

"Meek"

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[0:00] Thank you. That's very kind. It is good to be back. It is not good to be back in the heat. So I might do this. I got glasses over sabbatical, I think. Maybe I had them right before.

So I'm working on the sabbatical sweat things, or the glasses sweat things. So we'll see how this goes. If you feel yourself overwhelmed with heat, you can go downstairs. There's a live stream, and it's air-conditioned. I'd love for you to stay here, because I like to see your faces.

But I'd rather you hear God's word than faint in the pews. So if you find yourself overwhelmed, please take advantage of that. I did want to make a note, because maybe my hearing is bad, but I think Pastor Nick misspoke and said that the healthcare professionals was in October.

It's in August. So August 17th. And maybe he said it right, and I misheard it. I just want to make sure. August 17th, there's a healthcare professional event coming up. Okay.

With that, it's really good to be back. I missed you all. I didn't miss this humidity. The mountain air for the last month was dry and beautiful, and I missed that. But I'm more glad to be back.

[1:14] So thank you for your welcome. For those of you who don't know me, who are brand new, I'm Matt. I'm the other pastor of the church besides Pastor Nick, who you've seen, and I've been on sabbatical till today. So it's good to be back. My family has been watching The Chosen, and we just watched The Chosen season four. And it is Jesus' life and ministry heading up to, and it ends right at the beginning of the triumphal procession. And I want to make a caveat, The Chosen is not gospel truth.

It is not the teaching of the church on who Jesus was, but it's a beautiful picture. Think of it as like going to a Bible study where you're studying the Gospels together. And people are talking about, I wonder what this looked like, and I wonder how this worked played itself out. That's what they're doing. So enjoy it. I feel like you should feel the freedom to enjoy it if you can in good conscience.

And I think it helps in some ways to pick up some truths that I think are really good. In the last episode, there was this confrontation. Jesus was sitting with his disciples, and he had an interaction with some people from the Sanhedrin, and there was this conflict. And if you remember the story, anyway, Mary comes and anoints Jesus, and Judas gets all bent out of shape, and he says, what is this about? What kind of kingdom are you bringing? I thought you were going to come and unite Israel to rise up against the oppression of Rome and reestablish the glory of Israel.

Now look, we don't know if Judas ever said that in the Bible, but we do know that that was a common perspective in the first century, that the Jews in Israel were looking for a Messiah, for someone who would come and with political power rise up and overthrow the oppression of Rome and reestablish the kingdom of Israel so that it might be a glorious place to display God's power in the world.

They expected someone to take control and reestablish Israel. And when Jesus came, many pinned these hopes on him. And Jesus is aware of these things. And this brings us to our passage today.

[3:40] If you want to look there, we're looking at the Gospel of Matthew. We're looking at the Beatitudes. And that's page 759, Matthew chapter 5, is what we'll be looking at. And as you're turning there, I just want to give, again, a brief introduction of where we're at, because the Gospel of Matthew portrays the life of Jesus. And in chapter 4, verse 23, it says that Jesus was going about proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom. Right? And so when we get to chapter 5, which is the beginning of the first big teaching section in Matthew, what Matthew is doing is saying, hey, here's the content of Jesus' teaching about what kind of kingdom he would be bringing. Right? Pastor Nick has talked about the Beatitudes as following in a pattern of Greek wisdom teaching, which virtue teaching, which I think is true. And I want to layer over on top of that and add to that this kingdom lens. That what Jesus is doing in the Sermon on the Mount is saying, this is the kind of kingdom that I'm going to bring.

This is what God's kingdom really looks like. And then the Beatitudes, it's the blessed things are the character, the nature, the dynamics of when God is ruling rightly in our hearts, in our society, and in the world. This is what the kingdom looks like. And Jesus' picture is very different from what Judas was looking for, and the opinions that he expressed in the chosen.

The world seems to think, like Judas, that might makes right, and power is necessary for change. Where personal agency and assertion, we've got to do it ourselves to get ahead in the world.

You've got to go and take it for yourself. Where the forgiving, grace-filled, and merciful in our world are seen as weak and easily manipulated, and where self-promotion is the only way to be seen and valued.

And Jesus says, my kingdom is not like that. And even before we move on and read the passage and look at it, I just wonder, how relevant is that to our world today?

