

February 13, 2011

Matthew 5:5

Alright good morning! Take your Bibles out and turn to the gospel of Matthew chapter 5 verse 5. We've been walking through the Beatitudes as the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. And while the 1st two are crucial for entrance into the Kingdom of God as well as life in the Kingdom, this 3rd one may be the most important and I trust you'll understand why I say that before we are done today. Let's go back to the context as a whole – Matthew 5:1-12. If you're memorizing this, try and go along with me today. If not, then get started!

TEXT

Here's the deal. **You will not experience God nor will you stand well as a Christian unless this verse – this truth – is the REALITY in your life.** It is not learned intellectually but experientially and until then, the Sermon on the Mount will mean nothing. You can learn it, you just can't apply it. This one is critical. Verse 5: *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

If we don't become meek, we will never know God and He will never produce anything in our lives. Let me show you that truth simply in **James 1:21**. *“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”*

If the word is the implanted word, how can you accept it? Why do you have to accept or receive it if it is planted in you? Because the Word can be in you and not affect your life. We've all been there. Christian – yes – but not manifesting anything of God at all in our lives. James says “humbly accept” – same word – same heart as meek, in fact some translations will say “in meekness receive” – because **it is meekness that allows the implanted word to fully BLOOM in your life.**

So what does it mean to be meek? What are we talking about when we're talking about “meekness.” The word has been notoriously hard to define. If you look it up in a dictionary, the dictionary may lead you astray. One of the ones out there will tell you it means “deficient in spirit and courage.” Let me tell you that no matter what the word means in English today, that is not what it means in the New Testament. Synonyms are given often for this – things like gentleness, humility, etc. But **the bottom line for us to start with means someone who does not assert HIMSELF, someone who is not consumed with her own agenda.** But there is a reason why they don't assert themselves and it has nothing to do with personality issues. A lot of people confuse meekness with those that have phlegmatic personalities – laid back, unassuming people by nature. That's not the deal. The reason behind the meaning of meekness is seen in the chain Jesus has created in the Beatitudes so far.

There is a flow here. Those who are poor in spirit are those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy – their inability to produce anything of value before God – their unworthiness, their unfitness to enter the Kingdom and their poverty when it comes to anything that can please God.

These are the ones who mourn over that condition. They are broken and mourning not only because of their sinful situation but because of the absolute rebellion against God that is their basic nature. They grieve over their sin – over their condition – and such people are then naturally meek. They don't assert themselves – just the opposite.

The person who recognizes his own spiritual bankruptcy and mourns over his own sin and rebellion is not about to ASSERT himself. Instead he shows a quiet, willing submission to God – which stands in direct contrast to the stubborn, willful, self-centeredness of the natural man.

The word “meek” was used in classical Greek by three different types of people – doctors, sailors, farmers. The doctor used this word meek to describe a soothing medicine that would take away pain. The sailor used the word meek to describe a cool breeze that brings refreshment. The farmer used the word meek to describe a horse that is broken and able to be useful on the farm. **The imagery of the use of the word in Jesus' day sheds light on what Jesus means: POWER UNDER CONTROL.** Why?

Well think about it. Doctors use drugs – but they don't abuse them. When your use of drugs moves out of control you wreck your body, your mind, your life - the power of medicine without control will destroy you.

That cool breeze refreshes the sailors but we know that a tornado can destroy a home, even a city because of a breeze gone ballistic - something that is out of control.

Try to get on the back of a horse that is not broken and see the meaning of out of control as it bucks and kicks and seeks to do damage any way it can. But the meaning of meek in all these situations is that same power under control. In the life of a Christian, it means the emptying of self – a self-brokenness – and I want us to see it first in relation to God.

I'll choose my words carefully here to develop this for us this morning. **Meekness in the believer is when I see myself correctly and therefore am quiet before God.** When I see myself correctly – as God sees me – which is what the first two beatitudes were all about – how God sees me, not how I compare to others – that I can't produce anything of value spiritually and I have a nature in me that is in rebellion against him. I will be meek when I see those truths experientially.

Take Peter for example right quick (John 21:15-17). Peter was always mouthy. Always first one with his hand in the air. Would argue anything any time. Did you ever see evidence of meekness in Peter's life before he betrayed Jesus? No. All the way until Jesus literally tells him he was going to betray Christ 3 times – even then Peter says no way – uh uh. These other guys may bail and run, but I'll never do that – I'll give my life for you. Peter never thought of himself as incapable of producing anything spiritually – never saw himself as spiritually bankrupt and in rebellion against God.

