

The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

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Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, bless your word to our hearing, to our minds, to our hearts, to our will, to our doing that we might be hearers of your word and doers also putting into practice your wise instruction and so give us the ears to hear. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's turn together to Psalm 37. If you're following in our church Bibles this evening, that's page 466. We're going to look at the entire Psalm this evening. This Psalm in Hebrew is an acrostic, which means every two lines begin with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, all in order, and so in your bulletin I do have an outline for you, but I must admit, and others do as well, it's difficult to really structure and outline this Psalm because of that acrostic form, and there's so much back and forth between what is wise, what is wicked, what is of the meek, and what is of the unbeliever, but we'll do our best to follow the verses outlined there and try to capture the heart of the Psalm as well as the points along the way.

Psalm 37.

1 Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! 2 For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. 7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! 8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. 9 For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. 10 In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. 11 But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. 12 The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, 13 but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. 14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their

bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright; 15 their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. 16 Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous. 18 The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; 19 they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance. 20 But the wicked will perish; the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish--like smoke they vanish away. 21 The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives; 22 for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off. 23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; 24 though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand. 25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. 26 He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing. 27 Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever. 28 For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. 29 The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever. 30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. 31 The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip. 32 The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. 33 The LORD will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial. 34 Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off. 35 I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree. 36 But he passed away, and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found. 37 Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace. 38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be cut off. 39 The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. 40 The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

And so far, the reading of God's holy word.

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the meek shall inherit the earth but it doesn't usually look that way, does it? It looks like the bully inherits the earth for the bully is the one who gets the ball, the bully is the one who rules the playground. Isn't it the aggressive one who wins? Isn't it the one who cheats and lies and steals, who gets ahead? Isn't it the corrupt who seem to amass all kinds of wealth in an ungodly way, and yet they're the ones who seem to be ahead? Isn't it the ones who trample on everybody else, "Get out of my way until I get what I want"? Are they the ones that look so happy, portrayed before us in all of their splendor, smiling away with all of their wealth, all of their influence, all of their power, all of their greatness with scarcely a meek one to find among them all. Is

it really the meek who inherit the earth because it looks exactly the opposite. It looks like the meek are the ones who get trampled on the earth, who get kicked around and kicked out. It looks like the weak or the meek, rather, are the weak. The unbeliever is the wicked. They seem to win and we seem to lose. We seem to lose all the time.

Now in part, of course, because we're starting to look at things through their lenses, right, if power really is of this world, if true wealth really is of this world, if true influence really is of this world, then, yes, in a certain sense, we lose, right? Except we don't live for those things. It's one of the major differences that you see portrayed in this Psalm. We view life very differently than the wicked. We view true joy and peace very differently than the wicked. We are living for things and pursuing things that are not of this world but things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of glory, treasures in heaven, where moth and rust don't destroy, reward that the Lord Jesus Christ holds for us, crowns of righteousness. The meek do inherit the earth, boys and girls, even though in the news, in books, in movies, maybe in your life it doesn't look that way, but it is true. The meek do inherit the earth and not just for eternity, but even now in the present.

Who has the victory over everything? It's the Lord Jesus Christ. We can believe this and what this Psalm testifies to because Christ died and rose again. Sin has been defeated. The power of death is broken in his resurrection. We not only have eternal life waiting for us in glory, but we have new life in us by the Spirit of Jesus Christ today. Baptism testifies to both an everlasting life and a greater hope for glory there, but also new life now. The regeneration of the Holy Spirit and our sins washed away, and the power of sin broken on us and over us, so that we might truly live, and with a joy and with a peace and with a blessing that isn't of this world but it comes from above from the Lord of glory and is bestowed upon us, in his grace and his mercy and his love.

This Psalm is about the meek. What is meekness? It's a gentleness of spirit. It's also a compliance of spirit that you're willing to go along, and not just with anything, we're going to see that, we don't go along with the world, but a compliance, a going along with what God says is right and true and good and beautiful and awesome. And then a teachable spirit, a humility that says, "I don't know everything that I need to know. I need to be taught wisdom. Give me wisdom," like Solomon's prayer. "Give me wisdom that I can discern what's right from what's wrong and that I have the conviction, by God's grace, actually to do it, put it into practice." There's a wisdom to meekness in that submission to what God's word says, that teachable, humble spirit.