[6:11] How much in our societal conversation, in our political conversation, in our interpersonal relationships, do we value power to control so that we can get what we want? Or do we seem to take hold of this self-assertion in order to make sure that we get what is ours in the world?

What does Jesus have to say to us about that? So with that, Matthew chapter 5.

We're going to look at chapter, verse 5 of Matthew, as we're going through the Beatitudes, one at a time. But I'm going to read the whole thing just so.

And you know, this summer, if you want to memorize something, this would be a great thing to memorize. The Beatitudes, we're going slowly enough. You could actually do it. So here we go. So Matthew chapter 5, I'm going to read from 1 to 12, I think.

So, seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain. And when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[7:27] Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you, when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Let's pray and ask for God's help as we look at his word today.

Lord, we thank you for your word. Lord, what an incredible gift it is that you have, Lord, recorded these words for us.

[8 : 36] And, Lord, given us your word so that we might know you. And, Lord, I pray that these words would be life to us today. Lord, help us to see the beauty in your kingdom.

Lord, I pray for your help that I might speak clearly as you would have me to do. And that we together would sit under your word today. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. All right. So, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

We're going to look at this in three parts. We're going to break it down. There's not a lot here in terms of complexity. We're going to talk about what is the meaning of meekness. We're going to look at the blessing of meekness.

And then we're going to look at the model and source of meekness. So, that's where we're going to go today. And if you're making your outline, that's where we are. So, the first step, the meaning of meekness.

[9 : 40] On our trips west, I've been listening to a podcast called the Prancing Pony Podcast, which is all about the world of J.R.R. Tolkien. And they actually do close readings of the text and discuss the themes.

It's beautiful. It's a lovely thing. If you don't know, I'm a Tolkien fan. It's totally... They're like 352-hour episodes. So, it's a big commitment. I'm only on episode 30, and we're still halfway through the Silmarillion.

So, it's a long way to go. But one of the fun things they do is this section called Word Nerdery, where they take a word and they say, why did Tolkien use this word?

So, I want to say today, why did Jesus use this word, meek, in this section? And we have all sorts of problems with this. First of all, meek is not used very often today.

And when it's used in the English language today, people usually think meek means mousy, unbearably shy, or non-confrontational. If you're old enough to have seen the original Back to the Future, George McFly is your picture of meekness, a doormat being walked over by others and easily manipulated.

[10 : 56] Looking at one of the word books, Vine's word book actually had some helpful common usages that meekness really means weakness, timidity, or lack of courage.

That's the common use. But that's not what the Greek word means. And that's an overlay. That's one of the, meek is one of those words that used to mean something different and now means it has shifted in its meaning to be almost negative.

Whereas, that's not what the word actually means. In some places, this word in English translations is also translated as gentle or humble.

But what does it mean? Well, we're going to spend some time looking at Scripture in other places to help us figure out what does it mean. So, one of the places that we can look is in Psalm 37, which Suzanne read earlier to us.

If you want to turn there, we're going to look at this for a few minutes. Psalm 37 is on page 435 in your Bible. And the reason why we go to Psalm 37 is because in verse 11 it says, the meek shall inherit the land.

[12 : 07] That sounds almost like this beatitude. And so, many people think Jesus was referring to this. And in the context of it, it's helpful because it fills out the idea of what meekness is.

This is a Psalm of David. And he's speaking about evildoers and the wicked and those who would stand against him and against God and God's kingdom.

Right? And so, this is the context. As you read through the Psalm, it's very clear. This is a context in which David is writing this song.

He's surrounded by enemies and opponents who are threatening him. And as Suzanne prayed, she pointed out, there's a lot here about do not fret, do not worry.

Even though you're in a bad situation, do not worry because of evil. But do what instead? Trust in God and do good. Delight in the Lord and wait for him to provide for you.

[13:09] Wait for the Lord's timing when it seems like he's slow to rescue you or to save you or to put down the evildoers. Forsake revenge. Why?

Because God is going to do it. Because you are in God's hands and God is going to take care of his people. And he will cut off the evildoers in the end.

And they won't get the land. And instead, you who trust, who in a God-centered way believe and patiently wait for God to work, believing that God will be this vindicator of David and of the nation of Israel, this is the idea that it is those who wait on the Lord, this is the meek that inherit the land.

So this is starting to give us a portrait. I will just tell you, I don't have a quick definition of meek. I'm going to paint a portrait for you. I'm going to give you a couple of different pictures so you can try to get a sense of what meekness is.