Then after he betrays Jesus and he catches the eyes of Christ as Jesus bloody and beaten looks back at Peter - boom. He gets it. And then when Jesus meets Peter after he has risen from the dead, Jesus asks Peter three questions – remember that encounter? And Peter answers each one simply – to the point – no more – and doesn't go beyond that. There is a complete change in his view of himself before God – he is meek – he is quiet before God because of a correct view of himself.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. This verse is really rooted in Psalm 37 – if you'll turn there with me for a moment. We've got a lot more to say about this, but this passage will help shed some light on how this plays out in a life. Read **Psalm 37:3-11** with me.

There in verse 9 is an almost identical statement to Matthew 5:5 – hope in the Lord, some versions say wait for the Lord and you'll inherit the land. The meek will inherit the earth. Meekness – hoping in, waiting for the Lord. Verse 11 – the meek will inherit the land. Put all that together:

Verse 3 – trust in the Lord. Verse 4 – delight yourself in the Lord. Verse 5 – commit your way to the Lord. Verse 7 – Be still before the Lord, do not fret. Verse 8 – refrain from anger, do not fret. Verse 9 – hope in the Lord.

These are the ATTITUDES of the meek. They give up everything for the purposes of God. They trust Him – they delight in Him – they commit their way to Him – they rest in him, they don't fret, they wait on Him. The psalmist is saying be meek. Don't freak out when the wicked prosper – don't panic if your plans don't fall together – God's blessing comes to those who yield to him – and what else are you going to do anyway? If you know you are spiritually bankrupt and broken over your rebellion, what do you have to offer?

And please get this. **This meekness is NOT talking about cowardice.** God may call you to do something that is going to take tremendous courage. It isn't talking about **laziness**. God may call you to do something that takes tremendous energy and effort on your part. It isn't a **lack of conviction** – isn't wishy-washiness. Not **some benign human niceness**. **It is faith in the truest sense of TRUSTING God.** It is saying Lord I have nothing to offer – I am bankrupt and mourning over that reality and must therefore be humble before you because anything that happens in my life of value and blessing that pleases you you have to do so I trust you – I commit to you – I delight in you – I hope in you.

That's exactly how Jesus lived his life. He did not have to come to the sinful realization we do, but he says in John 5:19 & 40 "I only do what the Father tells me. I have yielded my life to him. I only do what the Holy Spirit works through me." He set the example for us and he was no coward and he was not weak but he was meek.

His power was under control – under God the Father’s control. He had yielded up his prerogative to use his divine attributes. He gave up the right to independently act as God and therefore set the perfect example for us. **Meekness doesn’t mean I’m weak – it means I’ve YIELDED my power to the purposes of God – I am under his control.** Out of a correct view of myself I am quiet before God and not about to assert myself or my agenda.

Church when meekness occurs in our lives, two things happen. And they are related to one another. **The first one is that we will EXPERIENCE God in ways we have never known before.**

I’m going to ask you a question but it is not to inflict guilt so nobody raise your hand or anything, it is just to make a factual point. We were snowed in for most of the past 2 weeks. How many of us spent as much of that time praying as we did watching television? Or extend it to the past month – same question?

None of us. Why is it that I would thirst for Hollywood more than I would thirst for God? Cause I’m right there with you – Nicole and I cleaned out our tivo and even got sucked into things like cupcake wars on the Food Network, so seriously.

But why, if we are just gut level honest is it that TV and movies touch us deeper than Jesus Christ? There’s only one explanation for that. It is because of Psalm 46:10.

The NIV words **Psalm 46:10** as *“Be still and know that I am God.”* Other translations just as correctly translate that first half as *“cease striving and know that I am God.”*

Remember the Greek word for meekness that we are talking about is pictured as a horse that is broken. That horse hasn’t lost its strength or power or any of its characteristics that make it what it is but it is broken before its rider. And the rider then with his knees and the reins can direct the horse wherever he needs to go and the horse is quiet before the rider.

If I am going to meet God, I have to CEASE STRIVING. That’s why our prayer times mean nothing. Because we come into the prayer closet not meek – we come in striving and not quiet and therefore it has no impact on our lives.

If you grew up in church the way I did, then you know you heard over and over again, you need to have a quiet time. You need to discipline yourselves to get alone with Jesus every day. Nothing wrong with that. But listen – discipline can create the opportunity to be alone with God but discipline cannot create a deep powerful experience with Jesus that so transforms your life that you’d rather be with Jesus than Hollywood.

