



Life Attitudes: meek but not weak

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Matthew 5:5

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We are continuing on in a 4-week look

at the Beatitudes, those "Life Attitude" sayings of Jesus that fly in the face of worldly wisdom and practice. Everytime I read or study these Life Attitudes, I am constantly challenged as Jesus shows me the tension of MY attitudes and perspective on life against the attitudes and perspective of the Kingdom of God.

Last week we looked at the Life Attitude that said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God." We used that verse to help us all look at the poverty of our own soul, and to be reminded of God's love and forgiveness for us, no matter what. And that one of the major hurdles that gets in the way of our relationship with God is our pride and our self-reliance, and that as we come to God in humility, we experience healing and blessedness.

All of these sayings start with the word "blessed"... and we need to remember that "blessedness" is very different than "happiness". Happiness is based on our circumstances. Blessedness is based on our relationship with God. Blessedness is not about possessions or good fortune or smooth sailing...it is about joy of having a relationship with a loving, faithful God.

So this week, we're going to look at Matthew 5:5, usually translated as "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." The difficulty with this Beatitude, obviously, is the word "meek". I mean, not exactly the kind of description we hope others have of us, right. Who wants to hear their spouse say, "I was attracted to your meekness!" or hear their children say, "My daddy is meeker than your daddy!". I mean, I haven't seen any "Meek Employee of the Month" awards out there in the business world!

Obviously, in our world, “meek” implies weak and wimpy. Some of the synonyms used by the dictionary include, “unassuming, unambitious, bland, deferential, lowly, tame, timid, weak. And these are not words that we value.

I once heard about a little boy who became frustrated with his mother one day because she kept calling him her “little lamb”. Finally, the little boy couldn’t take it any more and he said, “Mama, I don’t want to be your little lamb. I want to be your little tiger!”

That’s the way it is with most of us! We don’t want to be meek in the way that we understand it in our world today. Meek people and meek nations are those with not guts, no strength, no backbone. When we think about people being “meek” in this sense, we can maybe see that there will be some “blessedness” that awaits them in heaven, but here on earth they are pushed around.

But when Jesus spoke this Life Attitude, being pushed around was not what he had in mind. For Jesus, meekness means being obedient to God. Throughout the Bible, the word “meek” is used to describe those people who have committed themselves to doing the will of God and to being God’s servants – those who have surrendered to God...those who have yielded themselves completely to God.

It may be helpful to remember that in the Old Testament, Moses, of all people, was called the “meekest” of men. Yea, Moses....you know, the guy at the burning bush that God called to go lead his people out of slavery in Egypt; Moses, who faced off with the most powerful man on the planet; Moses who led an obstinate and stubborn people through the desert, through battle, and through discouragement.

No doubt about it, Moses was one of the strongest and most courageous leaders in the whole Bible. But when we turn to **Numbers 12:3**, we read this (in the KJV); ***“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”***



Moses was a man of meekness because he realized how much he needed God. He trusted God. He obeyed God. He served God. He yielded his life to God and that's what it means to be meek. Meek is the

opposite of arrogance, haughtiness, pride, and selfishness. The meek are those who humbly yield themselves to God, to be used as God's tools any way and anywhere God should choose. And there is nothing weak about yielding your life to God...in fact, I think that takes greater courage and strength than living life on your own.

Let's just take a look at Jesus' life and what that picture of being meek looked like. He's standing before Pilate with a crown of thorns on his head, being judged and beaten. Why? Because Jesus is perceived as a dangerous, seditious, revolutionary. Picture him in front of Pilate. Pilate offers him ways out of his impending crucifixion, but Jesus could not be bought. He couldn't be bullied or broken. Pilate says something to Jesus, after Jesus has been beaten and whipped. Pilate says, "*Don't you know I have the power either to free you or crucify you?*" Jesus defiantly says, *'you don't have any power over me... You don't take my life, I lay my life down.'*

Now that's not being weak, but it is being meek.... It's the meek who have mastered the weapons of the spirit. Who understand and rely on a different kind of strength, who see and utilize power in a different way than the world does.

One of the most difficult sayings of Jesus is found in Matthew 5:38-41. It is not one of my favorite passages...probably because it's about being meek. Meek in the Jesus facing Pilate kind of sense. Here's what Jesus says...



MATTHEW 5:38-41

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye, and tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your

tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

It really doesn't sound like very good advice. Does it? What kind of sense is this? When we read it we want to say, "that can't be right!" Isn't it just inviting people to take advantage of you? But remember Jesus in front of Pilate, and how Jesus said he had the real power? See, this is about power. It is about our ability to use the weapons of the spirit to display a power that stands in opposition to brutality.

And even though this kind of advice doesn't seem practical in our world, I can name at least three historical examples in the last 100 years where this advice led to revolutions.

Mahatma Gandhi stood against the power of the British Empire without weapons and won independence for India without using violence. Nelson Mandela used meekness to overcome the racist and brutal policies of apartheid in South Africa. Martin Luther King turned his cheek to demonstrate the injustices of racism in America. These three men faced insurmountable odds, yet all three won their revolutions.

They mastered the weapons of the spirit. By taking Jesus' unusual and seemingly impractical advice, each of them ultimately showed that love would

win against hate, vulnerability would always be victorious over control, and the spirit would always win against flesh.

So now that we've established that meek does not mean weak, in fact it means to allow God's strength to be demonstrated through us, let's look at some of the things we can do in our life to open up our lives and allow God's spirit to transform our lives into meek people...