Because the reason why the English translations still use it is they don't have anything better. Humble isn't quite right. Gentle isn't quite right. Both of those are parts of it. But neither is quite right. So I'm going to keep painting this picture for you.

[14:27] So Psalm 37 in the Old Testament is one way. Then there are places where this use or its cognates, different forms of it are used in the New Testament. And I'm just going to read you a few passages from the epistles that use this word.

It's almost always translated gentleness, except for in Colossians when it's translated meekness. But I'm just going to read four passages. And I want you to think about, again, the context of each of these things, what is said around them that may help us shape the picture of this idea of meekness.

I, therefore, a prisoner of God. This is Ephesians 4, 1. I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness.

There it is. With patience, bearing with one another, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Or Colossians 3, verse 12.

Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness. There it is again. And patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

[15:44] As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 2 Timothy, chapter 2, starting verse 22.

Paul writes this to Timothy. So flee youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies.

You know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.

And there it is, with meekness. And God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth. And then in 1 Peter 3, verse 13.

Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled.

[16:47] But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you.

Yet do it with gentleness. There it is again. And respect. Having a good conscience so that when you are slandered, those who revile you, your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

Do you see some of the common threads of where we see this word being used, right? It's often in a context of division or of reproach or of conflict.

Meekness rises to the surface. Showing patience with others. Being kind and gentle to one another. Not being self-assertive to make sure you are right or being heard or being understood properly.

But humbly, carefully interacting with one another. It is a God-word attitude where we trust God and have confidence in God and believe that He will vindicate us.

[18:05] And it allows us to treat others with softness of tone, even as we have firmness of conviction. It doesn't mean that we're doormats. It doesn't mean that we don't speak truth.

It doesn't mean that we don't confront or have conflict with others. But as we do that, we carry this character of meekness, which includes gentleness, humility, and ultimately trusting God in the middle of these things.

It is grounded in a security of God's grace to us. Now, I do want to make sure I say this at some point. Meekness does not simply mean submitting to unjust suffering or abuse and never confronting evil.

Sometimes the church has said, the meek means you must stay in an abusive home. You don't need to stay in an abusive home. If this is true for you, come talk to the pastors. We want to care for you.

This is not what... But it does mean that we continue to pursue the character of Christ even in the worst of circumstances and for our own heart to bear a proper response even as we seek to address things properly.

[19:23] Right? A respectfulness even when reciprocated as we interact with others. This is a part of the picture then of meekness that I think the epistles point us to.

I still haven't given you a definition and that's because I don't have one. Sorry. I'm hoping you can get a sense of this picture and of this word that's really going to capture it for you.

Before we go on, I just want to say this though. How much is this different from our own hearts? I think we often fall into traps that our world sets for us these days.

One of them is seeing all relationships as power dynamics. It's about winning and losing. It's about who has the power and who doesn't have the power and how is that power held. Meekness does not see relationships as power dynamics.

Meekness sees relationships as an opportunity to love and serve God first and the other person in light of loving God. We usually find ourselves or often find ourselves either feeling under the thumb of someone else and wanting to fight back or we find ourselves in the position of power and tempted to take advantage of others and use them.

[20:49] Meekness would forsake both of these paths for a different role. The other trap that I see in our culture today is a profound me first attitude.

If you're going to be who you want to be in this world, you've got to go get it yourself. It is up to you. You have to be seen. You have to be noticed. You have to promote yourself all the time.

You have to do all these things. And look, that doesn't mean that you can't write a good resume. It doesn't. But what it means is that in your spirit you know that ultimately the person you most want to be seen by and noticed by and vindicated by is God.

And that God will actually take care of you and He will provide for you. He will get you into the grad school so you don't have to spend three years of your life running around, running over people to be at the top so that everyone will notice you and say, look how great I am.

And if you're a mom on the playground, you don't have to keep talking about all the wonderful things you're doing to make sure everyone knows that you're the best mom around. You can think and see others and think, how can I love them?

[22:06] How can I serve them? How can I come alongside of them? This is, I believe, the spirit of meekness. And it's contrary to our spirit, to our culture today.

Jesus says, blessed are the meek because my kingdom is not like the kingdom of this world. So that's what meekness is as best as I can get you to.

