

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* Matthew 5:5

As we gather together to worship this morning as God’s people it is more than appropriate that we are looking at Jesus’ words from Matthew 5:5 on the very same day that Sasha Wood obediently stepped in the deep waters of baptism. The ordinance of baptism is a perfect reflection of “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*” because baptism is not something we do in order to receive God’s *blessing* – but rather baptism is what we do in response to the *blessing* of God’s saving grace when we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Baptism is the physical response to the blessing of what Jesus has done in our hearts through his death, burial and resurrection. We see this in Romans 6:4: “*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*” When we are baptized we also reflect the blessing of Jesus’ baptism, who obediently surrendered his life to God, and God’s blessed him for doing so: “*When Jesus was baptized . . . he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’*” (Matthew 3:16-17).

“*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*” These words are Jesus’ words spoken at the opening of his Sermon on the Mount we read of in Matthew 5-7. This verse is the third verse of eleven verses from what traditionally has been known the Beatitudes, which is Jesus’ opening statement which lays the foundation for the rest of his sermon, where he taught us what it means to live in the Kingdom of God. The “Kingdom of God” Jesus speaks of is a place where God reigns as king - but it’s not a place on earth but rather a place in our hearts. In the first eleven verses of Matthew 5 Jesus tells us the steps that we need to take in order to enter the Kingdom of God - or rather, for God to enter into us. In the first two verses (vs 3-4) Jesus declared: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*” Over the last two weeks we learned that the “*poor in spirit*” are those who come to recognize the desperate state of their souls and become keenly aware that they spiritually destitute and have nothing to justify themselves before God. And then we’ve learned that “*those who mourn*” are those who come to understand the horrible consequences of what sin has done in their lives and in the lives of others, and the heartbreak that they have caused God, who then repent and turn back to God for the “*comfort*” of His promise to love them and forgive them and heal them and save them - when they put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And now in our text for today Jesus tells us that once we become aware of the depth of our sin and then we truly grieve over our sin, our next step to entering the Kingdom of God will be the blessing of becoming “*meek*” - “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*”

What does it mean to be “*meek*”? We misunderstand what Jesus is saying if we look for the meaning of “*meek*” in the English language. The Bible’s definition of meekness and the dictionary’s definition of meekness are two entirely different concepts. The dictionary defines meekness as “submissive, yielding, deficient in spirit and courage,” which makes us think that being “*meek*” means to be weak. But it’s hard to imagine Jesus or anyone else for that matter saying, “Blessed are those who are weak.” But that is not what Jesus meant because that’s not the Biblical concept of meekness. *Biblical meekness* is not *weakness* – nor is it passive submission nor cowardice nor indecisiveness - nor deficient in spirit and courage. The English word “*meek*” here is translated from the original Greek word “*praus*” a word which was commonly used to describe a soothing medicine or a gentle breeze or colt that has been broken and domesticated by a mild or soft word. We get the mood of the word “*praus*” by contrasts. Soothing medicine brings *comfort*; the wrong medicine can bring *death*. A gentle breeze *cools and soothes*; a severe hurricane *destroys*. A broken colt is *useful*; an unbroken colt is *destructive*. Tied up in the mood of the word “*meek*” is the concept of power under control, the idea of being submissive to someone greater than ourselves. “*Meek*” is best defined as “power under the control of another.”

*“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* When Jesus spoke these words, those who heard him would have understood what he meant by the word *“meek”* - because their minds would have been drawn to think of the words of Psalm 37 where King David spoke into the problem and struggle we have when godly people struggle while ungodly people prosper. The solution is - we are to be *“meek.”*

*Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!  
For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.  
Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.  
Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.  
Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.  
He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.  
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!  
Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.  
For the evildoers shall be cut off, but 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.  
But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. Psalm 37:1-11*

*“The meek shall inherit the land . . . Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”* In the Greek Old Testament the word *“meek”* in Psalm 37:11 is almost identical with the New Testament word *“meek”* in Matthew 5:5. And the word for *“land”* in both Greek and Hebrew also means *“earth.”* In our text for today Jesus is clearly alluding to Psalm 37, where King David tells us what being *“meek”* looks like.

The *“meek”* are those who trust in God: *“Trust in the LORD, and do good.”* Meekness in the Kingdom of God begins by trusting God, by believing we do not have the power and or the strength to be who God wants us to be. Those who are meek believe that he will work for them and vindicate them when others oppose them. Biblical meekness is rooted in the deep confidence that God is for us and not against us.

