

Blessed are the Meek

Call to Worship: Psalm 147

1st Scripture: Matthew 11:20-30

2nd Scripture: Matthew 5:1-5

Hymn Insert- *O Church Arise*

Hymn #574- *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*

Hymn #678- *Christ Shall Have Dominion*

Introduction

This morning, we move on to consider the third beatitude listed here in Matthew, Chapter 5: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” And as we have been doing, we will begin by considering the object of the blessing (the first portion of the verse), before considering the actual blessing itself (the second portion of the verse).

I. Blessed are the Meek

“Blessed are the meek.” What exactly does it mean to be meek? Well, last Sunday, brother Cal had approached me and expressed interest in this particular beatitude because he had stated that he never really was able to come up with a clear definition of the word “meek.” And I had responded that I hoped to work toward doing that very thing. Now, why do I mention this? Because, to brother Cal’s credit, the term “meek,” is not an easy term to define, because it is a word that covers a lot of ground. In many ways, it is a “catch all” term. In other words, the term “meek,” is a robust term that carries a lot of weight in Scripture, and to attempt to define it in simple terms, or to limit it to other terms which help describe a meek person, really doesn’t do justice to its full meaning. And so, for example, to say “Meekness equals humility,” doesn’t really bring out the fullness of the term. To be sure, humility is definitely a major part of what it means to be meek, but “meekness” includes much more, as well.

All of that said, it would be best to state the matter this way, before attempting to dig out the fullness of what our Lord intends here, when He states, “Blessed are the meek”: Meekness involves an overall disposition, which makes up the entire character of an individual, and it would include such qualities as gentleness, lowliness, humility, graciousness, kindness, patience, contentment, long suffering...etc. And furthermore, meekness relates to the first two beatitudes (which ought not to surprise us), involving “poverty of spirit” and “mourning.” Now, here’s the

critical catch which “meekness” adds to the overall description of the blessed, in keeping with what we have gone over so far. Whereas being “poor in spirit” and “mourning the effects of the fall on this world” especially relate to how the true people of God view themselves, in many ways, “meekness” is the general outworking of the first two beatitudes, which naturally creates a disposition of lowliness that is exhibited by how we relate to God and others. In other words, because of what we are on the inside (as a product of the effects of the Gospel in our hearts), meekness is the descriptive general disposition that concerns how we now relate to others. And this is especially, clearly perceived by others, in the context within which we live, in a fallen world. The people of God, though imperfect, don’t respond to conflict and offense and contention, in the same way that the unsaved do. Because of who they are in Christ, because they recognize their own utter weakness and dependency upon God, because they mourn the effects of the fall without and within them, they carry a true and sincere aura of meekness, which is exhibited by how they respond to God and others. It is noticeable. It must be noticeable.

Now, the good thing about this “difficult to define” term, “meekness,” is that it can be much better understood by seeing it in action. And so, in a few moments, we will be looking at some biblical examples to help shape our understanding of the term. But, before we do, there is another critical factor that must be brought to the foreground, before we can fully appreciate the biblical examples. There is another key observation about meekness, which, building upon what we have already considered, provides the main motivation that fuels all of its visible expressions.

This disposition of meekness, which springs out of a “poverty of spirit” and a sincere “mourning over the effects of sin in the world,” compels the true Christian to consciously respond to God and others, in all of life circumstances, in ways that would be willing to sacrifice personal comfort, ambitions and desires, for a much greater cause, in keeping with their understanding of God’s divine will. The Christian understands reality. The Christian knows why we are here. The Christian recognizes the reality and devastating effects of the fall. The Christian is in tune with God’s redemptive purposes in Christ, and sees the world in the light of these redemptive purposes. The Christian relies on the sovereignty of God, to bring about His purposes, while recognizing (at the same time) the desperate need of all who are still blind to these realities. The Christian fully understands that heaven and hell are in the equation, and

never dying souls are in the balance, and this compels him in the direction of exhibiting an “all out” meek disposition. Yes, imperfectly; yes, with the need for constant reminders, because of the remaining effects of sin; yes, in a context of ongoing personal repentance.... but, it is in his make-up, nonetheless. It must be. And so, we can state this reality in the following two ways:

1) In a God-ward direction, meekness includes the willingness to endure suffering and hardship for the glory of God.

2) In an other-ward direction, meekness includes the willingness to endure suffering and hardship for the building up (edifying) of the brethren, and for the salvation of those who are still lost.

Unto these two ends, with the God-ward direction being at the very foundation, the meek willingly absorb and endure suffering, hardship, and even being personally wronged. This is the disposition of those who are truly meek.