So let's take that opening command of the Psalm to heart. "Fret not." Don't get worked up. Don't get upset. Don't get angry. Don't get jealous over the way that the world is going with all of their wealth and all their influence and all of their power, and there's corruption everywhere and they seem to get so far ahead, and we seem to be so far behind, the psalmist says don't get all worked up about that. I truly believe that a huge point of all of this global new order, wokeism, all of this junk that we're dealing with in our world today, I think a huge part of the point is to get us upset, to get us riled up, to get us worked up, to get us angry so our defenses get lowered, and we start playing the game like they do. If we start playing the game like they're playing it, we've already lost. We're

called to something much different and better because it's true and that's the way of meekness.

It doesn't mean we roll over and die. That's not what meekness is. There's a strength to it. If we're obeying God and fearing the Lord, there's a strength to that, a strength that surpasses the strength that this world portrays. And we are strong because of Christ, because of his grace, because of his Holy Spirit. When in the form for baptism it says we're to forsake the world, to crucify the old nature, it doesn't tell us that in summarizing scripture because that's just some kind of an ideal for us to do. It's there because scripture tells us we have the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to do precisely those things. It's within our reach. Then that's what we're doing every day, seeking to live for the Lord, forsaking the world, crucifying our old nature in Christ, working with the Holy Spirit in cooperation with him to live a godly life. Meekness is not weakness but has great strength to it.

Well, first of all, we consider what meekness is in terms of the gentle way in the first 11 verses. How can we not get all worked up over all of these things that are going on around us? The psalmist tells us two things in these verses: to look up to the Lord, and to look ahead to eternity. And when we look up to the Lord, we see what kind of a God he is. He's a trustworthy God. His power and his truth and his justice and his promises are trustworthy. Do you trust the Lord to carry through on his word? Is he going to keep it for you or not? What do you believe? Do you believe that his promises are certain, that they really are, yes, and amen? When he says, "I'll be a tower of refuge for you," do you believe that? When he says, "I'll provide for you," do you believe that? When he says, "Nothing will snatch you from my Father's hand," do you believe that? When he says that you will be in that place, that mansion, that place that Christ has prepared for you, you will be there with the Lord forever, do you believe that? "Grace and mercy will follow me all the days of my life," do you believe that? If we believe the promises of God, if we believe that his word is true, that's the beginning of all of this meekness, it's the beginning of the gentle way.

God will provide. God will protect. God will take care of you. And because of that, as the psalmist goes on in verse 4, you can delight in the Lord. Psalm 73:25 says, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you." The psalmist talks about all these things that the world cares about and loves and thinks is very, very important, their lives, their wealth, their possessions, their prosperity, but also their evil devices, their anger, their wrath. The wicked think they're getting ahead with all of these things. Our delight is in the Lord. I was saying earlier in the introduction, we don't live for this same things that the world lives for. We don't play the game the way that they want to play the game because they think life is about this life, they think that life is about what they possess and what wealth they own and how far ahead they're getting and it doesn't matter who's in the way, they're going to get what they're after. Their main goal is to get what they want because they don't care about anybody else except themselves. We don't live that way. We don't delight in the things of the world because we know that they're going to fade away. Our delight is in the Lord himself. It's in Jesus Christ that we find the fullness of truth, the fullness of joy, the fullness of peace. It's in Christ that we

know what grace is and what mercy is. It's in Jesus that we know what true friendship is. Who is more loyal to us than the Lord Jesus Christ? And who has provided more faithfully for you than anyone else other than Jesus? No one has done that like he has. Nobody has given you all that he has given to you.

So then be committed to the Lord, verse 5, we commit ourselves to God. The verb there actually is "to roll over." To roll over to God's way. To dislodge ourselves from trying to do our own way, from digging in our heels and saying, "I'm going to do things my way." Roll over to God's way. This is that compliant part of meekness. It says, "God's way is good, and I'm going to follow you." Jesus says, "Follow me." This is the part, boys and girls, where we follow Jesus and do what Jesus says and obey his commandments and do that because you love him and you're thankful for what he is given to you. And then the psalmist goes on from there to be still. The gentle spirit is still before the Lord. This doesn't mean laziness or inactivity. It's stillness before the Lord. This is the teachable part. Are your ears open to the word of the Lord? Is your heart open to the word of the Lord? When God says, "This is good for you, do these things," are you willing to do that? And when his word says, "These things are bad for you, don't do these things," are you willing to resist the temptation to do those things?

