

Blessed are the meek

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Date: 04 October 2020

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[0 : 00] Now we're going to read together in our Bibles from Psalm 37. We're going to read the first 11 verses and then we'll turn to our beatitude after that.

And you'll see that in Psalm 37, the theme of meekness emerges and Jesus appears to draw on this psalm as he teaches.

So Psalm 37, verse 1 to 11. This is the word of God. Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong.

For like the grass, they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away. Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in him and he will do this. He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

[1 : 08] Be 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. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath.

Do not fret. It leads only to evil. For those who are evil will be destroyed. For those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land a little while and the wicked will be no more.

Though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity. So as we come to this beatitude, blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. We'll see how Jesus draws on that psalm as we go. Now, question as we begin, is meekness, just another word, for weakness?

Let me take you to the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He wrote a now famous book called The Cost of Discipleship.

[2 : 15] So he was writing and teaching in the late 1930s in a seminary in Germany, training pastors for the confessing church. And many of those pastors, along with Bonhoeffer, would courageously oppose Hitler and the Nazi regime.

Bonhoeffer was not meek. But here is what he says on meekness. He said, those who now possess the earth by violence and injustice shall lose it.

And those who here have utterly renounced it, utterly renounced the world, who were meek to the point of the cross, shall rule the new earth.

Here is Bonhoeffer encouraging these pastors to give up their rights. Not assert my rights.

To pursue future inheritance rather than looking for the comfort and security of seeking everything now. Isn't this such a different message?

[3 : 25] Isn't this counter-cultural? But to be honest, isn't this profoundly challenging to our mindset and behaviour? We live here today in a secular society where most people think in terms of a closed system.

Where all we see is all there is. So all we have is now. Therefore, we should grab what we can. We should drive for our personal goals.

Now, of course, we need to recognise ambition can be good. When that ambition is to glorify God and when it is to serve others and to be for others.

But ambition can also become misdirected. And it can be turned inward so that we're concerned with self-glory and pride.

And we can be profoundly selfish in our ambitions. And in a society and in a way of thinking where that dominates, meekness, as described by Bonhoeffer, as described by Jesus, may appear as weakness.

[4 : 32] And to be the one person who doesn't want to step on others to get ahead. And to be the one person who, on social media, doesn't want to promote the brand of me and my vision of how

the world should be.

To put the will of God over my desires. That's very different to what's going on typically. Martin Lloyd-Jones, he said that Christians should be an enigma to the world.

A puzzle to the world. What's with the church? What's with these values that they pursue? So we're going to think about the value of meekness.

And recognise, as we do, that we follow Jesus. Who the one time, in the Gospels, he describes his own heart. He describes himself as gentle and lowly.

Humble and meek. Jesus is this powerful combination of complete power as God the Son. But also this gentle, patient love.

[5 : 43] Meekness is not weakness. As I hope we'll see. Three questions for us to think about together. First question, simply, what is meekness?

We'll use one negative example from the Bible and two positive ones. Let's go back to the beginning. To think about Adam and Eve and their life in the Garden of Eden. We go here often. What do we know about Adam and Eve? They were made in God's image. They were made with glory and dignity to rule as stewards over God's creation.

So to rule the earth under God. And they were living in paradise in that setting. But Adam and Eve did not bow in meekness.

Or they did not continue in that state. Rather, tempted by the devil, the snake, they tried to seize rule for themselves. And they discovered that kind of pride was not gain but loss.

[6 : 43] Sin came. They fell under God's curse. They were separated from God's paradise. And there was the wages of sin. Dead. Physical and spiritual.

So to think about their example. To learn from them. Meekness. Looks like humble dependence on God.

Meekness recognizes glory belongs all to God, not to myself. To use the language of Bonhoeffer. Meekness determines to leave our rights to God alone.

And that certainly means we don't assert my rights over God as we saw in the garden. Now to our psalm. And the positive example of King David in Psalm 37.

And as we said, Jesus likely has this psalm in mind. Now maybe as we read this together, you would have heard a repeating pattern three times. It says do not fret or do not fear.

[7 : 44] And each time the focus is similar. Do not fear the apparent progress or the apparent success of the evil and the wicked. Don't fret those who seem to be getting ahead while they live without God.

Why? Because in the end they will fade away. And in the end they will face the judgment of God. And instead, David encourages a particular mindset.