Now, coming at our consideration from a negative standpoint, which will also help bring our understanding of meekness into its fullest expression, we can say that those who are meek are not full of pride, self-confidence, stubbornness, fierceness, vengefulness...etc. The meek do not assert themselves by force, but rather, they strive to exercise total dependence upon God, remembering that “vengeance belongs to the Lord.” They are confident that God’s justice will ultimately have its way, concerning all who fail to repent and who persecute God’s people. And so, they willingly suffer hardship and wrong for the sake of God’s glory, for the sake of the edification of God’s people, and for the sake of the hope of motivating repentance toward God and faith toward Christ, leading to the salvation of the lost, should God choose to grant them salvation. And if not, God will vindicate the sufferings of His meek children, at the final judgment. Suffice it to say that the meek willingly bear insult, and do not repay evil for evil, but rather good for evil, an important theme which will come out, later on, in the middle of our Lord’s sermon. Suffice it to say for now that the meek strive to abandon self-will toward God and ill-will toward others. They are consciously mindful of God’s work of redemption and the present reality of His Kingdom of Heaven, in the context of a lost and fallen world, which desperately needs Christ. And so, they willingly prefer to suffer personal injury rather than inflict injury on others (even if they deserve it), for the sake of the Gospel.

Now, before we move on to consider the specific blessing that belongs to the meek, let me leave you with a few biblical examples of meekness, which will hopefully provide us with an illustrative picture of the reality:

1) We find a great example of meekness in Abraham, exemplified so well in his dealings with his younger nephew, Lot, whom he had taken into his care, after Lot's father (Abraham's brother) had died. Remember, Lot enjoyed a tremendous privilege in being able to travel alongside of Abraham to the Promised Land. God's gracious promise belonged to Abraham and not Lot, and yet, Lot was blessed because of Abraham. And yet, following their departure from Egypt, when they enter into the land, a conflict arises between Lot's herdsmen and Abraham's herdsmen. While in Egypt, both Abraham and Lot were able to significantly increase their livestock, and while this provided them both with great wealth, it also provoked contention, because there was limited grazing space, when they came into Canaan (which remember, was still populated by foreigners at this time).

And so, Lot's herdsmen and Abraham's herdsmen were vying for territory to care for their master's animals. When this controversy reaches Abraham and Lot, Abraham pulls Lot aside to discuss the matter. Now, consider, that by right, Abraham had every proper reason to order Lot to head in a direction of Abraham's choice, being that Abraham was his guardian, his elder (indeed, a father figure to Lot) and the rightful possessor of the entire land and all of God's promises included in His covenant with Abraham. And in many ways, Lot would have done well then, to offer Abraham the choice pick of the land, before Abraham had a chance to offer a solution, but he didn't. And rather than assert himself; rather than lay claim to his right, and risk any ill feelings between Lot and himself, Abraham gave Lot the option of choosing wherever he wanted to settle, first, before choosing his own settlement. Abraham so valued his relationship with Lot, that he rather chose to forgo his own privilege, in order to maintain the peace, and promote Lot's own desire and wellbeing. And it was a no-brainer for Lot. Looking in the direction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he saw what looked to be the best of the land, beautifully coated with flora and resources. And he made his decision and went there. Now, that later led to other problems for Lot, and a host of other lessons that we could learn (at another time), but nonetheless, we find a great outward expression of a spirit of meekness in Abraham here.

2) We would be remiss, if we failed to mention Moses, who was considered by God to be the humblest man on earth. And how many offenses did Moses endure from the people of Israel in their journey through the wilderness? How many times did they challenge his authority and test his patience and threaten him, in the course of their own unbelief and rejection of God? And yet, how often did Moses stand in the gap as a faithful mediator to the people, offering sacrifice and pleading with God to spare them, for the sake of His own Name? Moses was a tremendous example of meekness, as he often endured hardship, suffering and offenses, directly from, and on account of, the hard-hearted, stiff-necked Israelites in the wilderness. He absorbed the barbs and still loved them, interceded for them (even in the face of their personal attacks against him), and did all that he could to see them preserved, in the face of their own guilt and rebellion. That's meekness! Moses lived within a broader context of reality. [Note: David's handling of Saul]

3) Finally, we would be really remiss, if we neglected to consider the "One greater than Moses," who called all people to Himself with the words, "Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest...for, I am meek and lowly in heart, and my burden is light, and you will find rest for your souls." The very eternal Son of God, who had every right and reason to condemn and squash rebellious mankind, said, "Even in spite of your hard-heartedness and rebellion, which is a product of your own sin, I offer you rest and peace, in Myself, on behalf of God. Come, come to Me, and receive this rest, freely." And this Greatest of all Kings, came into Jerusalem, (literally) "meek, and sitting on a donkey" (Matt. 21:5).

And when we see our Lord relate to tax collectors and prostitutes and sinners, with such a gentle, gracious and compassionate heart; when He looked upon the woman caught in adultery with no stone in His hand to stone her (as the only One who remained, with the right to do so); indeed, when He was willingly led (like a Lamb) to the slaughter; when He was whipped and beaten and lifted on high, naked and nailed to His cross; when He could still pray with all sincerity, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," He exhibited par excellence a true spirit of meekness! He saw the big picture, He knew man's great need and his enslavement to sin, and He willingly absorbed all wrong, persecution and suffering, unto the salvation of lost, dead sinners. Indeed, He stood as a sacrificial Lamb, in their behalf. That is the ultimate picture of meekness, from which, the people of God, take their greatest example and pattern. Indeed,

that is what drives the people of God to do what the unbeliever cannot naturally comprehend, in battling against the flesh and self-will, for the sake of God's glory and the glory of Christ, and the good of others! [*Note: Our Lord's humiliation as revealed in Philippians 2; no reputation*]

And so, brethren, in these three examples, the last being the most perfect (without flaw), we fill-in the picture of meekness that we have been striving to understand from our text. But, before we move on to the blessing, one more, brief ingredient must be added to the overall recipe, lest we leave a hideous blemish in all that we have considered.