The *“meek”* are those who commit their way to God: *“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.”* Those who are truly *“meek”* will discover that God is trustworthy, and so they commit their lives, their families, their money, their time, their work, their plans, their problems, their relationships, their health, their fears, and their frustrations onto the Lord. The meek recognize they are insufficient to cope with the complexities and pressures and obstacles of life, and they trust that God is able and willing to provide, sustain, guide and protect them.

The *“meek”* are those who are quiet before God and wait for Him: *“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.”* Those who are meek are those who, after first discovering that can trust God and then commit their way to God - will quietly and patiently wait for God to work in their lives. Meekness begets a steady calm that comes from knowing that God is sovereignly omnipotent, that God has their affairs under His control, and that He is faithfully and graciously working things out for His glory and our good. The meek have a quiet steadiness about their lives in the midst of the upheaval of life.

The *“meek”* are those who don't fret over what other people do: *“Fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.”* The meek are those who do not fret, worry, agonize or get angry about what others have or say or do. The meek trust that their families, work and lives are in God's sovereign hands. They trust him; they wait patiently and quietly to see how his power and goodness will work things out. Meekness causes a steadfast spirit to rise up in the midst of the setbacks, obstacles and opponents of life. The meek chooses faith in God rather than fretting over what others are doing.

The Bible gives us a portrait of what this kind of meekness looks like in Moses, as God's Word declares that *"Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth"* (Numbers 12:3). We see this in Numbers 12:1-4 which describes an instance when Miriam and Aaron harshly criticized Moses: *"Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. And they said, 'Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?' And the Lord heard it. Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth. And suddenly the Lord said to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting.' And the three of them came out"* (Numbers 12:1-4). In the words that follow God severely rebukes Miriam and Aaron for criticizing His chosen leader - and God vindicates Moses by giving Miriam leprosy for seven days. We see the meekness of Moses in this event in that we don't see Moses trying to defend himself. Instead he trusted in God and committed his way to God. God's Word is clearly makes that statement because just where we would expect the text to tell us what Moses said to justify himself against the charges and criticisms of Miriam and Aaron, the text instead tells us that *"the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth."* When attacked and criticized, Moses doesn't say a word. Instead he trusts God, commits his way to God and he waits patiently for God. He frets not over these critical words and God comes to his defense. Meekness is the power of God within us under the control of God to absorb adversity and criticism.

Before we move on its essential to note that the Hebrew word from which we get the translated English word *"meek"* in the phrase *"Moses was very meek"* could be easily translated "humble." The word for *"meek"* in the Hebrew here is "awnaw" which means "to be humble, to bow down to." Why then does not Numbers 12:3 say, *"Moses was a very humble man, more humble than all people who were on the face of the earth"*? Well that doesn't really reflect the context nor the character and actions of Moses. Moses was humble but he was also *meek* in that lived out his life with a power that was under the control of God. In other words Moses was a *"very meek"* in that he lived out his life in humble dependence on God.

But there were times when Moses did not seem so humble. Moses clearly was not a man of a milky, watery character. He was not excessively passive, submissive, cowardly, indecisiveness or shy. Moses was a man who could be blazingly angry and extremely strong willed. It was his temper in his younger days that caused him to commit murder. It was that same temper which betrayed him during his time in the wilderness. The strong will that caused Moses temper was a liability at times, but the strong will of his character was also at times a virtue; it was precisely the quality he needed to lead the stubborn people of God through the desert for 40 years. And just like us, Moses also struggle with pride. It was pride that caused Moses to experience the most extreme and agonizing consequence in his life. It was while being an instrument of God, while performing a miracle of drawing water out from a rock, that Moses pridefully trusted in himself rather than trusting in God - and God forbid Moses from crossing the river with God's people into the promised land (Numbers 20:2-9). It was as if God was saying to Moses, "Now look, Moses, in order to show the depth the consequences of rebelling against God and not trusting in God - *you will not enter the promised-land*. The people will go in, but not you. But since you are meek, humbly dependent on my power, you will be able to accept the consequences of your actions."

It was at this point that we see clearly how meek Moses truly was. In view of God's judgment, instead of anger, there was humility. In place of a strong will, there was surrender. Where there once was pride, there was now humility. When God pronounced His punishment for Moses' pride of unbelief, Moses did not protest. He quietly accepted God's decision. *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."* Moses was a man who learned to keep his temper, his strong will, his reckless pride and his divine boldness on a leash - a leash held in the hands of God. That's what it means to be meek. Meekness, for a child of God, means accepting without complaint what comes, knowing that it comes from the hand of God who orders all things. What God sends, is accepted in faith even if it hurts, knowing that it's for our good and His glory. The meek are those who are prepared to forego their rights and places in this world for the grater purposes of God. Their lives reflect a power that is under the control of God.

