

The Meek

Message #5 in the series, "Blessed (for Chaos)"

Matthew 5:5 and Luke 22:24-27

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Pastor David Woolverton

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

²⁴A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. (Luke 22:24-27)

Happy Mother's Day to all of those of you who have been an important nurturing influence in each of our lives. Never underestimate the voice that you have been in the shaping of our character and in the development of our spiritual, emotional and physical growth. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

You know, I learned a lot from my mom while growing up. Some of those lessons – well, they sounded right at the time . . . but . . . Take for example:

- Don't sit too close to the TV, or you'll go cross-eyed. (Well, we didn't really, right? . . . But it did get me to stop blocking the TV so that others could see it.)
- Eating your spinach will make you grow big and strong. (Hmm... I'm still working on that one.)
- The people who say that we only use 10% of our brains are wrong. Politicians only use 5. (Need I say more?)
- Vegetables are best eaten by covering them with spaghetti sauce. (Now, *that's* true wisdom!)
- Medicines are best taken when mixed with apple sauce. (To this day, every time I eat plain apple sauce it makes me nauseous with the memory of crushed pills.)

In truth, my mom also taught me some really profound lessons – lessons that still impact me today in how I try to live my life. Like . . .

- Don't judge a person's integrity by the color of their skin; rather, judge a person's integrity by the color of their heart.
- There's always room at the table for one more.
- Do what's right even when it makes you uncomfortable.
- In most cases, the best medicine involves a hug.
- You can't follow Jesus without first listening to what He has to say.

Thanks for those priceless gems, Mom . . . and so many more like them. Priceless gems. That's actually what the Beatitudes are. We've been in a message series called, "Blessed for Chaos" – and we've been looking at the Beatitudes - incredible statements made by Jesus in what is called the "Sermon on the Mount." What we've learned is that while Jesus is indeed on a mountainside, and while there is in fact a large crowd of people that had gathered around Him, Jesus actually was teaching these lessons primarily to His disciples – a small group of 12 ordinary guys, each of whom (like us) had their own unique individual personalities, foibles and flaws, but each of whom Jesus invested into for the sake of a greater purpose.

And it's critical for us to understand that larger purpose in order to truly appreciate the power behind these Beatitudes. In Matthew's Gospel, just prior to introducing the Sermon on the Mount, we read that Jesus began His ministry with an announcement: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*" (**Matthew 4:17 NIV**). Unbeknownst to most at the time, with that statement, Jesus was inaugurating what best can be described as a "New Community" or a "New Community of believers in the Kingdom of God." And with Matthew's Gospel (along with Mark, Luke and John's Gospels as well) what we see played out in the stories and teachings of Jesus is that in that New Community, life and values would be different for those who choose to be Jesus followers.

In fact, the values that Jesus initiated and modeled for the New Community were actually quite subversive for His day . . . and even for ours today. Living out the values of this New Community – especially what Jesus taught and modeled about sacrificial love – would go on to upend politics, religion and even personal households for generations to come.

Jesus, you see, leaves nothing unturned in pursuit of new life for those who are identified as children of God.

Two weeks ago, Pastor John looked at the first Beatitude – "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" – and we discovered that

God sees what we, in our humanness, tend to ignore. Last week, Alisa Bair showed us, through words and dance, that "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Today, we're looking at another value within the New Community of Jesus followers – Beatitude number 3 – "*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*"

Now, the word "meek" might seem troubling to some of us. Some of us hear that word "meek" and we think, "weak." "Meek is weak," we might believe. "Why would I want to be meek? I don't want to be a doormat so that people just walk all over us, right?"

Well, I think meekness gets a bad rap. I don't think we fully understand what is meant by "meek." In Greek, the word is **praus** (pronounced "prah-Oose"). It literally translates as "gentleness of spirit, mild in disposition." It describes a person who totally trusts that they reside in God's care. That doesn't sound so bad, right?

The meek are those who don't live their life defensively. It's not necessarily that they are at peace with life. Rather they are people that are at peace with the Lord of life. The meek are those who know that every breath they take is dependent on the grace that only God can give. In other words, the "meek" know that they are not perfect... but that they are *perfected* — by God's grace.

And meekness is a character trait that comes from having faced some very important truths about yourself.

