

“#Blessed: The Happiness of Humility”

Matthew 5:1-12 • Psalm 37:1-11

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • January 27, 2019

We have a problem in America today. It's an addiction that is tearing the country apart. It's an addiction to outrage. Every day it seems there is something new for you to be upset about. People then line up on one side or the other of the so-called "issue" and proceed to try to destroy those who don't agree with them. We recently saw the supreme example of this in the fake controversy over an encounter in the nation's capitol between a native American protestor and a group of kids from a Catholic high school. When a short portion of a video clip was released on the internet people became outraged, with some making threats of violence against the kids, their families, and the school. And yet when more of the video was finally released it turned out that what people were outraged about was not the case. We had all been misled. And so another group of people became outraged about being misled, fueling the cycle.

Jesus says, "Happy are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The thing about being outraged is that it's the opposite of being happy. When you get angry not only are *you* not happy but it affects everyone around you. They're not happy either. But the meek *are* happy. So what does it mean to be meek?

Many people today would define meek as timid or subservient. We tend to think of a meek person being spineless or a pushover, unable to stand up for himself. Or maybe another way you think of meek is someone who never raises her voice. None of those really sound like desirable traits. We don't want to be called meek. Remember that the word "blessed" means happy or fortunate. So let me ask you, if meek means being in submission, would those who are in some kind of forced submission be happy? One commentator answered that question by saying, "There is no happiness in being compelled to do what you do not wish to do." Here's the good news. Meekness doesn't

mean weakness. In fact, meekness is a sign of true strength.

When Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," he's actually quoting Psalm 37:11. One of the important things to understand about Jesus is that when he quotes a verse from the Old Testament he's using that to point us to the entire passage. In this case He wants us to consider all of Psalm 37. So when we look at Psalm 37 what we find is a much better picture of what the Bible means by "meek."

The first thing to notice is that both verse 9 and verse 11 mention those who inherit the land. In both Greek and Hebrew the words earth and land are the same word. We are to think about God's promise to the Israelites that if they would obey his commandments that they would inherit the Promised Land. But it turns out that the true Promised Land is not really a particular place on the globe but eternal life with God. That's what it means to inherit the land. The meek will spend eternity with Jesus while, as the first part of verse 9 says, "the evildoers shall be cut off."

Next, verse 11 says, "the meek shall inherit the land," while verse 9 says, "those who wait for the Lord shall inherit." This teaches us that the meek are those who wait for the Lord as opposed to the evil doers who do not. This isn't always easy, right? I know I don't like to wait. But verse 7 says, "Be still before the Lord and wait *patiently* for him." So not only do I have to wait but I have to wait patiently? This sounds like it's going to be harder than I thought. Seriously, though, the picture here of meekness is of other people getting ahead while you are not. Perhaps they are taking advantage of you or they are cheating in some way to get ahead. Maybe they simply have more money or resources or connections than you have. Chances are, in this scenario, they have insulted you or hurt you in some way. Our natural

inclination is to get back at them or hurt them or to make them stop. We say we want justice.

What we really want is revenge. We want to be outraged. But instead, God says, "Wait for me. Let me handle this." The meek person is strong because he trusts God to act. Verse 3 says, "Trust in the Lord, and do good." And then verse 5 says, "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and *he* will act." Then as we see in verse 8, trusting that God will act on your behalf means refraining from anger. As verses 1 and 8 teach us, trusting means not fretting or worrying about what other people are doing. This goes against everything inside us. Meekness does not come naturally, which is why it's a demonstration of strength. Worrying, getting angry, seeking revenge is easy. It's a sign of weakness. Absorbing the insults and the injustice without passing it on to someone else takes great strength.

So the meek person is someone who trusts in God, trusting that God is on your side, trusting that God loves you and that He will keep His promises, trusting that God will act. This kind of trust, committing your way to God, leads to a quiet confidence in the face of all kinds of situations, a quiet confidence that comes from experiencing God working over and over. When you have the experience of trusting God and having him take care of the situation, you learn to refrain from anger and worry.

That leads us to the final thing about being meek. Meek people are blessed or happy because not only have they seen God work in their lives but they get to experience God using them in other peoples' lives. The Greek word for "meek" is actually the word that's used to describe an animal that has been tamed and trained for work, such as a horse or an ox. A wild horse is not much use to anyone. But a trained horse can be very useful.

Years ago, when we were first married, we had a Shetland Sheepdog, a Sheltie, named Brady. We started taking him to obedience classes. Brady was a very smart dog and he

caught on very quickly. When the beginner class was finished the instructor invited us to bring Brady to the intermediate class where he learned even more. Near the end of the intermediate class the instructor pulled us aside and said, "I have an advanced class that is by invitation only. I think Brady would be a great fit for that class." And so we took him to these advanced obedience classes. This is the idea behind the word for meek. It means someone that is trained by God in order to be useful to God. Here's the thing. We were training Brady to be obedient. But it wasn't a burden to him or to us. He loved the classes. He loved doing the things he was learning because he loved pleasing us. He was happy and it showed.

It's the same for us. When you get to see God working in you and then through you it will make you very happy. You will want to please God more and more. You will want God to work through you in the lives of the people you love.

In the Bible there are two people who are described as meek. The first is Moses. Numbers 12 describes how Moses' brother and sister didn't like Moses' wife. They began to grumble and complain. They probably made a few choice remarks around Moses and around his wife. But then it says that Moses was the most meek person on the earth. This is the same Moses that confronted Pharaoh, the same Moses who became so angry with the Israelites that he smashed the tablets with the Ten Commandments. Those were instances of righteous anger. Moses was angry because of injustices that others were suffering. But when he was attacked personally he did not respond. He waited patiently, trusting God to act. And as Numbers tells us, God did.

The other person described as meek was Jesus. Jesus got angry with the religious leaders who were taking advantage of people but ignoring God's law. He got angry with the money changers in the Temple. But when he was accused and beaten and spit on and mocked he could have called upon legions of

angels to defend him but he didn't. He took it, even to the point of dying on the cross for us. And the world has never been the same since.

There is no training program to learn to be meek. Like patience, it's learned in the midst of difficult situations. It's learned by choosing not to be outraged, by choosing not to fight back. It's learned by intentionally choosing the way of Jesus. We learn to trust in God by trusting Him a little this time and then a little more the next

until we are confident in Him. We grow to be meek like Jesus by waiting for God to act on our behalf. We learn not to fret over evil people doing better than we are by seeing what the future holds for them. We become meek by delighting ourselves in the Lord. Because then he will give you the desires of your heart. And what your heart really desires is to inherit the land, to spend eternity with God.

Amen.