It is important to recognize that "meekness" is never to be confused with "weakness." Indeed, one of the glorious facets of meekness is that it often requires great strength and self-restraint to consistently exhibit this blessed virtue. Let me leave you with two examples, from the three that we have already considered, that will bring this point home:

1) Moses, was the humblest man in the world. But, at the same time, he had a fiery zeal for the glory of God. Indeed, his attitude toward God, took preference over his gentleness toward men. When the Israelites had set up the golden calf in the wilderness, yes, Moses interceded on behalf of the people, but not before rebuking the people sharply, ordering them to grind down the golden calf into ashes, and then forcing them to drink the ashes with water.

2) And the Lord Jesus Christ was no weakling either. When the money changers stood in the temple of God, and they turned God's house into a lucrative business and an opportunity for making money, He turned over the moneychanger's tables, and made a whip of cords, by which, he drove them out of the temple.

You see, meekness does not mean weakness, and especially when it comes to compromising the will and desire of God. Meekness tames the lion of personal offenses, but it can morph into a fiery zeal, when the cause of God is at stake.

Having then considered the subjects of the blessing, here proclaimed by our Lord, finally then, let us consider the blessing itself.

II. They Will Inherit the Earth

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” How then are we to understand the blessing of “inheriting the earth?” Well, I think it is best understood when we consider the divine paradox that is revealed here.

What has mankind been trying to do from the beginning? Has he not always sought power and attempted to rule the world, as it were? Is that not in the nature of fallen man? But, here is the irony of it all. The ones who will ultimately inherit the earth, are not the aggressors. Rather, they are the meek, who do not assert themselves or their own natural wills. Rather, they trust God, and serve His glorious purposes. And God, the great “role reverser,” causes them to ultimately inherit the earth, when it is all said and done. When the smoke clears, it won’t be the “Alexander the Great’s” who conquer and remain rulers over the world (they all die quickly and fade with the wind; their days are shortly numbered), but rather, it is the meek, who with Christ, will inherit the earth. The earth is not won by brute force, atomic weapons, massive government and military powers, or the arm of the flesh in any sense (even backed by demonic powers). No, it is freely given to God’s humble servants, who have laid down their lives and their own self interests, for the sake of Christ and His glorious kingdom. That is the divine irony and paradox of life, isn’t it? [See Isaiah 66:1-2; Psalm 37]

III. Closing Thoughts

In conclusion then, we come back full circle to where we began our consideration of this third beatitude, and we ask the question, “Does this whole concept of *meekness* describe your general disposition?” Now again, we are not talking about perfection here; we are not talking about “humility without any struggle,” but is there consistent evidence of the Spirit’s work in you, to this end? Perhaps, we can pose the question another way, that can help unlock the honest intentions of our hearts. What is it that drives you? How do you view your life, the world, and everything in it? What does this all mean to you? What is the lens, through which, you see your very meaning and purpose in life? You see, because that will ultimately make its way out, into the sphere of your every day life. Do you view this life and world through a biblical lens;

through a redemptive, kingdom of God lens, or do you fit right in with the natural course that everyone else is on, in this world?

What is it that drives your response to situations and people, and most of all, to God Himself? How does God factor into your overall, daily, moment by moment, equation of life? Can you describe yourself as striving to live for the glory of God, or do you love the world and the things in this world? Is there an ongoing, linear desire in your heart to love and serve Christ, which affects the daily direction of your life and decisions, your actions and responses? Does sin bother your conscience, in the world, and especially in your own heart? Is repentance a part of your life routine? Do you consciously strive (imperfectly, but consciously nonetheless) to interpret events and to respond to circumstances and people, in a way that would be in keeping with one whose eyes and heart are fixed on heaven? Have you died to “self,” and are you willing to forgo your own rights and privileges, so as to see the people of God edified, the unsaved saved, and God glorified? Are you ready, willing and able to suffer loss and hardship; are you prepared to embrace self-denial and to absorb barbs, if by doing so, you can testify to the glory of Christ’s grace in the Gospel? What is it that really drives you? Do you have a meek disposition or are you driven unto your own ends? Do you rest in God, and are you lowly in spirit, or do you soar on the mountains of your own pride, with great delight and little care for God or others?

These are the kinds of questions that come to mind, when considering this robust attribute of bearing a “meek” disposition. And consider how radical this was to a Jewish audience that clung to notions of grandeur, looking for a Messiah to lead them to militarily destroy all nations, unto the exaltation of Israel. No. Jesus said, “In My Kingdom, you can just sweep that whole notion right off of the table. Blessed are the meek, for they (and they alone) will inherit the earth! [The Gospel; the way of Christ’s humiliation and death, as our only hope!!!]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25