

Upside Down Kingdom: Blessed are the Gentle Matthew 5:5i

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you this morning. For those of you that are guests, my name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are certainly glad you are with us today. And on behalf of our church family, we welcome you.

We would love the opportunity to get to connect with you. If you would, simply text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to 94-000. You will then be prompted to click on a link that will provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you. And here's our promise to you... we promise not to bombard your inbox. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you and to pray for you.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Today we continue in a new teaching series that we kicked off a couple weeks ago called, "The Upside Down Kingdom." We are looking at Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5. We are zooming in on the beginning of His sermon known as the Beatitudes. So, I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn there with me this morning as we examine verse 5.

We are talking about how, as believers in Jesus Christ, that we are to align ourselves to God's Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven. And it doesn't take long to realize that God's Kingdom seems upside down in comparison to the kingdom of this world. Jesus continues highlighting this fact with the third Beatitude.

Follow along in your copy of God's Word, Matthew chapter 5, verses 3 through 5. Jesus says, ³*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* ⁴*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* ⁵*"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."*

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Unmet Expectations

Have you ever had an expectation that was unmet? My son, Drew, is currently wrestling with an unmet expectation. Since basketball season is upon us, he ordered a pair of basketball shoes on Amazon. When he completed the

payment, he was sent an email stating when the basketball shoes would arrive. Well, that was a couple of weeks ago and the shoes still have not arrived. Unmet expectation.

We are often frustrated or disappointed when our expectations do not line up with reality. Unmet expectations can cause dissension in a marriage and disillusionment at work or even consequences at school. Unmet expectations challenge us in many ways.

In this, the third Beatitude, Jesus communicates what is then a perceived unmet expectation.

BACKGROUND:

In the crowd of people that have assembled to hear Jesus' sermon, and even the twelve disciples that He selected, are hearing this sermon with a certain expectation of the Messiah.

Place yourself in the sandals of those that are gathered on the mountainside. People were eagerly awaiting the promised Messiah. And their view of this promised Messiah was that of a great victory of liberation over the reign and rule of oppressive regimes. The accomplishment of this task would have to be by way of showing great might and power, a military and political takeover.

We know today that Jesus did not come to liberate His followers from worldly governments, but to liberate us from our greatest enslavement, the enslavement to our sin.

So, people were not expecting Jesus to come humbly and meekly. And when He is laying out His Kingdom Manifesto, and comes to the third Beatitude, can you imagine the feeling of unmet expectations?

We think much the same way the people of the first century thought. We tend to hear the word, "meek," and immediately think weak, pushover, doormat, and the like. Remember, to live according to the Kingdom of Heaven means that we do not operate according to the kingdom of this world. Jesus is calling His followers to a different way of life compared to the culture. Upside down.

It is my prayer that when we come to the end of our time together this morning that we will see that there is much to be gained in a meek approach to life.

I want to look at a few perspectives this morning regarding meekness. I want us to examine 1) Meekness Defined, 2) Meekness Results, and 3) Meekness Practiced.

MESSAGE:

1) Meekness Defined

When you look up the term “meek” in the dictionary, you get many different definitions. I looked up “meek” at onelook.com and here is what I found. Meek is, “quiet, gentle, and easily persuaded by other people to do what they want.”ⁱⁱ

The problem is that turning to the world’s definition to understand what Jesus is saying, we would come to the conclusion that Jesus says, “Happy are the whimpy.” But as is the case in many circumstances, the world’s definitions are not in line with biblical teaching. So, it is important to understand meekness from a biblical point of view.

The word translated as “meek” here is the Greek word praus [prou-oose]. It is used only 4 times in the pages of the New Testament.ⁱⁱⁱ One of those, of course, is here in the Beatitudes, but 2 times the word is used it is to describe Jesus Himself.

It is a word that means more than “meek.” It refers to exercising strength, or power, under control.^{iv} Pastor J.D. Greear defined it this way, “Meekness means taking second place instead of first place whenever you can. It means leveraging your power to serve others and not exalt yourself.”^v This is what it means to be gentle, meek. Having the ability to dominate and choosing not to for the sake of someone else.

So, as you can see, being meek carries none of the connotations that we think of in our culture today. Meekness does not equal weakness. Nor does meekness mean cowardice or emotional. It is power under control.

One commentator I read this week pointed out that this word was used a lot in extrabiblical literature. That means in other writings other than the Bible. And when it was used it was often used in reference to the breaking of an animal.^{vi} Again, power put under control.