Yield to God's Love

Another way to say this is simply, "Trust God." Now that sounds pretty simple and easy, but it is not always easy. Consider the story of a guy named Jack. He was walking along a steep cliff one day when he

accidentally got too close to the edge and fell. On the way down he grabbed a branch, which temporarily stopped his fall. He looked down and to his horror saw that the canyon fell straight down for more than a thousand feet. He couldn't hang onto the branch forever, and there was no way for him to climb up the steep wall of the cliff.

So Jack began yelling for help, hoping that someone passing by would hear him and lower a rope or something. "HELP! HELP! Is anyone up there? "HELP!" He yelled for a long time, but no one heard him. He was about to give up when he heard a voice.

"Jack, Jack. Can you hear me?"

"Yes, yes! I can hear you. I'm down here!"

"I can see you, Jack. Are you all right?"

"Yes, but who are you, and where are you?"

"I am the Lord, Jack. I'm everywhere."

"The Lord? You mean, GOD?"

"That's Me."

"God, please help me! I promise if, you'll get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person. I'll serve You for the rest of my life."

"Easy on the promises, Jack. Let's get you off from there, then we can talk. Now, here's what I want you to do. Listen carefully."

"I'll do anything, Lord. Just tell me what to do."

"Okay. Let go of the branch."

"What?"

"I said, let go of the branch." Just trust Me. Let go."

There was a long silence.

Finally Jack yelled, "HELP! HELP! IS ANYONE ELSE UP THERE?"

Yielding to God's Love is a very practical thing, and it's not always easy to do. Basically it means trusting in God's love. It means believing that no matter what, God loves you. There is nothing you can do to make God love you any less. It is about getting your security from God and from God's love alone. That is the freedom that Paul encourages the church in Galatians to experience. The meek trust in God's love for them, and they are free to turn their life over to God more and more fully because they trust God with it. They know they're not worthy, that they don't deserve God's love, they can't earn God's love or favor, but they trust that God DOES LOVE THEM ANYWAY! And that is their strength.

This is what Jesus is saying in **Matthew 6:25-26**



"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they don't sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet

your Heavenly Father feeds them."

The meek are the folks who trust their life to God because they know that God loves them. They are yielded to God's love.

This may be a good time to just remind you of God's love for you. It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've been doing. Romans chapter 8 tells us that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Jesus! Nothing! There is nothing you can do to make God love you less! There is nothing you can ever do to make God love you less! And there's nothing you can ever do to make God love you more! You already have the GIFT of God's love in all its fullness! It is yours to be received as a gift.

A little later this morning we're going to celebrate communion, which is a reminder and a celebration of God's extravagant love for us, demonstrated by Jesus sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection from the dead to share new life with us.

OK, so the meek are yielded to God's love in their life. That's their security. And then, they



Yield to God's Will

Of course, we could spend a series of sermons on the struggle we all have to follow God's will instead of our own!

But for today, let's just look at a teaching from Jesus about where we place our priorities.



Matthew 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

We visited quite a bit about this last week; about our pursuit of happiness and how that leads us to leading self-reliant lives. That's the wrong priority and it leads us to places of brokenness and emptiness. Jesus teaches us that the right priority is to pursue God's desire in all things. That is the priority that leads to abundant life, meaning, and purpose.

So how do we know God's will...how do we understand God's will? *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness!* First, remember that with God, it's all about the relationship! Righteousness means living in right relationship with God and with others. If we are pouring our energy and our heart into our relationship with God, then we are going to be nearer to the heart of God, and we'll be better able to discern God's desire and will for our life. Now God has given us tools to help us in our relationship. We call these tools disciplines...and they are things like prayer, reading scripture, fasting, joining an accountability group, worship. These are the tools that we use to deepen our relationship with God. The purpose of prayer, or reading the Bible, or being in a growth group, or Bible Study, or coming to worship, or coming to communion, is not to make us feel good about ourselves, but to strengthen and deepen our relationship – to be in right relationship – to seek first his righteousness.

And when we are in right relationship with God, we are more attune to God's action, direction and purpose. So yielding to God's will happens best when we seek to be in right relationship with God.

So the meek yield to God's love, they yield to God's direction (will) and they **Yield to Servanthood.**



Matthew 20:26-28, reads,

"Whoever wants to become great among you, must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."

The world measures greatness by how many servants a person has. The world in Jesus' day was no different than ours...you know someone is great or powerful by the size of the entourage! Watch Donald Trump on the Apprentice. I wonder how many servants that dude really has! That is the measure of power and greatness in our world.

But in the kingdom of God, it's not how many servants you have; it is how many people you serve. Jesus is saying that the future of the world is in the hands of the servants.

Robert Fulghum, author of *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, says that he has placed a picture of a woman who is not his wife alongside the mirror of his bathroom. Every morning as he's shaving, he looks at the picture. The picture shows a small humped over woman wearing sandals and a blue sari. She is surrounded by important looking people in tuxedos, evening gowns, and the regalia of royalty. It's Mother Teresa, receiving the Nobel Prize! Fulghum said he keeps that picture there to remind him that, more than any President, more than any pope, more than any CEO, that woman has authority because she is a servant.

Jesus said he didn't come to be served, but to serve...to give sacrificially, to pay the price for others. As we share in communion today, we'll remember that his servanthood led him to the cross – it wasn't just something he talked about, he lived it. And he calls those who want to find life through him to yield their lives to servanthood.

Near to the heart of God are those who yield their life to God. They are God's demonstration of true greatness in the world.

And for today, that is the good news...