

This morning, we are in week 7 of a sermon series that I have entitled Revival. My hope in this series is to lead us into a deeper experience of God, that God would give us greater spiritual life and vitality both individually and collectively, that we would experience more of His love and power, and that through us, He would bring His salvation and redemption to our world.

Earlier in this series, I mentioned what Richard Lovelace calls the **two precursors of revival: an increased awareness of the holiness of God, and an increased awareness of the depth of our sin.** By holiness, I mean that God is transcendently separate from us in His perfection. By sin I mean our rebellion against God, our inability to measure up to His holy standard, and our brokenness. You want to see revival in your life and in the church? Pray for those two things.

Over the past few weeks, I've been trying to dive deeper into the second part, the awareness of the depth of our sin, and to do so by looking at the Beatitudes, the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The beatitudes describe the blessed life, the man or woman who is favored by God. In this sense, if we want to live a life that is blessed or favored by God, then the beatitudes are something we should all pay close attention to and strive to live out. But on the other hand, the characteristics emphasized by Jesus are incredibly countercultural, running precisely against what we are taught is the happy life by our world and often by Christian teachers as well. And so, they require a huge shift in our perspective. This morning, we will be looking at Matthew 5:5 – **"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."**

Meek is not a word you hear used today, except as the first name of the rapper Meek Mill. I can't tell when I have ever heard someone described as meek, or a time I have ever prayed that God would make me meeker. So what does it mean to be meek? Why does Jesus say that those who are meek will be blessed, favored by God? And what does it mean that the meek will inherit the earth?

Remember that the Beatitudes build on each other, and so if we are going to understand what meekness is all about, then we need to go back and remind ourselves of the first two beatitudes to see how meekness logically follows the first two beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and "blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." How does being meek logically follow the first two beatitudes?

Remember, Jesus begins by saying that "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." God's favor and the blessed life begins with recognizing

our complete and utter spiritual poverty, our bankruptcy before a holy God. It is best seen in **Luke 18:10-14** - *"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' <sup>13</sup> "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' <sup>14</sup> "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

The poor in spirit come empty to God. They know that God is not impressed by their spiritual resume, that they are desperately in need of God's grace and mercy, and that they are utterly dependent upon God for every single breath. They know that every good thing in our lives is an undeserved gift from Him. We have nothing to offer Him that has not been given to us. As the song says, *"It's your breath in our lungs, so we pour out our praise."* We are completely in His debt. We can not approach God with our spiritual resume, acting like He owes us anything or that He has been unfair, unjust to us. We deserve nothing but eternal separation from God, and all the good that we have is a complete gift of His grace and mercy. That is spiritual poverty. And Jesus says that people who understand this are blessed, favored by God, and that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. As they come empty, they are revived by God, filled with the life of Jesus, with His Holy Spirit. All that is God's is theirs.

Jesus goes on to say that blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. We looked at this last week. Blessed are those who do not just recognize their spiritual poverty, but also recognize the implications of it, who feel the full emotional weight of it. These people recognize that they are sinners who have fallen short of God's standards, of their own standards, and of what others need from them. **Their sin is not just a cold hard fact, but has had devastating effects on their own life and the lives of those around them.** Blessed are those who look their sin full in the face and see just how much pain they have caused to others by their sinful, self-centered choices and actions. Like the recovery movement teaches, they make a fearless and searching moral inventory of themselves, and then admit to themselves, to God, and to another person the exact nature of those wrongs. Blessed are those who feel the full weight, who see how it was their sin that led the innocent son of God to his death, and so, in their grief are brought to tearful repentance. Jesus says that they will be comforted. They will find grace and forgiveness. Their guilt and shame will be removed. And blessed are those who

mourn over the suffering of this world, who do not turn a blind eye to the suffering and brokenness of the world, but who look at it and feel the weight of it, who are moved to prayer, to action, to care for others. They will be comforted, and will experience the eternal comfort that will come when Jesus returns and sin and death are destroyed and all is made right.

So, what logically follows from these two realities, both in our relationship with God and with others? According to Jesus, meekness. What is meekness?

It's not weakness. Meekness has a vertical and horizontal component. There is an aspect of meekness that is about our relationship with God, and another aspect that is about our relationship with others.

First and foremost, meekness has the implication of a domesticated wild animal, like a wild horse that has been tamed and now submits to its master. One definition of the meek man or woman is "One who feels he [or she] is a servant in relationship to God and who subjects himself [or herself] to Him quietly and without resistance" (Hauck & Schulz). This is not weakness; it is power under self-control, disciplined in submission to the master, God.

#### 1) The meek person is the one who has submitted to God in trust and obedience

How does this follow logically from poverty of spirit and mourning? When we realize our spiritual bankruptcy, when we have stared our sin in the face and realized its devastating consequences, when we see how the Son of God died to pay the penalty for our sins, the logical response is to respond to God with trust and obedience. We know better than to trust ourselves, for we know the mess we have made of things. And we know that God is trustworthy, that He loves us so much that Jesus gave His life for us while we were still sinners, and that He knows what is best. We trust what Jesus has said:

***John 10:10*** - *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

And so we can say, as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, "not my will but yours be done."

Matthew 5:5 has an echo in Psalm 37:11 - *But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.* Listen to the Psalm and how it illustrates the man who trusts in

God, even when it feels like those who do not follow God are experiencing worldly success:

*Psalm 37:1-11 - Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; <sup>2</sup> for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. <sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. <sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: <sup>6</sup> He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. <sup>7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. <sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret-- it leads only to evil. <sup>9</sup> For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land. <sup>10</sup> A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. <sup>11</sup> But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.*

Trust in the Lord, delight yourself in the Lord, commit your way to the Lord, wait patiently before the Lord. Do not be swayed by the prosperity of the wicked or envious of those who do not know God. It's just a mirage. Their prosperity will not last. The world will be yours forever.