ILLUSTRATION: My Cousin Kirk – Breaking Horses

I have a cousin that used to break horses. I don’t know if you have ever been a part of that process, but that is a rough way of life. A horse is a very powerful animal and prior to being broken is very wild and unpredictable. However, once the horse has effectively been broken, it doesn’t lose any of its power or strength, it simply surrenders it’s will to the good of the rider.

If you have ever ridden a horse, you know that they can be onery, and you have to keep the horse surrendered to your will. You must ensure that the horse keeps their strength under control.

In much the same way, when we exercise meekness, we surrender the power and ability we have to be first, to be the greatest, to gain recognition, because we have surrendered to living according to the Kingdom of Heaven. Power or strength under control

So, we see meekness defined. Secondly, let’s look at...

2) Meekness Results

Jesus said, “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*” Now, this runs counter to what we often think in our culture. We think that the people who gain power, who win in life, are those that demonstrate dominion over others.

We award the title of national champion to the football team that beats everyone else. We give promotions to the ones that demonstrate better ability than everyone else. We take pride in being the most affluent and powerful country in the world. The wisdom of this world says that the strong and self-assertive are the ones who will inherit the earth.

So, when it comes to Jesus’ teaching here, it seems upside down. Those that bridle their strength, for the sake of others, are those that win in life?! They inherit the earth?! Again, Jesus is calling us to operate according to a different Kingdom, one that seems upside down to this world.

But I want us to think about it for a moment. I would say that meekness has accomplished more good in our world than any display of power has. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Think about the Civil Rights Movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King. What

was his approach? Meekness, not a display of power and violence. The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (known as the SNCC) organized sit-ins in the 60s, where African Americans along with some white supporters, sat at segregated counters in restaurants and braced themselves to take whatever came their way. This is a display of meekness by not turning to violence yet allowing humiliation fall upon them. Yet, it is that display of meekness that served as a catalyst to change in our country.

What else? **Think about all the world powers that have risen and fallen.** Egypt, The Assyrian Empire, Greeks, and The Romans. The phrase, “The sun never sets on the British Empire.” Yet, where did their power and pride ultimately lead? Pride and arrogance always lead to the dissolution of a world power. The Bible says it this way in Proverbs 16:18, *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”* Pride and a haughty spirit are antonyms, they stand opposed to meekness. Meekness, humility, truly is the way to inherit the earth.

But I also want us to see this in another way. The already, not yet, principle to the Kingdom of Heaven. I have given you a couple examples as to how we have seen how the display of meekness causes us to inherit the earth now, but what about what is to come?

You may wonder why the wicked and arrogant seem to prosper and the godly seem to suffer. Why do good people often finish last? This is not a new realization for those that have followed Jesus throughout history.

In Psalm 37, in what many scholars believe is Jesus’ basis for this Beatitude, verse 10 says, *“In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.”* The phrase, “in just a little while,” draws our attention to what is to come in the future. This is the not yet realized part of the promise of God.

As believers in Jesus, we know that one day, Jesus will return. And when He does, He will take the reign and rule of this world away from the Adversary. And there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth where Jesus is King and we will, as co-heirs with Christ, inherit the earth. So, not only do we see how meekness is powerful and effective in the world now, but in what is also to come. The already, not yet principle of the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, we have talked about Meekness Defined and Meekness Results. Now, let’s turn our attention to...

3) Meekness Practiced

How do we live out this Beatitude from a practical sense? Well, I want us to consider some biblical examples. There are biblical examples of the disposition of meekness in both the Old and New Testaments that I think serve as guides for us today. Let me give you a couple examples of meekness demonstrated.

Do you remember **the story of Joseph**? Remember that his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. But by God’s grace and His plan for Joseph’s life, he became second in command. When a great famine fell on the land, Joseph was in a position to take vengeance on his brothers. He had the power to destroy their lives for the actions they took against him. Yet, he didn’t. He demonstrated forgiveness and love for them. He was, in that circumstance, meek. He exercised power under control.

What about in the New Testament? **The Apostle Paul** demonstrated meekness. He was by far the most educated Apostle. He was the greatest missionary and church planter the world has ever seen. If anyone had the ability to recognize their own ability and accomplishments, it was Paul. Yet, what did he say? Philippians 3:8-10. *“⁸ Indeed, **I count everything as loss** [all of my accomplishments and education] **because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”***

Make no mistake. Paul was not weak, nor was he a coward. He did not back down nor cower to anyone. But he demonstrated power under control. He was humble and The Lord used him in powerful ways.

Yet the greatest display of biblical meekness, power under control, is The Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus, Almighty God in the flesh, did not even raise an objection in His own defense. In fact, at His crucifixion refused to leverage supernatural power for His own benefit. Jesus says in Matthew 26:53, *“Do you*

think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" Jesus had the power and the authority to save Himself but chose meekness in order to accomplish salvation for us.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus surrendered His will to the will of the Father. He surrendered His power and strength to God's control and thereby demonstrated the greatest display of meekness.

