

- 1) They see human beings that, in the tragic insanity of their estrangement, walk through their days as blind men groping along a wall at noonday, “groaning sadly like doves” as they find no deliverance – no remedy for the absence of peace, justice, righteousness and hope (Isaiah 59:1-11).
- 2) They also see a creation that, for all its beauty and excellence, continues to endure defilement, disorder and dysfunction, groaning under the weight of the curse as it awaits the day of its own deliverance and renewal.
- 3) And, having a “true sight” of themselves, the kingdom’s citizens lament the flaws and failures of their faith, love, and hope, seeing as “from afar” their calling and destiny but unable to lay hold of it fully at the present time (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:1-5:10; Philippians 3:1-14).

These things are true of those who belong to Christ, but they equally mark those whom He is drawing to Himself. While the “seeker’s” mourning may not reflect a thoroughly developed insight, he *does* see, and so enters the kingdom as a true spiritual mourner looking to Christ for deliverance and healing. And all these who presently endure the godly sorrow that accompanies an illumined mind will enjoy comfort – first through the gift of new life in Christ (Matthew 11:28), then through the consolation of the indwelling Comforter (2 Corinthians 1:3-4), and finally in the presence of God at the consummation and renewal of all things (Revelation 7:14-17, 21:1-5). Each of these, in turn, stands upon the preeminent act of divine comfort promised by the prophets: the comfort that came to a beleaguered and travailing world in the person of the Redeemer (Isaiah 40:1ff).

So the Servant-Redeemer – while He had no such sorrow by virtue of His own human failings – mourned deeply and continually because of a world that didn’t know Him and, in its blind, suspicious and self-destructive alienation, resisted and opposed His every overture of mercy and reconciliation. Jesus, expressing the pathos of the Father who sent Him, mourned His creation’s *death* (cf. John 1:9-11, 5:39-47, 11:11-42 with Isaiah 53:1-4; also Genesis 6:5-7).

- c. The heirs of the kingdom are likewise characterized by **meekness** (5:5). This quality presupposes the previous two and builds upon them. The person who has been stripped of the delusional pretensions of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency and has come to see the tragic effects of the estrangement between God and His creation will be a person marked by humility and gentleness.

This disposition, too, must be distinguished from its natural counterfeit. Some people are unassuming or modest by nature, and others tend to express themselves in a self-deprecating manner (for whatever reason). But what people tend to regard as meekness is really just another manifestation of the fallen human condition. In themselves, modesty and deference no more express the nature of the new creation than do self-deprecation, self-denial and quiet piety. *Quite the contrary, Paul recognized that such sensibilities and behaviors are intrinsic to the worldliness that characterizes and drives the fallen order* (Colossians 2:20-23).

Like its companions, this beatific quality is uniquely spiritual: Like them, it is the product only of a supernatural, renewing and transforming work in the soul. By nature or motivation, people are quite capable of being unassuming, gentle and accommodating in their dealings, but such attitudes and behaviors don't themselves touch the fundamental issue of human estrangement, *which is the very thing that renders authentic meekness out of reach for human beings in their Adamic state*. For the meekness Jesus spoke of results from a conscious, immediate and intimate connection with the living God.

- The meek person views himself and all others in relation to the Creator (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). He doesn't assign priority to himself, his interests or desires, but regards others as having equal importance and dignity.
- Meekness is an inherent, unfeigned fruit of a life that has God as its true concern and overarching interest (ref. Psalm 73). Man in his natural condition cannot be meek for the simple reason that he cannot help but have himself as his point of reference and ultimate concern in everything.

And if it is true that meekness is the property of the new creation, it follows that it must first characterize Jesus Himself. The reason is that, as the "first fruits," He is the paradigm of the new humanity; it is into His likeness that the Spirit is transforming the sons of the new creation. This conclusion is explicitly affirmed by the New Testament witness: Men share in and become disciples of *Jesus'* meekness by coming to Him and being joined to Him (Matthew 11:28-30). And sharing in Christ's meekness through His indwelling Spirit, they are called to live into it as an aspect of their new humanity (Galatians 5:22-25; Philippians 2:1-8).

The spiritual, "other-worldly" nature of this meekness is further supported by its reward. *The meek are blessed in that they will inherit the earth*. In sharp contrast to every earthly kingdom, the spoils of conquest and dominion in the kingdom of God belong to the submissive and dependent rather than the assertive, powerful and dominating. The uniform legacy of earthly kingdoms is that the spoils come to the mighty; kingdoms are parasitic entities that find their life, sustenance and growth in the consumption of other kingdoms, and that demands superior power and resolve. Under the sun, it is the mighty who inherit the earth.

The spiritual nature of this meekness is also reinforced by the fact that Jesus' promised reward looks back to the Abrahamic Covenant and God's covenant favor. God promised a kingdom land to Abraham and his seed as their perpetual inheritance and the promise had the land of Canaan as its first referent (cf. Genesis 17:8; Exodus 6:1-8, 15:17). But the providential outworking of Israel's inheritance of Canaan and the eventual destruction of the Israelite kingdom indicated the non-ultimacy of that fulfillment. And what the Old Testament indicated, the New Testament explicitly declared: The covenant promise to Abraham of a kingdom land was to find its ultimate fulfillment in the new creation; Abraham looked for a better, heavenly country: a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God Himself (Hebrews 11:8-16; cf. Romans 4:13).