Are you still before the Lord? Do you fear God? Boys and girls, do you fear the Lord? When no one else is watching you, when you're tempted to do something sinful, is it enough upon your heart to know that doing that sinful thing will anger the Lord, will dishonor the Lord, will grieve his heart so that you say, "I can't do this sinful thing. I can't do this wicked thing. I won't do it because I won't do this thing against the Lord." That's to be still before God, to be so committed to his word we will do everything in our power to obey it and everything in our power to resist the temptations to sin against it.

That's looking up, looking up to the Lord, but then also looking ahead, verses 9 and 10, "evildoers shall be cut off, those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there." Like grass, they fade away. What's our hope? To inherit the earth. To look ahead. If the wicked want to live in the moment and they want to live for today, they're not thinking really about tomorrow, they're certainly not thinking about the end of all things. We're different. We live for the Lord today and we live for the Lord forever. Our life today is preparation for eternity. We are not narrow-minded to live only for what we need today. We are living each day for the Lord and in preparation for his coming again.

That's to look ahead and when I said earlier that the meek shall inherit the earth, it doesn't just mean our eternal glory, we're going to talk more about that anyway at the end, but it's also for now. It's also for now. This world is God's gift to you to be used for him. That means something when you go to work tomorrow because when you go to work tomorrow, you go to work for the Lord tomorrow. And you go to work for the Lord tomorrow not just for tomorrow, not just for the moment, not just for the day, you don't go to work for the Lord tomorrow just to get a paycheck in two weeks' time, you don't go to work tomorrow for yourself, you do it for the Lord and you do it for others. You have a much wider view of life than just you and maybe that's the thing that sets us apart as

Christians in North America more than anything else right now. There is so much greed. We rightly decry all the violence and all the sexual immorality that gets plastered all over our society right now, but what about the greed? It's just as much in the movies and in the media and in the advertising, "Go get what you deserve." That's not how we live. Our aim is not to amass and to take in and to receive, receive, receive. We live for the Lord and we live to serve others.

We don't go about our business for us but we're thinking about doing this for God. When we make investments, we're doing that wisely because those are God's gifts, that's why we're not burying it in the ground, but it's also why we're not going all over the place trying to amass more and more wealth just for ourselves. We're using God's gifts in a wise and godly way, in a gentle way, in a compliant way because our delights in the Lord. We inherit the earth now. We're the only ones as believers in this world who understand what this world is, who it belongs to, who made it, and who's going to bring it into it, and that has an effect on how we live each day. We're living each day with the future in mind, and we're living each day for God.

Contrast it to all of this in verses 12 through 22 but again, throughout the Psalm, is the way of the wicked. Psalm 1, Psalm 14, Psalm 36, Psalm 103. Do this also. Romans 1:18 through 32 shows this as well. In Psalm 2, they have all their plots and schemes, but just like Psalm 2, the Lord laughs at them. He scoffs at them because the Lord knows the end of all of these things. The wicked are going to fall by their own weapons. Verses 14 and 15, "The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows." Verse 15, "their sword shall enter their own heart." Verse 17, "the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous." Where is their hope? It's in their own strength, it's in their own mind, their intellect, their smarts, their scheming, their devices, their plans.

It's very interesting, two instances I saw this week or read about, two instances this week of those pushing racial problems and they came up against a very unlikely group, the LGBTQ alphabet soup, but they were opposed to each other. You see, part of the lie in all of this is the media portrays that all of these people get along but they don't. They don't at all. Not even close. And when these two groups came, both instances came against each other, these two issues, the racial groups won in both cases. So don't tell me, don't tell us that this is all one happy group and we're on the wrong side of history, and they've got everything kind of figured out and we just really need to start getting along and going along. They've got morals too. They've got all kinds of rules. And you've heard me say it before, at least our congregation, you've heard me say before it's secular Phariseeism. They're Pharisees. They've got all kinds of rules. Nobody knows when they're going to be laid on them, and they also don't know when they're going to change, but they've got lots of rules. And they don't get along. Wickedness eventually is going to come up against more wickedness. That's the point. Lies are going to start crumbling at the foundation. Corruption is going to corrupt. And if they're going to be devious with other people, they're going to be devious with each other. That's what verse 15 is all about, "their sword shall enter their own heart." Jesus said this to his disciples, "They who live by the sword will die by the sword." And if they want to live by worldly power, then it's worldly power that's going to take him over. If they're going to live by lies, they're going to die by lies. If

they're going to live by corruption and work that way, it's going to be corruption that's going to be their undoing. If they think might makes right, then someone stronger is going to come along and take them over.