Most of the time when we pray – or let’s just be honest – if we pray – we don’t cease striving. We bust in the door and start striving. Same deal – growing up – you were probably taught like I was the ACTS acronym for praying, right? Stands for what? Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. That when I pray I gotta adore God then I gotta confess my sin then I gotta thank him and then I make supplication for other people and needs. And I get it – those things are going to be in our prayers in one way or another if we know Jesus at all – we need some way to teach and disciple new Christians – so I’m not knocking the attempt to do that with that acronym. What I’m saying is we basically take that and bust in to the prayer closet & God’s presence and do it and get out of there, that’s the problem.

Stick with me – on this side of the door to the prayer closet, who is supposed to be riding the horse? God. He’s riding – I’m the horse, right? But I get in the closet and I become the rider. I take over. I become god. I expect him to respond to me. No! He is God – not me. Even in the prayer closet we are to respond to him. That’s why prayer means nothing. We’ve never heard his voice.

So many people will in honesty say I’ve been a Christian for 20, 30 years and never heard God speak to me. I’ll tell you why – because you never stopped striving. When Elijah heard the voice of God – was it in the fire or the storm or the earthquake – no it was the still small voice of God. Psalm 46:10 – be still – cease striving – and know that I am God. **Ecclesiastes chapter 5:1-7** says guard your steps when you go to the house of God – go to listen rather than offer the sacrifice of fools – don’t be quick with your mouth or hasty in your heart to utter anything before God – let your words be few.

Everything in the word of God is designed to teach us to shut up and listen. And if you’re meek, that’s what you will do, but if you aren’t meek, you’ll do all the talking. And the reason why that means nothing to you, the reason why Hollywood gets you deeper than the word of God, why you have never heard from Jesus is because you’ve never been quiet enough to hear him.

But church when you come to the place where you are meek in that prayer closet and you hear him speak to you, you won't be able to wait till you can GET BACK IN!

So two things when meekness grips our lives, we experience God in ways we have never known before – combined with the first two beatitudes - **what happens when I meek in that prayer closet is that I leave and I know I'm bad – I'm bankrupt and I know that I'm APPROVED. I'm his. No matter how bad I am, I belong to Jesus.** Which connects us to **the second thing that happens when meekness grips our lives and that is that absolutely NOTHING man can do or say will affect us.**

We already talked about meekness being power under control – that out of a correct view of myself, I am quiet before God. But that same reality affects our relation to man as well. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones emphasizes that this meekness denotes a humble and gentle attitude to others which is determined by a true estimate of ourselves. He points out that it is comparatively easy to be honest with ourselves before God and acknowledge ourselves to be sinners in his sight. But he goes on and says how much more difficult it is to allow other people to say things like that about me! I come into church and have no problem calling myself a miserable sinner. I take that all in stride. But let somebody come up to me after the service and call me a miserable sinner and point out his perspective on all my faults and I want to punch him in the nose! In other words, I am not prepared to allow other people to think or speak of me what I have just acknowledged before God that I am. There is a basic hypocrisy there – there always is when meekness is absent.

But when that meekness is there in the closet and it is there when I leave, nothing a man can do will affect me. The meek will inherit the earth – we'll come back to that – but nothing on earth will affect me because **man's APPLAUSE and man's CRITICISM won't affect me when I leave the prayer closet the right way: in meekness before God.**

Listen we've talked before and commiserated together before about our mutual weakness for speeding, right? I've talked about my run-ins throughout my life with cops on the road – in fact back in 1993 on the way back to Texas A&M from Amarillo I was in a 3 car caravan, one of which was my future wife Nicole, & I got pulled over twice in the same trip. Once in Clarendon when I was the lead car and once right here in good ol' Wichita Falls when I was the last car in the caravan. I asked the cop why didn't you stop them – I was just following them (nice loyalty huh) He goes – you were going faster. Anyway...

But it hasn't been till the past few years that I've had cop friends both here at Fairway and outside the church family who – out of the goodness of their hearts – have told me time and time again, if or when I get pulled over, to call them right afterwards and they'll get the officer to tear up the ticket. I never do and they get mad at me and what I tell them is the truth – if I get pulled over, I broke the law, no matter what my excuse, I deserve the ticket – I can't justify having them as a friend get me out of it.

