



Humble to be Exalted
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are continuing our study called **Different Than Last Time**. Over the next few weeks we are walking through the most counterintuitive statements of all time: **The Beatitudes**. They are not the philosophy for a good life – they are the values of this new Kingdom Jesus is bringing. They come at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ most famous teaching, and each Beatitude begins with the word “**BLESSED**” (happy or fortunate). Here we see the portrait of a Christian disciple pleasing to God and we are challenged by the words and wisdom of Jesus. This week we are studying the Beatitude that is so powerful it has the potential to change the way we live our daily lives with greater kindness – Blessed are the meek.

SCRIPTURE¹

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

Psalm 37:1-3, 7-11 (NIV) Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; ²for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. ³Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. ⁷Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. ⁸Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. ⁹For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. ¹⁰A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. ¹¹But the *meek will inherit the land* and enjoy peace and prosperity.

Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV) Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am *gentle* and *humble* in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Luke 18:9-14 (NIV) To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ 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.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

QUESTION: What does it mean to be justified?

OBSERVATION

God had made a covenant promise with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give His people a land of their own. Then, after Moses and the children of Israel entered their promised land, God told them that, if they obeyed Him, they could stay in that land, but if they disobeyed Him and started following other gods, He would drive them out and their enemies would occupy it. And that’s exactly what happened. They were under siege then exiled to Babylon for 70 years (605 B. C. to 535 B.C.) and when they were finally allowed to return home, the land was never fully theirs again.

QUESTION: What kind of covenant would you be willing to make with God?

QUESTION: What gods are you following today?

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

The Romans and the Greeks were prospering while the Jewish people were being overtaxed, killed for treason, and religiously suppressed. By the time Jesus came on the scene, the Jewish people were trying to figure out how to get their land back and set up their kingdom as it used to be. In doing that, they were up against four political and religious groups: **1) Pharisees.** They believed that if everyone obeyed the Law and Traditions it would usher in the Kingdom of God. That is why they were all about following religious rules. It was easier to be the religious rule keeper and to check all the boxes than it was to check their hearts; **2) Sadducees.** They were realists. They made political alliances with the Romans thinking it would give them power; **3) Essenes.** They were separatists and withdrew from society. It is believed that in their isolation, they copied many Jewish scrolls and hid them from the Romans in the Dead Sea caves; **4) The Zealots.** They were all about political revolution. Their strategy was to overthrow the government by violent resistance. Barabbas was one of them.

QUESTION: Which of these four describes you: Have you been concerned about looking religious or better than everyone else? Have you compromised your values? Have you just withdrawn from other people? Do you overpower those around you?

Jesus was talking to oppressed people about His Kingdom. In this environment He is telling them, "It is not about adhering to rules or making alliances or withdrawing or overthrowing. It is a new Kingdom with different values."

APPLICATION

Our response to the word meek is almost always negative. No one says, "When I grow up I want to be meek" or "I want my kid to marry a meek person." That's because we define it as weakness. What it really means is gentle, humble and considerate: strength under control. Meekness is when we turn the other cheek, control our anger, have a chance to get even and choose not to.

QUESTION: When have you considered yourself to be weak when you were really demonstrating meekness?

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you had a chance to get even? What did you do?

But, what does mean when we say, the meek will inherit the earth? **Psalm 37:1-3,7-11** tells us: "The meek will enjoy peace and prosperity." The Lord's Prayer says, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That is the kind of earth we want to inherit. One with God's values governing all of society. We want to be people who are gentle and humble in heart and worship their Father God with passion and joy.

QUESTION: If you are gentle and humble, what does it look like in your life?

Jesus illustrated His upside down Kingdom with a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector. The Pharisee prayed about himself and thanked God that he was not like other people. He was not meek and humble -- he was prideful. His heart is revealed just as ours are when we say, "You aren't going to talk to me like that!" or "I'm not going to be the one who apologizes" or "It's not me; it's you" or "It's not fair." The tax collector, on the other hand, said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." The Pharisee drew attention to himself while the tax collector was broken in spirit; he mourned his sin and was meek and humble in heart. Jesus is shining a light on the difference between being meek and humble and being full of pride. If we want to inherit the land, to usher in the new Kingdom, it only happens when we place our strength under God's control.

QUESTION: Where is pride controlling your life?

Pride makes us defensive and unwilling to hear criticism or correction. If we don't have people who can say those hard things to us, it's not because we don't need to hear it -- it's because we let pride get in the way of being meek and humble. When we refuse to acknowledge that we're wrong, we are saying that we are better than they are. Pride lets us off the hook while we put others under a microscope. Also, if we have a hard time celebrating with others when something good happens to them, we are probably suffering from a case of pride.

QUESTION: When have you said, "I'm so glad that bad thing is happening to someone else and not me." What could you have done instead?

QUESTION: When have you celebrated wholeheartedly with someone who has had a good thing happen to them?

Jesus was the most powerful man ever to walk the earth, but He never used His power for His own benefit -- He showed us what meek and humble in heart looks like. Yet He didn't cower in fear. He was not afraid of the Romans or religious leaders and He was not afraid to lay down His own life for us.

QUESTION: What do you fear about living a humble and meek life?

This weekend we celebrate the life and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. He wrote the following shortly before his death in 1968: "When I have to meet my day I'd like somebody to mention that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to live his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I want you to be able to say on that day that I did try to feed the hungry. And I want you to be able to say that I did try in my life to clothe those

who were naked. I want you to say that I did try in my life to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.”

QUESTION: When you reflect on Martin Luther King’s words, what do you think will be said about you in your eulogy?

Jesus is calling us to lay down our selfish ambition and to die to ourselves, to humble ourselves because only then can we go home justified before our Father God.

QUESTION: Are you ready to make that commitment? What are you holding on to that would prevent you from doing that?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we pray that your Kingdom would come down here, that your values in heaven would be our values here on earth, that your will would be done here as it’s done in heaven. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: What does it mean to be justified?

QUESTION: What kind of covenant would you be willing to make with God? Why?

QUESTION: What gods are you following today?

QUESTION: Which of these four describes you: Have you been concerned about looking religious or better than everyone else? Have you compromised your values? Have you just withdrawn from other people? Do you overpower those around you?

QUESTION: When have you considered yourself to be weak when you were really demonstrating meekness?

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you had a chance to get even? What did you do?

QUESTION: If you are gentle and humble, what does it look like in your life?

QUESTION: Where is pride controlling your life?

QUESTION: When have you said, “I’m so glad that bad thing is happening to someone else and not me.” What could you have done instead?

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