it before, but I'm just going to tell you again because it's good to be reminded of.

[8 : 51] It means self-control. It means controlled strength. Meekness is being in control through the power of the Spirit of our lives and of our hearts and of our emotions.

It comes from the concept of taming a wild horse, breaking a horse so that it becomes something that is domesticated and can be ridden.

Not just a horse, it could be any animal, I guess, but we normally think of horse. Those of us who are a certain age here will remember, I don't think any younger people here really watch, you don't really see many cowboy films anymore, but the cowboy films where you know the cool cowboy would come and go and get on the back of an unbroken horse and they called him the bucking

bronco, and he would break that horse by riding it and it would become tame.

And that's where the word meekness comes from. It speaks of restraining our passions and controlling our passions. It means being able to, and this is what it fits in quite well with this morning about, because this morning we looked at temper and losing our temper.

Meekness is about being able to control by this power of God, our temper and our passions, and when we're opposed or when we're maybe rebuked or corrected, we don't need to be defensive.

[10:14] We don't need to always be on the defensive in our lives. We don't rage. We're not easily provoked. We're not impetuous, hasty or flighty.

We have this meekness, this strength of self-control that comes from the living God. It means being able to forgive and treat others calmly because we know how God is treated us.

So it must, it comes from, it's not a natural characteristic, it's a spiritual one that comes from our relationship with God in Christ and what we've received and the grace that we've received.

It would involve not being unduly opinionated or forceful in how we share our opinions and our thoughts.

So it really, meekness speaks about in gospel terms, submission and obedience to God through Christ, obeying God, and submission and service to others.

[11:19] That's what meekness is, it's revealing a willingness to obey God even if it goes against what we want to do maybe ourselves and also a desire to serve others in our lives because of that control of who we are in Christ that enables us to serve others, better even to suffer for doing right than to sin and submission and meekness reflects that.

God's will is, I know I'm sorry, I'm repeating a little bit from this one, God's will and not our will primarily in the Lord's prayer and the needs of others before our desires, that servantheartedness, calm and controlled, not easily blown off course, willing to change in order to stay on course following Jesus doing His will.

So there's two things it's not, so if we see that it's a controlled strength, this meekness that's spoken of in the gospels and in the Beatitudes here and in the Bible, it's not, it's not, there's two things it's not as well, it's not weakness, okay?

I think the concept of gentle Jesus, meek and mild, often along with it seems to have the underlying impression that Jesus is just weak, spineless in some ways, but it's not weakness, it's not sentimental to be meek, it's not soft.

Meekness, as I say, it's controlled strength, you think of a, I'm scared of horses, they are big brutes and I'm kind of scared of them and you wouldn't say a horse at any stage at any way was kind of weak, even though it may be controlled and there's a, there's a great strength as we'll see, but it certainly isn't something that's often championed in, say for example in Hollywood or in films, you would often get the opposite, wouldn't you, in terms of heroes, you know, Top Gun, the second Top Gun just come out, it's the classic, isn't it?

[13:35] Classic hero, he wins everything, he's powerfully strong and he's got good stuntmen and all these things and you know, everything works for Mel Gibson, who is it?

What's his name? Tom Cruise. Tom Cruise, yeah, I knew that, I was just checking, you weren't asleep. So, that's the normal picture you would get in Hollywood, isn't it? It's kind of the opposite of meekness, but I thought of, there's a great example of meekness in Hollywood, I don't know if it's Hollywood, in the film industry, because it's a true story and it's a true story, again, it's a war film about Desmond Doss, who was a pacifist, a Christian, who went, was determined to fight for his country as a medic, but there was a big struggle because obviously he wouldn't fire a gun, but anyway, he went.

And there's this great story of this meek character saving 75 people's lives by going again and again and again the battle of Okinawa to retrieve them at the danger to his own life.

It's a great example of meekness, of controlled strength, of serving God and serving others before himself without firing a shot.

That selfless inner strength that came from his faith. So it's not weakness, strength, controlled strength, like an excavator, Lachy, you'll like this one, an excavator, you know, if you've seen the buckets of these massive machines and they can move tons and tons of earth, but in the right, driven and operated in the right way, it could pick up a duckling, these massive buckets with the controlled strength of the operator.

[15:36] And the skilled hands at the controls. And that, you know, a muscly, strong dad holding a newborn, controlled strength.

It's not weakness. It's not weakness. Nor is it a natural characteristic. These two things, it's not, it's not a natural characteristic. You know, you can be an introvert, you can be an extrovert, you can be a physical giant, you can just be a wee thing.

It doesn't matter about your natural characteristics because meekness is a gift from God, it's a blessing that comes from Him. It's a beatitude. It's what He gives to those who are His, and we are to display that in our lives.

And the motive for it is how Christ has dealt with us, and we respond in that meek way as a result, and we live in that way. There's two examples.

One, we read about Moses, and we read in Numbers 12 verse 3 that he was the meekest man who walked on earth. And that is, that's an amazing claim for the inspired scriptures to make.

[16:44] He was, and what, was he weak? No, he wasn't weak. He was a leader of a nation. But he prayed for his rebellious people again and again. And in the story of Miriam and Aaron where he may have acted very differently, God was interestingly, as we looked this morning at God's wrath, God's wrath was poured out on.

And Miriam, because of her sinful, rebellious spirit against Moses and against God, and God judged her with leprosy, and Aaron pleaded on her behalf, and Moses pleaded, please God, please heal her, please heal her.