Watch. You, who are meek, watch them. Watch them devour each other. And laugh with the laughter of God as he scoffs at them. They think they're so smart, they think they're so wise. They've got it figured out. They're smarter than God, they think, and he laughs at them. And we should too with God's holy scoffing laughter. Not for vengeance. Not in spite. But because the justice of God is coming upon them rightly. They are their own undoing. The wicked always, always are. Their wealth and their power and their influence, eventually is all going to disappear, of course, because they die. They'll either lose it in this life or they'll lose it when they die. How many generations do these things carry through? 2-3 maybe, and then it's taken by somebody else and the influence has gone. Particular agendas they go for, what, in political terms, maybe 4 years, maybe 8 and then there's a change over when things swing back the other way. All of their plotting and all of their planning, it depends on people and people don't last forever so neither do their plans.

They're so sure that they're going to hang on to everything that they possess, in fact, verse 21, that they don't pay back. They borrow, but they don't pay back. "Oh, our capital is forever. Our hedge fund is always going to be around. We're always going to be big in the markets. Our company is going to last forever." How many bankruptcies have we seen of big corporations in the last two years? How's the market doing? Is that where your hope is? Be meek. Watch. See what's going on. You see how those earthly hopes can crumble so quickly? That's not where our hope lies. That's not where our safety is.

The wise, on the other hand, verses 23 through 26, trust the Lord. The Lord will uphold the righteous, verse 17. Our strength isn't in our arms. Our strength isn't in our wealth, our productivity, our possessions, corporations, our kingdoms of our own building. That's not where our strength is. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who established us upon the rock, and he's going to keep us there. "For those blessed by the LORD," verse 22, "shall inherit the land." Verse 24, "though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand." When we have troubles, and we have troubles, we know who to turn to. We also know who's doing all of these things, and he's doing it for our good and for our profit. We heard that also in the form for baptism, that our Father, our heavenly Father, will avert all evil or turn it to our profit summarizing scripture once again. in God's good providence for us.

We need to teach our children these things. Trust the Lord, boys and girls. He will take care of you. Trust the Lord. He will provide for you. Trust the Lord. He will make the path plain to you that you're to go on. Trust the Lord. When you have questions, ask him, seek them in his word. Go to him in prayer. Come with a meek, teachable spirit. "Father in heaven, I don't know everything, there are so many things I don't know. And sometimes I'm afraid about those things that I don't know because I don't always know what's coming and I don't always know what I'm supposed to do. But there's one thing I know for certain, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you know everything. Teach me. Give

me wisdom. Help me. Lead me. Put me in the places that I'm supposed to be. Give me the words to speak when I need them. Show me what you would have me do each day so you're glorified."

Trust in the Lord. Trust him. And then in light of that great and glorious grace that we have in Christ, the second part of this in these verses, the wise are to be generous. Now it's interesting that we sang that from Psalm 112 also and we see it here again. Why is wisdom in both Psalms attached specifically to generosity? While conventional wisdom, earthly wisdom, man's wisdom says, don't give anything away, keep it, keep it for yourself because you might need it, and gain all that you can, and be your own provider, and wisdom says, be generous, be kind, lend freely, help people especially when they're in need, give of what you have, work hard so that you have something to give because wisdom says everything comes from God and I trust him to provide for all of my needs. So I don't need to be stingy. We need to be wise. We need to be careful. But we need to be generous.

And teach your children to do this too, the psalmist says in verse 26, "He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing." Well, the blessing that the children become in that verse in context is they learn to be generous too. Parents, show your children that you're generous, that you're hospitable, that you're kind, that you're willing to help people when they have a time of need, and that your concerns is for that person or that family or that group and not yourself so that they learn those good spiritual disciplines of generosity and of giving, giving to the church, giving to the community, giving to people who are in need so that that generosity grows through the generations and we become more and more a people who don't live for themselves but live for God and live for others.

