

2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters
Sermon Series - Focus On The Heart
Sermon Title - Meekness is Not Weakness
Sermon Text - Matthew 5:5
Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

Introduction:

“Great is Thy faithfulness, Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided!”

I’m so glad that God is faithful and that His mercies are new every morning! And I’m so grateful that He is my great provider! There’s a lot of people who think they are responsible for everything they have and that it’s by the sweat of their brow they’ve achieved and accumulated all the blessings they have. Don’t get me wrong, God doesn’t bless laziness, but if you aren’t humble enough to realize that the fact that you have the health, the strength, the opportunity and the God-given talents to do what you do, then you may be in for a rude awakening at some point! Humility and meekness are misunderstood concepts in our world today, and we need God to teach us the truth! So let’s pray and ask Him to do just that today! Prayer!

Jesus, in His famous sermon on the mount, said this...

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Just what did Jesus mean when He used the word meek, why are the meek blessed, and why will they inherit the earth? Let’s answer those three questions.

What did Jesus mean when He used the word Meek?

Before we answer that question, let’s see what the world’s definition of the word meek is. Merriam Webster defines meek in three ways...

Meek - enduring injury with patience and without resentment: MILD

Meek - deficient in spirit and courage: SUBMISSIVE

Meek - not violent or strong: MODERATE

Dictionary.com says this:

“When used in a positive way, meek describes someone who shows patient restraint. When used negatively, it means overly submissive.”

So you can see how the world could very easily define meekness as weakness. However, when Jesus spoke of meekness He was definitely not referring to weakness in the sense of being

deficient in spirit and courage. He was definitely not referring to lack of strength. He could have very well been thinking about enduring injury with patience and without resentment! And He could have been speaking of being submissive, albeit, submission to God and His will for your life. Bottom line, when Jesus speaks of meekness He is not speaking of weakness! I was talking with Steven Stringer at the men's breakfast yesterday, where he inspired us all with his testimony! He shared how he came to the place in his life where he humbled himself and admitted he couldn't overcome his struggles without the Divine help and strength of Jesus Christ! If we were all honest, we would admit the same thing! Steven then showed me his journal where he takes notes and said he was at a sister church, and he had written down what the pastor said about meekness and I quote "Meekness is strength under control!" That's such a great definition!

You know, so many people think that good leaders could never be meek but rather have to be arrogant, demanding, bossy, and in total control of everything. The truth is that leaders who are meek are extremely aware of their weaknesses, and as a result realize their dependence on Jesus and His Holy Spirit for strength, wisdom, and direction! James 1:5 says...

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Also, leaders who are meek seek to surround themselves with people who have the strengths they do not! Leaders who are meek are good leaders because they actually allow the people on their team to use their strengths and aren't threatened when those people excel and do well! In fact they celebrate them! A humble leader doesn't have to get all the glory! In fact, they don't care who gets the credit as long as God gets the glory and lives are transformed! A humble leader doesn't have to be demanding, because they lead by example and the people around them desire to do their best because of that example. I don't know about you, but I'm much more motivated by a leader who has a humble dependence on God than one who has an arrogant dependence on his or her self. Those kinds of leaders will get you hurt, because it's all about them and their personal agenda and that's just dangerous! The kinds of leaders are motivated and guided, not by the wisdom of God, but by their own prideful wisdom. James describes this kind of worldly wisdom...

James 3:14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

James 3:15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

James 3:16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

You see, meekness has to do with humility, and a person who is humble understands that they don't know it all. So that person is teachable and because of that teachable spirit, they become wise and learn how to be good leaders. James said...

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

If meekness is associated with humility then we need to know the definition of humility. Right? Once again, we turn to the Merriam Webster Dictionary.

Humility - "Freedom from pride or arrogance: the quality or state of being humble"

Not a bad definition. And James talks about the kind of wisdom that motivates a person or a leader who is humbly dependent on God...

James 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Now this is where the world, and even some Christians draw the line. They think this kind of language is weak speak! Wait, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere! This is really going to date me, but Beaver, of "Leave it to Beaver" fame would say, "But gee, Wally, that doesn't sound very tough!" It may not sound very tough, but it's the truth of God's Word and it makes so much sense! Let me explain.