Look with me at a very interesting passage in Luke's Gospel -- **Luke 22:24-27**. As you're turning in your Bible, a little bit of background. Chapter 22 opens with us reading that Judas has gone to the Jewish chief priests and has agreed to betray Jesus. Then the scene shifts and we go into the Upper Room where Jesus shares in the Last Supper with His disciples. In a very intimate moment, Jesus shares the bread and the cup – talking about His body and blood – and then tells these friends that one of them is going to betray Him. It says in verse 23 that "*they began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.*"

Then we read in verses 24-27:

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ But [Jesus] said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who

serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Notice something very important in this passage. Notice the phrase, "**not so with you.**" This is classic Jesus. He's teaching His disciples that in the New Community of the Kingdom of God, *His* followers do not live the same way as others do that live by the world's standards. Compared to the world's standards, life and values for Jesus followers are inverted: the greatest is the youngest, the leader is the one who serves, you find your life by giving your life away. In that Upper Room – and in our daily life today – followers of Jesus only need to look at Jesus to know what it means to be meek.

Meek is not weak.

Rather, here's my definition for "meek" -- "**Meek is what we become when we realize that we are nothing unless we're connected to Jesus.**" In other words, meekness is realizing that God is more important than me. It's realizing that my life is empowered by grace – grace, a gift of God that is given to me, in spite of me.

But here's the problem: Just like those arguing disciples in Luke 22, we're way too entitled. As a culture, we think too highly of ourselves. And in the New Community – that's not the way of Jesus. In truth – listen – God doesn't owe me anything . . . but, I owe Him everything. What about you?

As followers of Jesus, we find our greatest strength on our knees – before God, in humble submission to the One who died for us; and before our neighbor, in humble acts of love and service.

James, the brother of Jesus, reminds us in chapter 4 of his letter, that "**God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble**" (v. 6). He says, "**Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you**" (v. 10).

The disciples needed to learn that lesson – to approach each other, and others, with a gentleness that comes from knowing who they are at the foot of the Cross of Christ . . . something that, in fact, they *did* learn -- the hard way.

Followers of Jesus are meek – not because they work at *being* meek, but because they *discover* that without Jesus, they are nothing.

And it is the meek – those who know the humility of grace themselves *and* can offer it to others – it is the meek who “will inherit the earth.” That’s the promise of this Beatitude.

The word “inherit” is an interesting word. It’s a term that implies ownership through legacy. In other words, the meek don’t inherit the earth because they *earned* it. They inherit it because it has been *gifted* to them, bequeathed to them. The meek are those who are in the will of God – literally and metaphorically.

And it’s important to note that “the earth” that is being referenced here – is the *new* earth that’s referred to in **Revelation 21**. Look at what it says starting in verse 1:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; ⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” ⁵ And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.”

That’s the earth that the meek will inherit.

In the New Community, followers of Jesus are meek. We give away what has been given to us – namely, grace that has been purchased by the blood of Christ. In humility, in meekness, therefore, we make some very important, Kingdom-oriented, New Community assumptions.

What does that mean? This is where we apply this Beatitude to our lives today. Being meek means that in our relationships with one another, we assume that ...

1. Jesus died for the other person(s) even as He did for us.
2. An attitude of superiority is antithetical to the gospel (**Phil. 2:1-11**).
3. God was present and active before we arrived, will be present and active because of and in spite of what we bring, and will be present and active after we’ve gone. This is known as “Prevenient Grace.”

4. Power is most effective when it is given away (as exemplified by the Cross of Christ).
5. We have more to learn from the other person than they from us.
6. The Divine Mission of God is more important than anything else (**Mark 1:14-15; Matt. 6:33**)

Meekness is not weakness. It takes great strength to wash the feet of the one who you know will betray you. It takes great strength to stand in the midst of a roomful of people who hate you and yet commit to serving them in Christ-empowered love. It takes great strength to look beyond the painful actions or words of another person and see the brokenness that fuels the pain. It takes great strength to give up something that is important to you in order to help another person in need. It takes great strength to look into the eyes of someone that you wholeheartedly disagree with - and respect the story that has made them who they are.

We – all of us who are followers of Jesus – we are nothing – *nothing* – unless we are connected to Jesus.

In John 15, we read that Jesus tells His disciples:

⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, ***neither can you unless you abide in me.*** ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because ***apart from me you can do nothing.***

“Apart from me you can do nothing.” Acknowledging that . . . truly knowing that . . . And then offering the same grace to others that Jesus has offered to us on the Cross. That’s meekness.

So, Mom was right . . . You can’t follow Jesus without first listening to what He has to say.

Let’s pray our prayer together . . .

Lord, what do You need me to see, what do You need me to hear, what do You need me to know, what do You need me to do. I am Your servant in Jesus’s name. Amen.