This is the vertical element of meekness. The meek man knows he is spiritually poor, dependent upon God for everything. He has seen the devastation that his sin has caused, and has mourned it. But he has experienced the grace, the forgiveness, the undeserved goodness of God, and it has let him to believe that God is trustworthy, that He is good, that life to the full is found in following Him and not what he thinks is best.

2) The meek person is the one who is humble and gentle towards others

Secondly, meekness has the implication of humility and gentleness with respect to others. If we are poor in spirit, if we have looked full at our sin, seen the devastation it has caused in the lives of others, and mourned over the hurt we have caused, how would that impact our relationship with others?

1) They are not easily offended, because they know the truth about themselves.

If I am poor in spirit and have mourned my sin, if I have looked at my sin fully and seen what it has done to others, then what can you say about me that I don't already know to be true? If I have made a fearless and searching moral inventory

of myself and seen just what evil lies inside of me, then what can you say that would insult me? In fact, I know so much more that is sinful about myself than you do. So if you insult me, cut me down, point out my flaws, then you're only telling me what I already know to be painfully true – I am a sinner in need of a Savior. And thanks be to God that He has provided me that very Savior.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it this way: “Meekness is essentially a true view of oneself, expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others... The man who is truly meek is the one who is truly amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do.”

We are so easily offended. It's one thing for us to admit to God and ourselves that we are sinners. But when others point out our sin, we are much more likely to get defensive and fight back than we are to humbly listen, confess our sin, and repent of it. But that is precisely what the meek person does.

The meek person recognizes that they don't need to defend themselves or fight back. Instead, they can humbly entrust themselves to God. Think of David with Saul, letting him live and trusting that God would take care of him. And of course, think of Jesus:

*1 Peter 2:21-23 - To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup> "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." <sup>23</sup> When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

Listen closely: if we are truly meek, then we see offenses and hurts as opportunities to show grace to others as He has showed grace to us. After all, anyone can love and be kind to people who are nice to them. But when people insult us or mistreat us, we have an opportunity to display the gospel by the love and grace we show to those who do not deserve it:

*Matthew 5:43-47 - "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?*

## 2) They humbly serve others

The meek know that they have been given so much more than they deserve, that despite their spiritual poverty and the depth of their sin and how responsible they are for injury to others and to the death of Jesus, they know that they have been given so much that they don't deserve. They have been transformed by God's grace and generosity so that it flows out to others. Listen to Paul:

***Philippians 2:1-11*** - *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,* <sup>2</sup> *then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.* <sup>3</sup> *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.* <sup>4</sup> *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.* <sup>5</sup> *Your attitude should be the same as **that of Christ Jesus**:* <sup>6</sup> *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,* <sup>7</sup> *but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.* <sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!* <sup>9</sup> *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,* <sup>10</sup> *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* <sup>11</sup> *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Jesus, being in very nature God, took the very nature of a slave, serving God and others all the way to an unjust death. And because of that, He has been given the name above every name, exalted to the highest place. The meek person knows that Jesus did this for them, and is willing to follow Him by lowering themselves, serving others as if they are slaves. We are not worried about ourselves or protecting ourselves, because we know we are spiritually nothing.

Do you want to hear a passage that will completely destroy your pride?

***Luke 17:7-10*** - *"Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'?"* <sup>8</sup> *Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'?"* <sup>9</sup> *Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?"* <sup>10</sup> *So*

*you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are **unworthy servants**; we have only done our duty.'*"

That is what it looks like to serve God and others as a slave, a servant of God. Even if we receive no thanks, no appreciation, no honor, no glory, the meek person is grateful to God and continues to serve, knowing that He is following in the footsteps of His Savior, who made Himself nothing for him or her.

**Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.** What does it mean to inherit the earth? This promise is so counter-cultural. We would expect that those with strength and self-assurance and aggression and military might will inherit and possess the earth. They will rule. And you would expect the meek to be trampled and ignored and to gain nothing. But Jesus tells us that those who will possess and enjoy the world are NOT those who rely on military conquest or aggression, but who are meek, humble, who trust in the Lord.

What does it mean to inherit the earth? There is an already and not yet component to it.

Already component. Think about it. What happens when you have seen your spiritual poverty, your emptiness, your complete dependence upon God for every breath, and also mourned over the negative impact your sin has had on others, and especially on the Son of God who died for your sin? You realize that everything good in your life is a gift of God's grace. Like Dave Ramsey, I am doing better than I deserve. I have more than I should have. Every day is a gift, every breath is God's grace. And so, in a sense, the world becomes ours. Instead of constantly being discontent, envious, focused on what we don't have, striving for more, we learn to be content, grateful, to enjoy what we have.

**2 Corinthians 6:4,10** - *Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses...sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*

Having nothing, yet possessing everything. We feel that it is all ours by God's grace.

**Philippians 4:12-13** - *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,*

*whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

I thank God for this food; I don't compare it to what someone else has and feel upset. I thank God for this home, this car, this family. It is more than I deserve. But those who are not meek always want more. They are not content with what they have. They are envious of those who have more. They rejoice when others are knocked down a peg.

And of course there is a "not yet" component. One day evil will be destroyed, and we will reign with God in the new heavens and earth. We will inherit a recreated world with every blessing we could ever want. This world can not compare with what we will have on that day.

*1 Corinthians 2:9 - However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"--*

We will inherit the world. We are co-heirs with Christ.

Blessed are the meek, those who are poor in spirit and mourn their sin. They will walk in humble trust and obedience with God, and act in humility and service towards others. They will inherit the earth.