These biblical examples, I believe, serve as a template for us today. What are some ways that we can demonstrate meekness in our lives?

Think about in relationships. Do you ever feel like exploding at someone? They make you so angry, frustrated, and maybe even rightfully so, and all you want to do is drop a bomb on them. Ever been there? No? Just me? Okay then.

Well, to be meek in that situation means that while I may have the right and the ability to blow them up, I am instead going to be very careful in what I say and how I respond. I am going to demonstrate power under control.

What about in leadership? How are we to apply meekness to the way in which we lead? Well, what is it that fires you up about leading? Are you more motivated by the glory and recognition that you will receive or the success of those you are leading? I think in those situations, meekness will always work toward the edification of those around you, not the edification of self. If you are a leader, it is your job to see that those you lead are successful and do well. It is not to seek glory for your own credit or gain.

When it comes to the idea of meekness in leadership, I think Jesus washing the disciples' feet. A servant leadership model. A meek leader seeks to be a servant first. This is what it means to operate according to God's Upside Down Kingdom.

What about in speaking out against injustice? How is meekness applied in that situation? Meek men and women in the Bible demonstrated resolve, courage, conviction and strength.^{vii} And that kind of position requires speaking out against immoral behavior and wickedness. This is why we must be a people that speaks out for the protection of all life, conception to the grave. Especially for those that are most vulnerable and unable to speak for themselves.

Think about Jesus for a moment. Remember when He cleansed the temple? He saw that the Father's House was being turned into a den of robbers. It was that conviction and resolve that led Jesus to speak out against the injustice He saw.

Ultimately meekness in our day and time comes from how we think. Our outlook. Meekness means that we put ourselves last and others first. Philippians 2:1-5 says it best. *"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ **Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.** ⁴ **Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.** ⁵ **Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.**"*

Now, I know that because we are sinners, it is inevitable that we will lose our spirit of meekness. But in those moments, a repentant spirit will go a long way in humbling us.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

CONCLUSION:

As we come to a time of response in our service this morning, **I want to ask the band to come back up and lead us in that time of response.** And as they are coming, I want you to consider how The Lord is stirring in your heart.

Perhaps you are here this morning and God has revealed to you the fact that you are a sinner. In fact, the bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God in our lives. The effects of sin has brought a spiritual death to us. But, God, in His great love for us, gave His one and only Son, that by faith and trust in Him as Lord and Savior, we can be saved. Have you ever trusted Jesus as the Lord of your life? If not, you can today.

Perhaps the Lord has revealed to you areas in your life where you need to be meek. Ways you need to surrender to the control of God in your life. You need to repent and ask God to give you the ability to surrender to Him.

Whatever The Lord is prompting in your heart, be obedient to that in this time of response. I trust He is stirring, respond to that stirring. Pray stand, respond.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this sermon: John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, David Brown, *The Gospel According to Matthew Commentary*, "Matthew 5:1-16; Harvest Ministries, "Who are the Meek? Why did Jesus say 'Blessed are the Meek?'," article posted on Christianity.com, September 22, 2010; Biblestudytools.com, "Why Does Scripture Say 'Blessed are the Meek, for They Will Inherit the Earth?'," compiled June 3, 2021; Mark E. Caner, "Spiritual Meekness: An Imperative Virtue for Christian Leaders," Article written in 2010 and posted on regent.edu; Vance Pitman, *Radical Red Letters: "Blessed are the Gentle,"* message preached October 4, 2020 at Hope Church Las Vegas; Dr. Michael Gossett, *The Upside Down Life: "Powerful Weakness,"* preached October 3, 2021 at Green Acres Baptist Church; Skip Heitzig, *Expound, "Matthew 5:5-16,"* Calvary Church Albuquerque, October 19, 2011; J.D. Greear, *The Whole Story: "8 Ways to Be Happy, According to Jesus,"* Summit Church, September 25, 2016.

ⁱⁱ Found on onelook.com: <https://www.onelook.com/?w=meek&ls=a>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Strong's Greek Concordance*. Word number 4239.

^{iv} Definition found on Biblehub.com: <https://biblehub.com/greek/4239.htm>

^v Quote from a sermon by J.D. Greear, *The Whole Story: "8 Ways to Be Happy, According to Jesus,"* preached at Summit Church, September 25, 2016.

^{vi} John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7 MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, page 171.

^{vii} Mark E. Caner, "Spiritual Meekness: An Imperative Virtue for Christian Leaders," Article written in 2010 and posted on regent.edu