

The Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the meek
(Ephesians 4 v 29 – 5 v 2 Matthew 8 v 21 – 35)

Let's begin by saying very clearly, a 'meek' person is NOT a 'weak' person. A meek person is rather a realistic person, who looks at themselves accurately and honestly as they are before God and is constantly comforted but humbled by the experience. Subsequently they treat other people with the same quality of kindness and mercy and gentleness they themselves have received from God in Christ.

“Blessed are the meek”, says Jesus the Christ, the Messiah King and Saviour of the world, near the start of His kingdom manifesto which we know as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 – 7. And it's interesting where this statement comes in the order of these opening declarations we call the Beatitudes.

“Blessed are the meek” comes after “Blessed are the poor in spirit” and “Blessed are those who mourn” and before “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness”.

So the 'meek' person is in fact a godly person who acknowledges they are poverty stricken in their heart and soul without Christ, who mourns because of the sin that makes us so in this fallen world, who above everything else desires to live a pure and God-pleasing life and who therefore has meekly and humbly trusted wholly on God's grace in Christ. This person knows they are guilty but deeply loved and completely forgiven at the profound cost of Jesus' lifeblood shed on the cross of Calvary. By the Holy Spirit's influence we have begun to appreciate God's kindness and mercy and the cost by which it has come to us, so we mourn and repent of our sin and long to live clean lives acceptable before Him.

And part of that is without doubt to mirror God's grace and Jesus' loving forgiveness and the Spirit's patience and forbearance to other people. A big part of holiness is not being squeaky clean in a cold,

clinical way, but treating people graciously because that is how the Lord treats us.

Christians who practice this Christ-like quality of meekness may suffer abuse temporarily in this power hungry world but we are promised that when Christ returns in glory and makes all things new, we shall inherit the earth!

‘Meek’ is what the man in Jesus’ parable is NOT. He seizes the fresh opportunity given him to get even with someone who owes him. Such people will have no share in the resurrected splendour Christ is bringing to the world at the end of the age. ‘Meekness’ is instead what the King shows in the first instance – a strong man using his power not to dominate or control but to liberate. ‘Meekness’ is a clever, educated woman using her talents and resources to improve and enable her community. It’s like the priest in ‘Les Miserables’ who shows such radical forgiveness and generosity to Jean Valjean in the hope he will take the chance to rise from a life of bitterness and crime and become a better man.

Ultimately ‘meekness’ is what was shown by our Lord Jesus Christ, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”

He was, is and always will be first in line, the Alpha and Omega, co-creating, co-reigning Son of God, King over Kings and Lord over Lords, yet He took our place at the bottom of the pile so that we could be raised to enjoy His place, a seat at God’s Table in Heaven.

To be Christian is to appreciate this radical, undeserved grace of God in Jesus and live our lives in constant gratitude seeking to follow the example of His remarkable humility.

The parable of the unmerciful servant comes in the context of Jesus teaching His disciples about true spiritual greatness. They'd been arguing again, competing for the highest honours in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus has been talking about simple childlike faith, strict self-control regarding sin and compassion for the lost. And He urges us to practice reconciliation in the fellowship aware that all we say and do is noted in Heaven.

Peter has taken a legalistic, Pharisaical approach to this teaching and is calculating how many times he is absolutely required to express forgiveness. Jesus urges him to grasp the spirit, not the letter of the law. Not 7 times Peter, 77 times – 70 x 7 and more! Treat others as God your Father treats you! Treat people with ongoing patience, never failing kindness, Jesus-like love and forgiveness. Meekness, for our Master's sake.

That's the message the Apostle Paul is teasing out in this passage in his letter to the Ephesians. Christians have been saved by the grace Paul describes in such fine theological terms in the first few chapters. Now he says we must practice living in the light of this grace in the way we treat one another.

No more nagging criticism, finding fault, tearing people down instead of building them up. Such talk grieves the Holy Spirit, Who lives in us and would be prompting us to the kind of talk and conversation beneficial to others. Here's a list of things to leave out for the binmen! They're to be considered as rubbish, no longer needed. God rid of these, says Paul – bitterness, uncontrolled rage, brutal competition, slander and malice. What good are these thing to do a Christian person or fellowship?

Instead it's meekness that is to be the order of the day – kindness and compassion, thoughtful consideration of others and oh, there it is again, forgiveness of one another's faults and weaknesses, loving and bearing with each other as brothers and sisters in the family of God.

In so doing we are following the example of our Lord. We are becoming more like Christ. We are honouring Him and pointing others to Him as we practice this Christian virtue of meekness.

And while we may get walked over a time or two by the small-minded of this world, the Lord is no man's debtor. He promises a share, and knowing Him it will be a *generous* share in the new heavens and earth that are coming soon.

Ps 37 puts it well:

“Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong

...

Trust in the Lord and do good ...

Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart...

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; Do not fret – it leads only to evil.

For evil men will be cut off

But those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.

A little while and the wicked men will be no more, though you look for them they will not be found.

But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace”.

Thanks and praise to God!

Amen