And all of this ends in this Psalm with a hopeful way. Verses 27 through 33 are really about keeping God's law. Again, do you fear the Lord or do you fear man? Psalm 111:12, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Do you fear the Lord or do you fear man? The wicked fear men, they fear man all the time. That's why they're on social media trying to get "likes" and also trying to be careful that they don't overstep whatever new boundaries were created today. And they're putting their best selves out there right now all the time, of course, they're living their best life now too, aren't they? It's all that they have. But they're so afraid of what people think and they're living their lives by poll numbers and we live according to a totally different set of standards, higher standards, greater standards, and more freeing standards. In the law is freedom and delight and joy.

Walk in God's ways, very simply, the 10 Commandments. I know, boys and girls, sometimes it makes life look so boring because the unbelievers, the wicked, they look like they're having fun, don't they? They look like they don't have a care in the world and they can do so much stuff that we can't do. But the thing is that when we see those betrayals of the wicked doing things against God's law, we never ever ever see the consequences, the brokenheartedness, the guilt, the shame, the brokenness, the broken relationships, the devastating consequences in their lives, and their sheer unhappiness.

Don't be deceived by the smiling faces and the glitz. They're unhappy. They're always unhappy because their life is meaningless. It doesn't have a purpose. They have no sense of this hope that we have. They can sense their lack of eternity. They can sense that their bodies are going to break down. They can sense that their beauty is going to fade. They can sense that they're only one mark or drop away from poverty. They can sense that all that they're pursuing is unfulfilling. But they have no answer for it because they don't know the Lord Jesus Christ.

This Psalm ends and it's really weaved throughout the whole thing, we're destined for eternity as believers because a day is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come back again. And for us it's a glorious day, it's a blessed day, it's a wondrous day. We're going to see our Savior face-to-face. The resurrection is going to happen. We're going to get bodies that are new, bodies that are spiritual, bodies that don't break down, bodies that don't have any sin. And we're going to worship Jesus Christ for all eternity without ceasing and throw down our crowns by the sea of crystal and sing God's praises forever. And we're going to love each other without conflict, we're going to love each other without jealousy, we're going to love each other without anger and bitterness. We're going to be with each other as brothers and sisters without shame and embarrassment. We're going to know each other so well and we're going to love each other so deeply, and the Father's love will never be clearer to us in our experience than at that time.

But for the unbeliever, the day of the Lord Jesus Christ is something unimaginable in its terror, in its fright, in its devastating consequences. And it's coming. And then what? And they already sense that because when the doctor says to an unbeliever, "You have cancer," they can't throw enough money at that problem and make it go away. When their life is at risk, they can't throw enough influence at that problem and make it go away. And when they stand in the judgment before the Lord Jesus Christ whom they have spent their life denying and rejecting, nothing that they possess, nothing that they have learned, nothing that they have achieved will be enough to answer on that day of judgment for their unbelief, and it will not take away the inevitable judgment of hell and condemnation.

There is nothing, nothing for us to be jealous of when it comes to the wicked. Our hope on that day is that none of what we possess, none of what we have done, none of what we have achieved, nothing about how we look or what we possess, none of that will be an answer either. But that isn't our answer. The judgment day of the Lord, our answer is Jesus. Not what my hands have done, what he has done. Not what I have paid or made in worship or sacrifice, what he sacrificed. Not my life, but his life given up for me, for his people. That's my confession. That's where we stand.

That's our hope, brothers and sisters, as this Psalm ends, especially verse 39, "The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble." That day Jesus is all our peace, all our confession, and our faith in the Lord is that we are covered in his righteousness for that day and washed clean in his blood, prepared even now for an eternity of glory. The meek shall inherit the earth. That's where

we'll be for eternity in the new earth, under the new heavens, forever with the Lord.
Amen.

Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven and gracious God, may you make us meek before the Lord, trusting in you, committed to you, looking to you, hoping in you, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation and his promises. May we not get worked up over the wicked and their prosperity. May we not be jealous of what they might have in this world. May we not be dismayed over what we don't have in this world but that our life which is meant for something so much greater, which is precious to you, is a joyful life and a life for which we give you thanks. Make us meek. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.