So in verse 3, instead of fretting and fearing, trust in the Lord and do good. Verse 4, delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

And he will change your heart so that you desire what is good and pleasing to him. Verse 5, commit your ways to the Lord. Knowing that he will ultimately vindicate. Verse 7, be still and wait patiently for the Lord.

Pursue his will and trust in his timing. Verse 9 and verse 11, hope in the Lord. Live with meekness.

[8 : 50] And what? You'll inherit the land, David says. There'll be peace and there will be prosperity. So meekness, according to King David, is a willingness to be deprived and dispossessed and disadvantaged now.

To not have to fight for our rights. To not have to demand our place. Because we have hope. The hope of a future inheritance both from God and with God in his good land.

Our last positive example to help us to think about what is meekness is, of course, the life of Jesus himself. For the next couple of months, we're going to be thinking about the heart of Jesus as we see it in John's Gospel.

In our morning series, tune in at 11.30 the live stream and you can catch up on YouTube. Well, Jesus, as we said, he describes himself as gentle and lowly and humble and meek.

At the beginning we read from Matthew chapter 12. And we are reminded, here is Jesus, the servant of the Lord. He has been appointed and anointed by God.

[10 : 05] He is filled with the Spirit. God loves him. God delights in him. He is the one who has it all. And yet, how does he deal with people? He will not quarrel.

He will not cry out. He will not break the bruised reeds. He will not snuff out the smouldering wick. Jesus is gentle.

Jesus is patient. Patient to those who have weak faith. Patient to those who are discouraged. And isn't that good news to us now when this season can seem so hard and be going on for such a long time.

And it's easy to give in to discouragement and despair. Jesus is there. Jesus, who is meek, is there for you. This is the Jesus of Philippians 2.

Who had all the glory of heaven and yet became a servant. And he submitted himself to the will of God. Ultimately, he submitted himself to death on a cross.

[11 : 07] To give his life as a ransom for many. To save proud rebels like us. To give us new hearts. That would humble ourselves before our God and King.

So meekness is a life patterned on Jesus the second Adam. Jesus the greater king than David. Following on from that. What are some of the marks of meekness? Let's try and think in a concrete way here.

John Stott in his book Christian Counterculture. He recognises a flow to the first three beatitudes. That if we recognise that spiritually we are poor and banged up.

That we are entirely reliant on God for mercy. If we mourn our sins such that we take it to Jesus for forgiveness. Then we'll have a true self-assessment.

[12 : 11] So we won't be proud. We'll naturally be meek. Before our holy and perfect God. But with the result that we will not be so defensive and protective of our self and our status and our reputation.

And Martin Lloyd-Jones says that to be truly meek. Means we no longer protect ourselves. Because we see there's nothing worth defending. Where we see all I have.

Comes from God alone. If I have God's approval and I'm secure in that. I don't need to worry about reputation or status in the world's eyes.

Now, how does this kind of meekness show up in our lives? Where does its light shine over and against the backdrop of pride and self-confidence? And here in part I'm drawing from a book written by a pastor scholar by the name of Terry Johnson on the Beatitudes.

Which is one of the many helpful books that are out there. He makes four observations. First of all, the meek are teachable. Let me read from James chapter 1 verse 21.

[13 : 25] Where James says, Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent. And humbly accept the word planted in you which can save you.

In humbly accepting the correction of God's word, we will get rid of moral filth. Meek people are ready to listen to others.

Are ready to receive correction. Especially to submit to the correction that comes from God's word. Whether it's as we're reading the Bible in our private devotions.

Whether it's hearing the Bible as it's read and taught in church. Or whether it's as it's brought to us from a Christian friend lovingly helping to show us truth.

So we're not defensive. We're not sulking. We're not fighting back. Where we can honestly say, I know there are many areas in which I fail.

[14 : 31] So it's natural and necessary that I receive correction. Honestly, this is something that I find difficult.

But it most certainly helps to be reminded of who our God is. To see his perfections.

So that we would have a lower view of ourself. And we'd be more honest about our sin and our need of correction. Another quality of the meek is that the meek are gentle with others.

This time we can go to Paul's letter to the Galatians. And he says there towards the end, Brothers and sisters, If someone is caught in a sin, You who live by the Spirit Should restore that person gently.

Gently. So we have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters in Christ Towards loving correction and restoration. But we must be aware of ourselves.

[15 : 41] In the teaching of Jesus, Before we start taking specs out of our neighbour's eye, We must be aware of the whacking great logs in our own eyes. So that we would move towards others humbly and gently.