James 1:19-21 says: *“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”* Of these words, John Piper writes: “James has in mind two kinds of people here. He pictures on the one hand a person who does not like to listen to what other people have to say, especially if they speak with authority. This person is quick to speak and quickly becomes angry if the words of others cross his opinion or call his behavior into question. He is not receptive to the word of God. He filters it through his own desires and receives it selectively, if at all. On the other hand James pictures another kind of person. He is slow to speak, and quick to listen. This person recognizes the limitations of his knowledge and the fallibility of his thinking, and so is eager to listen and learn anything valuable that he can. If he hears something new or contrary to his own view, his first reaction is not fretful anger. He is slow to anger. He listens and considers. And when it comes to the word of God, he receives it with meekness.”

God’s Word is telling us this morning that we will not hear God speaking to us in this sermon unless we are meek. Meekness begets teachability. To receive the Word with meekness means that we don’t have a resistant, hostile spirit when the Word of God is read and being taught. This becomes even more clear in James 3:13 and 17: *“Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. . . . the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”* James is telling us here that if we are *“quick to hear . . . and receive with meekness the implanted word”* we will then understand the *“meekness of wisdom”* out of God’s Word, which will cause us to be *“pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”* Meekness is a disposition of both our hearts and our heads.

*“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* Biblical meekness is a hard sell in the world we live in today. Words and phrases like *“meek, surrender, trust, commitment, quiet, waiting, peaceable, accepting without complaint, gentleness, open to reason, quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, impartial, teachability, wisdom of God and under the control of another”* stand in opposition to the rights-oriented, entitlement-minded, autonomous, individualistic, wisdom-of-humanity culture of our day. Yet, this is our calling as followers of Christ because meekness characterizes our Lord Jesus. He lived out His life pursuing the will and purpose of God. Jesus didn’t lash back when criticized, slandered, or treated unjustly. He spoke up only when God was not honored and the truth of God was profaned, perverted or neglected. And when his time of suffering came, Jesus submitted to the will of His Father and endured the abuse and murderous intentions of the hypocritical leaders. He demonstrated meekness to the very end. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. As he gave his life up in sacrifice for others, he uttered no threats but kept entrusting himself to the One who sovereignly judges the hearts of all humanity. Jesus lived and gave his life with a power that was under the control of God.

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Philippians 2:5-11

*“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* Those who are meek are promised the blessing that *“they shall inherit the earth.”* This promise has both a present and a future aspect to it. First, it is really only the genuinely meek person who will be content - *because their ego is not so inflated that they always think they deserve more.* The meek are content to rest in what God has allowed to be a part of their life because they realize that through Jesus Christ they already *“possess everything”* (2 Cor. 6:10).

But there is a future aspect to this promise as well. When Jesus says, *“they shall inherit the earth”* he quite literally means *“they shall inherit the earth.”* The word *“inherit”* in the Greek means “to receive an allotted portion.” The word *“inherit”* is also a future tense verb. This is the millennial promise of God when time and the world as we know it will come to an end; when the heavens will open up and Jesus will return to establish the Kingdom of God in the new heavens and new earth; and the old will pass away and the new will come; and sin and evil and death will be destroyed forever; and God will call His own to Himself and those who have truly trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will live with him and worship him and reign with him forever and ever. On that day the meek will see Jesus face to face, and they will know the completeness of what *“they shall inherit the earth”* truly means. Of this John Stott writes: “The godless may boast and throw their weight around, yet real possession eludes their grasp. The meek, on the other hand, although they may be deprived and denied by men, yet because they know what it is to live and reign with Christ, can enjoy and even possess the earth, which belongs to Christ. Then on the day of regeneration there will be a new heaven and new earth for them to inherit.”

A. W. Tozer once wrote, “The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In himself, nothing; in God, *everything!*”

Romans 8:31-32 says: *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”* The quietness and openness and vulnerability of meekness is a beautiful and a painful thing. Biblical meekness goes against all that we are by our sinful nature. It requires supernatural help. And God, through risen Jesus Christ, offers us that help. We can know the reality of the blessing of humble dependence when we trust in Jesus and commit our way to Jesus and wait patiently for Jesus; as God moves within our hearts, minds and souls - regardless of our struggles and circumstances; in spite of what people may think, say or do; leading us into the Kingdom of God, inviting the Holy Spirit to live ever deeper within us; with the assurance that we are fellow heirs with the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, and that the world and the universe and everything in it, is ours with Jesus. *“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”*

*“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”* The blessing of humble dependence is ours. Amen!

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