I hope that helps. The question then is, what is the blessing of meekness, right? Jesus says, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

Now what in the world does that mean? Does that mean that we can take over the empty lot down the street and like, you know, build a parking garage for ourselves so that we don't have to deal with someone else's parking garage?

No. It doesn't mean that at all. Again, going back to Psalm 37 is really instructive. David is writing this psalm and David as the king, whether he's the king apparent or the king in, it doesn't tell us.

[23:10] We don't know when this psalm was written, but David knew that these evildoers, these wrongdoers were seeking to destroy him and in, by extension, the nation of Israel, the land that God had promised to be the place where he would display his glory by creating a great nation, a great kingdom, right?

So this is the, in the Old Testament, the promise of the Davidic kingdom and the prospect of this being the pinnacle of God's great work where he would display his glory is really big.

And so in light of this then, David is saying, these things are threatened. And it would be very easy for David to say, therefore, what do I need to do? I need to amass power to myself.

I need to get the biggest army so that I can defeat all my enemies. I need to assert myself as king and put all these other people under my thumb so that I can rule the way God intended me to do it.

That would be such a temptation. But as we've seen, that's not David's response. David says, fret not because of these, but God will give you the land.

[24:24] He will be the one to cut off the evildoers who think that by their power they're going to get it. He will cut them off and instead you will receive the land that God promised and the promises of his kingdom coming to earth.

Jesus says, this is true in my kingdom too. Not in the land of Palestine between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan or, you know, the broader area that was promised in the Old Testament.

Because we see very clearly a discontinuity between the land and the Old Testament and in the New Testament where the church becomes the people of God not in a national, physical place but becomes a transnational place where the land, the promises of the land are fulfilled as the gospel goes to the ends of the earth and then is fulfilled ultimately in the new heavens and the new earth where, if you were here this spring, we heard lots about in the book of Revelation.

So what does this inheritance look like? I think it has two different aspects that I want to point out this morning. The first is from 1 Peter chapter 1.

So 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3 through 5. says this, according to His great mercy, that is God's great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[26 : 20] Friends, the greatest fulfillment of these promises is in the salvation that God has worked in Jesus Christ. This is the riches of our inheritance.

We have, because He has saved us from sin and brought us into His kingdom, we are now citizens and heirs of the kingdom of God that Jesus has won by dying and rising from the dead.

And so we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. We have, we know that we will be in God's kingdom forever, not because we are great, but because of what Christ has done.

This is the beautiful thing of it. And there is a present reality for that. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul is talking about the Corinthian church and he's saying, already you are rich.

Already you've experienced the riches of this salvation. You've been given the Holy Spirit and were that you actually lived in this richness rather than continuing to strive for more power and influence in your community through spiritual gifts.

[27 : 33] He says, you have everything already. You don't need anything more than these riches. And so we live in this today time with the spiritual riches that come from our salvation in Christ.

The certainty of our salvation, the reality of spiritual new life in our hearts, the giving of the Holy Spirit to empower us to know and love and serve God.

The riches of the community of faith where we get to live out our love for one another. The power of the gospel that brings us to salvation and that we proclaim to others that they may come to salvation.

These are the riches of the gospel that we have. And yet there's more to come because what we saw in Revelation is that one day when God creates a new heaven and a new earth, it will be all of his kingdom completely and fully.

What Jesus did was come to be the inbreaking of his kingdom. The kingdom of God is at hand. But we know now that it's not fully there, don't we?

[28 : 43] We look around in our fallen world and we think this can't be God's kingdom. We even look at the church and we think, man, we got a long way to go, don't we? But instead, we have a promise.

Remember what we heard in Revelation chapter 5 as the elders worship Jesus around the throne in the heavenly realms?

It says, they sang a new song. This is verse 9. And they sang a new song saying, worthy are you, that is Jesus, to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth.

And when you get to chapter 20 and Jesus finally defeats all of the enemies of his kingdom when final judgment comes upon the earth and there is a renewal that comes with his reign and a new heavens and a new earth come down, it says over and over again and the saints, God's people, will reign with him in that world.

When we are connected by faith to Jesus, we will inherit the earth for eternity.

[30 : 11] And it's an upside down promise, isn't it? Because our world tells us the only way we'll get ahead is through power and self-assertion.

And Jesus says, no, the meek shall inherit the earth. Friends, do you know what great promise, what great freedom there is in this picture?