Using his strength not to destroy Miriam at that point, or to say, well, you know, you're getting what you deserve, but rather to plead for her forgiveness, because he himself knew, and had experienced forgiveness and so was meek in his life.

Isn't it great? He's so close to God. It's an amazing description we have there of him with God that, you know, God spoke to others in dreams and in visions, but God spoke to Moses as one face to face.

There was this great friendship. He knew God's shining face. He came down from the mountain reflecting that face. He knew God's grace in his life, and he knew not to be defensive, because God had placed him in the position he'd been in, nor to seek revenge.

[18:09] But yet, what incredible resilience, strength and courage as he led the people of God. So Moses is a great example.

If you want to know what meekness is, read the story of Moses, but also, of course, Jesus is a great example of meekness as well. The infinite God, his incarnation, childhood obedience, fact that in his rejection, he didn't call down the angels from heaven at any point.

Silence before Pilate, his strength, his faithfulness to the cross. We saw this morning his forgiveness of the murderers that had placed him there. His obedience to the Father, yet not my will but yours be done.

The sweating of blood, the cry of dead election, internally and externally absolute meekness we find in Jesus.

First Peter 2, verse 20 says, But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God to this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

[19:22] Okay, we know he's a Savior, but he's also an example. He committed no sin, no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate.

When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Great picture of meekness in action in our Savior.

So just in conclusion for us as we think about meekness, how do we display meekness and receive this blessing of meekness?

Well, we do so by imitating Christ. We're called to do that. We're called to suffer injustice for doing good.

But always to seek revenge, never to seek revenge and not always to seek justice, but leaving that to God. Enduring an entrusting judgment to God, we recognize that, dying to sin.

[20:30] So we imitate Christ, but we also, we wear meekness. Colossians 3, 12 is similar verses from this morning. This morning we looked at the negative verses that included anger and wrath and sin and everything else.

So this evening, we're talking about this morning, what we put off. This evening, what we put on. So put on then spiritually, wear the clothes as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another.

And if one is a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also forgive them. That's a great, a great, very simple description of meekness for us all. Nobody here doesn't understand that. Nobody here needs that explained theologically. We just need to do it in the power of the Spirit.

You don't need some great kind of exposition. You simply, and I simply need to do it, to put it on. We need to wear meekness then.

[21 : 40] We also need to hear the word with meekness, the way we open the Bible, the way we come to church under the word of God, the way we hear God as He speaks.

James 1.21, therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness. I think in the A.V. it was the most beautiful description of the superfluity of naughtiness.

Put aside all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls. So we listen to the word with meekness.

That is not high-handed. We don't say, come on, God prove it to me. We listen with meekness. We listen with submission. We listen with eagerness.

We listen with hunger because of who God is and what He has done for us. And we find that our lives are therefore transformed because we do so.

[22 : 36] So we wear meekness. We imitate Christ. We hear the word with meekness. We live out obedience with the meekness of God's wisdom. And again, it's beautiful how it's all brought together.

James 3.13, who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct, let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

So God's wisdom is not necessarily intelligence, but it is the wisdom that enables us to live out and understand how He wants us to live and display it as a fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5.23, we recognize that. It's one of the fruit of the Spirit, that gentleness or gentle force could be a way of describing the gentleness of the fruit of the Spirit.

Show that. Go on. Tomorrow, show it. Live it out in your life tomorrow. I don't know where you're going to be. I know where I'm going to be and I'm going to have to live it out.

[23 : 38] You live it out tomorrow. Live out meekness. Show yourself to be different from your unbelieving colleagues and friends and neighbors by responding with meekness rather than responding in a naturalistic and sinful way.

And when we do so, we're reminded as we go right back to the beginning about permanence, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

In other words, we're gifted what we cannot earn. Spend our small futile lives trying to make permanence. The only permanence that comes is from trusting in Jesus Christ and following Him because He gifts us the earth.

In the life, our deepest longing, what we strive after most we can't obtain without Christ.

He gifts us it. He gifts us this earth, this world, this rock that St. Columbus is built on. He gifts us it. It's our home. Yes, it's right for us to care for and to steward this world, but the environmentalists generally have missed the main point that there's only one way to save and redeem the planet ultimately is by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and recognizing that He has inherited that world to us.

[25 : 08] It's our planet. The desire for that permanent, earthly, physical soil that we call home comes from the heart of God and it's good, but it's a misguided desire that has burst a thousand wars.

And currently we're seeing it in the world and we live, but we will inherit the world as our home, as a promise from God because that will be the home within dwells righteousness.

And that is what we can look forward to. And that is what enables us to be blessed this evening.

When we live for Christ, when we obey and serve others, that's where true life is.

That's where we find peace, contentment and happiness. Make your gaze on Jesus, make my gaze on Jesus because then that's the blessing that enables us to live like Him and know fullness of life. Will not find it anywhere else. Amen. Father God, we ask that you'd help us to live for you and love you. Forgive us when we don't see it.

[26 : 27] Forgive us when we believe it theologically or intellectually, but when the rubber hits the road we self-preserve or we sinfully self-righteously judge or we show that we are out of control, that we don't have that meekness, that great strong control of our passions that the Spirit enables

us to have.

We thank you that you do forgive us and we thank you that you don't give up on us. And if there's anyone here this evening, Lord, who feels like giving up on themselves as Christians, may they hear your word and know your promises and believe in your faithfulness and trust in your provision and not give up.

May they hold on and stay close and see transformation and change. We pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.