That we'd be careful of our tone. That we'd be careful of our attitude. Approaching anyone as a fellow sinner. Looking to extend the grace that we have received from our God and Saviour.

There was a friend of Martin Luther King Jr.'s called Will Campbell. And he once famously said this. He said, Do not reduce a person to the madness of a single moment. To think the best of someone. Even when they show you your worst. And how different that is to the trial by social media that we see so prevalent.

[16:45] People that we don't know. Background stories that we have no inclination what's going on. But we can be so quick to pile in with harsh words and pronounce judgment.

As Christians we need to avoid that. We need to avoid cancel culture. Again so quick to pounce on the mistake of a celebrity or a politician or a friend.

And to want to bring them down. Thirdly the meek are modest.

And again this is from Paul 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 7. Where he makes the point. What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it.

Why do you boast as though you did not? In other words understand everything. Everything we have is from God. Terry Johnson asks a great question.

[17:56] He says, What if you had all your abilities. All of your skills. But you lived in outer Mongolia. Our lives would be so so different wouldn't they?

All that we have is a gift of God. And so we are called as Christians to admit complete dependence on God. To give glory to him rather than claim it for ourselves.

The fourth thing about people who are meek is that they are servants. Let's return to some words of Jesus. In Mark chapter 10 beginning at verse 43.

So this is after James and John two brothers wanted the best seat in the kingdom. They wanted to sit in the left and the right hand of Jesus when he came to reign as king in his kingdom.

And Jesus said this to them and to his listening disciples. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant. And whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

[19:00] For even the son of man did not come to be served but to serve. And to give his life as a ransom for many.

The meek are not living for themselves. The meek are not living for themselves. Not asserting and demanding their rights. But rather giving energy to serving others.

Following the pattern of Jesus. The greatest servant. Who served us by giving up his life for us as a ransom for many. Again to borrow from Bonhoeffer.

The meek renounce every right of their own. And live for the sake of Christ. Some diagnostic questions.

To think about do I have the marks of meekness in my life? Where do I need to grow and develop? Ask yourself the question. How do I deal with criticism?

[20:00] Am I open to correction? How do I react to others who wrong me? How do I speak or type about people I believe are wrong?

How do I think about and speak about any success I enjoy? How willing and ready am I to go low and serve for the sake of others?

How do I do? How do I do? How do I do? Now one last question to think about on the topic of meekness. And it's a hugely important one.

What is the reward of meekness? Now maybe you spotted the difference between Psalm 37 verse 11. Where I finished the reading.

And then Matthew 5 verse 5. In Psalm 37 the meek will inherit the land. Jesus says the meek will inherit the earth. And what I want to do is try and show how Christian hope.

[21:12] Future hope. As well as present joy. Is totally tied up with Jesus. The truly meek one. To recognise that it's because of his meekness.

Because of his humility. His patience. His gentleness. His willing to go low. His submitting to his father's will. And becoming the suffering servant for the sake of his church.

Is because of that attitude in his heart. And the actions that flowed from it. That he then receives all authority. That he receives the kingdom.

That the whole earth is his. And here's the wonderful hope. That King Jesus who now rules and reigns. And the whole earth is his. He promises an inheritance.

To his people. To his church. Not just the geographical promised land. That was the hope of King David. And Old Testament Israel. He's promising. He's guaranteeing. Life and rule.

[22:19] In the new heavens. And the new earth. He's promising life. Like the Garden of Eden. Where God's people will live in God's place. Under God's rule.

Enjoying his blessing. Serving him. Enjoying his world. Stewarding it. Stewarding it. For his glory. Not ours. Great joy.

And by the eyes of faith. We are able to see. The glorious future. That belongs to the people of God. So that we might turn. From the sin of pride.

To trust in Jesus. As Lord. To turn from a desire. To grab everything now. To live for. A glorious eternal future.

Those who grab it all now. Cannot truly take possession of the earth. But to follow Jesus. Gentle and lowly.

[23 : 18] Is the promise. Of a future. Where we enjoy it all. What you and I need. Is to place. Our trust.

In. This. Jesus. He is the one. Who. To use Bonhoeffer's words. Truly was meek. To the point. Of the cross. He humbled himself.

To death. On the cross. But God exalted him. God. Raised him. And gave him the name. Above every name. The name of Jesus. Every knee would bow.

And every tongue confess. That Jesus is Lord. He rules. The newer. And by faith. As we live with meekness.

So too. Will we.