And that's true, but the reason I don't tell them about is because the truth is, I think I am so way ahead. I've gotten away with it way more than I've been caught. Guy pulls me over, he'd have to give me 200 tickets a day just to start keeping up – so I'm always nice to the cop – I always take the ticket and say have a nice day because dude you are so way behind!

And that's true of all of us - ok. If you're over 16 – you speed. You ever been in a car, you've sped. That doesn't make it right – that doesn't make it ok – and that's not my point. You say what's the point? What does that have to do with meekness? Everything.

Listen – **when I realize how BAD I am (Matthew 5:3 & 4) then there is nothing anyone can say to me in criticism that can have any effect on my life because you can't possibly tell me anything about my life that is any worse than what GOD has already told me.** When I am defensive to criticism, it is because I am not meek – I've forgotten what I am.

And the other side is just as true. Neither can your applause affect me. **When I leave the prayer closet in meekness having heard the voice of God saying “yes, you are bad, but I've FORGIVEN you in the blood of Jesus Christ and you are my child and I've put my Spirit within you and I'm going to control you and make you something.”** Let me tell you, when I hear the applause of heaven like that, **there are no other applause in the world that can OUTSHINE God's hand in my heart!**

Why can't we tell people about Jesus? Because we are scared to death because we've forgotten whose we are and we're scared what they'll say. It is a lack of meekness that has killed evangelism in every generation in this room.

When you are driven and affected by men's applause or men's criticism, you are not meek. But Jesus says, blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

What effect does Jesus want this promised to have on his disciples? Yes it means **in the literal sense that it is the meek** – those who out of a correct view of themselves are quiet before God – under his control – **who WILL RULE the world with Christ one day in the new heaven and the new earth rather than those who try and rule it now on their own.** But there is more to this than that. I think Jesus wants this promise to give his disciples strength in their meekness.

The promise that the meek will inherit the earth is intended to give us strength to ENDURE in meekness when the natural inclination would be to defend ourselves or retaliate or give way to worry or anger. There is a passage in **1 Corinthians 3** that helps us see what I'm talking about. In **verses 18-23** Paul is trying to help the Corinthians overcome pride and to stop boasting in different teachers and worldly wisdom and so he says (text)

Notice the logic in verse 21 – no more boasting about men (for) all things are yours. And one of the things mentioned is the world. Don't boast in men, because the world is yours. Does that make sense?

Would I feel a need to brag that my house is bigger than your house is I knew that my Father owned the whole city and I was the beneficiary in his will? No.

The quietness and vulnerability of meekness is a beautiful and painful thing. It goes against everything that we are by our sinful nature. It requires supernatural help and that is what Jesus gives.

If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ - that is if you trust him and commit your way to him and wait and hope patiently for him, God has already begun to help you and will help you even more. And the primary way that he will help you is to assure you when you will listen that you are his – **you are a fellow heir of Jesus Christ and the world and everything in it that is worth having is YOURS.**

Romans 8:32 says *“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”*

Back a verse to **Romans 8:31** – *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* Such is the strength of the meek in Matthew 5:5.

One last consideration this morning. How do you know if you are meek? Some tests are obvious from what we've already heard. But let me ask:

- Do you respond humbly and obediently to the Word or are you quick to excuse yourself or even more quick to apply it to someone else sitting around you?
- Are you more concerned about when God is dishonored rather than when you are dishonored?
- Are you more concerned about God's purposes being or not being fulfilled than you are about your own?
- Do you seek peace? Do you easily defer to someone else? Are you more concerned about others than yourself?
- Do you receive criticism well and love those who give it?
- Do you receive applause graciously without really being moved by them or seeking them?
- Are you willing to be seen by others in the way that God sees you?
- Who is the rider and on the horse of your life?
- How is your prayer life with Jesus?

Such give us the evidence of or the lack of meekness.

Matthew Henry said “A lion in God's cause, must be a lamb in his own.” Meekness is the abdication of our rights, our power under his control, us quiet before God. It is the person ready to say “I will not stand on my rights, I will not demand to have my own way. I will be concerned about the interests of others and the cause of God and I will trust God to take care of me.”

And the power behind it – **biblical meekness is rooted in the deep confidence that against all logic, against all human reasoning, against all odds, God is FOR you and not against you – all that He is is YOURS when all that you are is HIS.**

Church I told you when we started that this verse may be the most important of the beatitudes and I still do. **The single greatest quality we need as believers is to be MEEK before our Holy God.** So that we experience God in ways we never have before – so that His Word comes to live in us and this world cannot affect us because we are his.

May such be true of each of us who claim his name today. Pray.