We have the freedom to be meek. It means we don't have to be afraid of being run over or cut off or left out. It means we don't have to be afraid of being insignificant or our lives being meaningless.

It means that we don't have to enter each social situation posturing and navigating our insecurity. It means that we're free from the rat race of believing that you have to impose your will and get ahead and use other people to get what you want.

Do you see how being meek frees us from all of those things? Because we know that God has loved us in Christ. God has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm in Christ Jesus.

[31 : 23] That God has delivered us from darkness into the kingdom of his beloved son. That God has given us all that we need. And when we know Christ we can be meek before other people because we know that the meek will inherit the earth.

And why do we lean into Jesus? Because as we come to our last point Jesus is the model and the source of meekness for our lives.

It's helpful that Matthew uses the word meek from 5-5 and two other places to refer to Jesus. The first is in Matthew 18 I'm sorry Matthew 11 28-30 where he says Jesus says come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly of heart. Gentle that's the word meek. Gentle and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

You know it's remarkable Gavin Ortlin pointed out in the book Gentle and Lowly which if you haven't read it is a great book on the person of Jesus. He points out that this is the only place where Jesus talks about his own heart.

[32 : 44] He says this I am gentle or meek and lowly of heart. And this is in the context of the burdens that his people carry the burdens of legalism that the Pharisees in the context of the passage are putting on the people.

And he says come to me come to me and release the burdens the burdens of religious work that that cause you to have to over and over again try to approve to achieve or earn God's approval.

Jesus says come to me and I will lift the burden of the sin that you bear and the life that you lived in a fallen world. Come to me for forgiveness and rest and for comfort.

And my meekness Jesus says my meekness and loneliness means you can approach without fear for I am with you. I am here for your forgiveness for your good for your rest.

And so we see Jesus himself lives out this picture of meekness. And the second place that Matthew uses this word is in chapter 21 verses 4 and 5.

[34 : 04] Jesus is instructing his disciples to go get a donkey to prepare him to enter Jerusalem in what's called the triumphal entry and Jesus entered his Jerusalem on the way to the cross.

Matthew 21 4 says this this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet saying say to the daughter of Zion behold your king is coming to you humble and mounted on a donkey on a colt full of a beast of the foal of a beast of burden humble and mounted on donkey there's that word again meek the prophet Zechariah spoke those words in chapter 9 verse 9 of his prophecy a prophecy regarding the Davidic king that would come one day but not on a white horse in triumphal entry having defeated his foes militarily and reestablished the national kingdom but this new king would come humble on a lesser beast of burden Jesus came not to impose himself but to give himself and think of all the ways in which we see Jesus living out meekness he confronted the false teachers but he welcomed sinners he turned the tables in the temple but then he was silent before his accusers he resisted the fame that he could have had while still knowing who he was his strategy was not power but love not self importance but self sacrifice he had all the authority and he used it to lay it down his own life for others he had all power and he used to heal to give life to give hope to others he came in humility not to be served but to serve and give himself a ransom for many and in this in the meekness of Jesus he gained a kingdom friends we know this this is the message of the gospel that we have believed as Christians from the beginning the pattern of Jesus victory was humility humiliation suffering death then glory and this is the model of meekness for us and the source as well because

Jesus didn't just give us an example he gave us himself to atone for our selfish pride and an arrogant ambition to gain for us forgiveness in his act of meekness he gained us and rescued us and brought us to be his own he loved us his enemies and made us his people and this is the good news of the gospel that Jesus comes in meekness to rescue people and so we not only can see that as a model to follow but by the very knowledge of who he is as we come to know him more as we behold Jesus in the glory of his meekness we too will be like him be transformed with him and he will teach us and enable us to lay down ourselves and embrace meekness I want to close by reading what Paul wrote to the

Philippian church in chapter 2 starting in verse 5 have this mind among you which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him a name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father friends this is the meekness of Christ this is the meekness of the gospel this is the meekness for those who will inherit the earth

Lord we confess how much we resist the path of meekness Lord it reveals how little we know of you and of your grace and of the power that you have shown us shows how little our faith is oh Lord fill us with confidence that you are the vindicator of the lowly that you are the champion of those who humble themselves before you and serve others Lord help us to see that in the very salvation that we know Lord that we can and are called to embrace a life of meekness Lord with a great promise that as we do that

[39 : 39] Lord we will know and inherit your kingdom be with us Lord we pray in Jesus name amen