Meekness does not mean that you don't take pride in your work, or have courage to do your job, or do not have the ability to speak up or speak out when the situation demands that you do so. Sometimes leaders have to be strong, decisive, courageous, and even take chances, but their strength shouldn't translate into destroying people, and their decisiveness doesn't need to become divisiveness, and their courageousness shouldn't be outrageous self promotion, and when they take chances it should be more about putting their own self interests at risk rather than the ones they are leading! A good leader is looking out for those they lead. Like a Good Shepherd looks out for their sheep and puts their own life at risk to protect them! When we think of leaders, we also think of leadership in the home. You may not like what I'm about to say, but I must preach God's Word, all of it. Sometimes men will manhandle things at home and manhandle their wives, and think that that's being a spiritual leader. That's not what God's word means when it tells the man to be a spiritual leader in his home. Paul said this...

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Jesus died for the church, and that means He died for people, because the church is not a building it's people. Sinners saved by the amazing grace of Jesus poured out upon the cross. Look at how Jesus treated His disciples in the Bible. Jesus never manhandled them. He was strong, and spoke with conviction, and even rebuked at times, but it was with humility. When he confronted Saint Peter about his three denials, He was firm, but loving! He didn't even manhandle Judas at the last supper when he knew Judas was going to betray him to his death! He called him a friend. Once again, meekness is not weakness. Jesus could've handled

business with both of those guys, but he had a bigger lesson to teach. And what lesson was that?

Blessed are the Meek!

Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Matthew 16:22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

Matthew 16:23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Jesus wasn't calling Peter Satan, He was speaking to Satan, who was trying to use Peter to tempt Jesus to forgo the Cross and the suffering, and the shame! And then Jesus gives a powerful lesson.

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Matthew 16:25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

You see, Jesus was teaching the lesson that those who are willing to humble themselves and become meek, fully submitted to the will of God, willing to endure injury for the good of others, with patience and without resentment will be blessed! He said...

Matthew 16:25 ...but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

It takes meekness and humility to deny yourself and take up a cross and follow Jesus! It took meekness and humble submission to the Father's will for Jesus to take up His Cross, but He did it because, as the song says, "He didn't want heaven without you" and He knew the joy of having you in glory would outweigh the pain and humiliation! And if you take up your cross, it will be a sacrifice but you will be blessed and you will find a joy in life not based on personal power, personal gain, personal popularity, or personal satisfaction, but a joy in life fueled by God's power, God's purpose, God's plans, and God's love! And while you may not gain the things the world says are important and satisfying, you will find a level of soul satisfaction that can't be found in things of this world! It's not that you won't have things, or enjoy things, but things will no longer control you or be the things you chase after. You will begin pursuing the things of God and He will show you how to use other things for His glory and for your good and for the good of others. You will be blessed materially in that God will take care of you and meet your needs, and may even give you above and beyond what you need. But you will also begin to find the freedom that comes from understanding this truth Paul quoted...

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' ”

I believe it takes a meek and humble person to fully understand and actually practice that truth! And it also requires something else that is also one of the most important blessings that comes to a meek and humble person: Genuine love! Genuine love is more about giving than receiving. And why would I say this? Because God's Word tells us in 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, that genuine love can only be experienced by those who are willing to become meek and humble and willing to give. Let me show you. Paul said...

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

1 Corinthians 13:5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

1 Corinthians 13:6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

1 Corinthians 13:7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

So why does Paul begin with only two things about what love is, patient and kind, and then go into a rant about what love is not? Maybe it's because it is so hard to describe what love is, but it is easy to describe what love is not! We cannot ignore this because understanding “what love is not” helps us understand “what love is” and it has to do with meekness and humility!

Love is not envious!

Webster defines Envy as...

Envy: painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage

Love is not envious because of its motivation! True love is motivated by the object of its love! Because true love is motivated by the object of its love, then true love wants what's best for that person! Instead of being hurt by another person's good fortune, we rejoice with them. Paul says this in verse 6...

1 Corinthians 13:6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

True love is motivated by what is good for the other person and so it doesn't do things with an eye to personal gain. It's not motivated by how it can get what the other person has, or has achieved! In other words, true love is excited when another person does good, when they get a promotion, when they succeed, when they win an award! If you struggle with envy, something is not right! In fact, God's Word has this to say in the book of Proverbs...

Proverbs 14:30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

Why does it say that envy rots the bones? Our motivations in life affect our physical well being. When a person is envious, they are, as the definition stated, resentful and in emotional pain over the fact that someone else has a perceived advantage! This can destroy your physical and emotional health. Envy has side effects like, dissatisfaction, disappointment, discouragement, and anger! Envy and selfish ambition causes us to be takers rather than givers. The opposite of envious is generous! God wants us to be givers not takers!

Love is Not Boastful

Oxford Dictionary defines boastful as...

boast-ful 'bōs(t)fəl/ - adjective: showing excessive pride and self-satisfaction in one's achievements, possessions, or abilities.

How hard is it to have a good, solid relationship with someone who thinks they've gotten where they are without the help of anybody else? How hard is it to be around someone who is always bragging about all the stuff they've accumulated or how smart and talented they are? Why is love not boastful? Once again it has to do with motivation. Love is motivated by the object of its love, so it is not focused on self but on others! True love would rather brag on the object of their love! This is especially true of a follower of Christ! Why? Because we understand that we have no righteousness of our own and if it weren't for the willingness of Jesus to take our place and pay for our sin, we would be doomed, lost, without hope, destitute, and permanently broken! Paul put it this way to the Galatians...

Galatians 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Love is not Proud

Oxford Dictionary defines pride as...

pride prīd/noun: pride

1. a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements

Now we know that not all pride is bad. There is a good kind of pride. Like being proud of your kids or grandkids when they achieve or do something really special! That's okay and can be a result of love. But the pride that is not love, is the pride that thinks it needs no one else and falsely believes it got where it is on its own. It's a selfish, arrogant pride that refuses to humble itself before God or anybody else. Just as the opposite of envious is generous, the opposite of pride is humility and meekness. So when Paul said love is not boastful or proud, he was in essence saying that love is meek and humble. Why is humility and meekness such an important

part of love? Without humility and meekness we will not admit we need anything from God and we won't seek Him! The Psalmist said...

Psalm 10:4 In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Psalm 10:5 His ways are always prosperous; your laws are rejected by him; he sneers at all his enemies.

Psalm 10:6 He says to himself, "Nothing will ever shake me." He swears, "No one will ever do me harm."

Psalm 10:7 His mouth is full of lies and threats; trouble and evil are under his tongue.

But Jesus said,

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

What did Jesus mean when He said "The meek will inherit the earth?"

Frank Stagg said it powerfully in the Broadman Commentary...

"The meek are not the weak or cowardly. They are those who under the pressures of life have learned to bend their wills and to set aside their own notions as they stand before the greatness and grace of God (Lohmeyer, p. 86). They are characterized by humble trust rather than arrogant independence. The earth does not belong to the self-trusting or self-assertive who seek to possess it but to "the poor in spirit" who are willing to lose all for the kingdom. This paradox belongs to the larger teaching which sees that one lives by dying, receives by giving, and is first precisely when willing to be last."

Frank Stagg, "Matthew," in Matthew–Mark, ed. Clifton J. Allen, Broadman Bible Commentary (Broadman Press, 1969), 105.

People who are meek find their strength in allowing Jesus to be Lord of their life!

Meekness is not weakness because when I am humble enough and wise enough to admit that I don't have the strength on my own to overcome the powers of this world, Jesus gives me the strength to overcome the world and to inherit what matters most while living on the earth, the ability to love God and to love others! While I don't fully understand what "inherit the earth" means, I believe this: If I am meek and willing to humble myself by allowing Jesus to be Lord of my life, then the world doesn't control me, and through Jesus I inherit the resources of this world to do good things for the Kingdom of God in love! Peter said...

1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Let's pray!

