

Title: Upside Down: Beatitude Number 3 – Blessed are the Meek

Text: Matthew 5:5

Date: Oct 4, 2020 at FBCW

INTRO. Last week Pastor Christian shared that Christ was known to use the oxymoron in his teaching (Blessing of mourning).

Oxymoron = when contradictory terms appear together.

- “Unbiased news...” “Deafening silence...” “Act naturally...” “Successful Falcons...”

Kent Hughes has pointed out: Christ is also the master of the paradox. Paradox = when the absurd, self-contradictory claims, after being studied, may prove to be true.

For example, listen to these shining contrasts:

- *Last is first... Giving is receiving... dying is living... losing is finding... least is greatest... poor is rich... weakness is strength... serving is ruling...*

But maybe no paradox is quite like this one: blessed are the gentle...they receive the earth.

In the history of mankind: wars are fought over land.

You receive/establish yourself by muscling your way into land/territory.

In football when you flip the field...you are in your opponent's territory.

Background. All Jews had hoped for deliverance from Rome by some sort of powerful, forceful means.

- Pharisees: Messiah will come with great fanfare and a mighty show of power.
- Sadducees: Messiah will rise with diplomatic genius...politically overthrow Rome.
- Essenes: withdrawn, isolationist...let's just ignore Rome...Messiah pull us away.
- Zealots: vocal/active in desire to destroy Rome. A military fighter will rise!

All the Jews were looking for was this → let's get rid of them (the Romans) – and let's get all this back for ourselves like our forefathers enjoyed it (the land).

And here comes Jesus saying, “Blessed are the gentle/meek...they inherit the earth.”

First, what is meekness? Meekness is from a word that means mild, gentle.

- Word described a soothing medicine...or a soft breeze.
- Word was used about colts/horses...trainer breaks their naturally wild spirits and the animal becomes calm and useful.

Quite literally, meekness means: potential power, power under control. Strength with discretion.

In other words, when Jesus uses this word, He is warning us against:

- Domineering...aggression...harshness.

Second, this Beatitude is Jesus quoting Psalm 37:11. To appreciate what Jesus is teaching in this Beatitude – we must return to the original quotation – Psalm 37:11.

Psalm 37 → A wisdom psalm. The Psalmist is reflecting, “What about the evil people that seem to be in charge of everything?” → *Should we fight them? Should we bow up against them?*

V1, Am I worried because of the evil around me? (Fretting, agitated?)

V1, Do I feel like my morals/restrictions are silly? (Do I envy those who do wrong?)

V1, Should I just eliminate my moral restraints and live however I want?

NO!!!

V2, Eventually, all evil will fade like grass...from green plants to wilting.

(ILLUS: Like autumn lawns are now, from green to brown).

FACT: Foolishness/Godlessness has no bright future...it will only get worse! But meekness/gentleness has a very bright future!

Psalm 37:3-6, *Trust in the Lord and do what is good; dwell in the land and live securely...take delight in the LORD...and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act, making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday...*

Psalm 37:8-9,

- Be silent before the Lord and wait patiently for him...
- Do not be agitated by one who prospers in his evil way...
- Refrain from anger...give up your rage...do not be agitated...
- For evildoers will be destroyed...

Psalm 37:11, *But the meek will inherit the land and will enjoy abundant prosperity.*

Note → three different times this Psalm (v 1, 7, 8) – says, “*Do not fret, do not be agitated!*”

Q: So what is gentleness? What is meekness?

A: It means to not be easily rattled. It means to be so calm...so filled with faith in God...that even when it looks like you are losing...you know you are winning because of God!

Psalm 37 and Beatitude 3 both remind us → we must choose to stay loyal to the Lord, even in hardship.

- Yes, I could throw a punch...but instead...I remain calm.

Third, Jesus Christ himself was described as meek. We know virtually nothing about the physical appearance of Jesus. We know he was a man...we know he was Jewish...we know he grew up in Nazareth of Galilee.

- But what did he look like? Was he tall, dark, and handsome?
- Did he walk fast? Did he talk fast? Was he athletic?

Well, with respect – this is what Isaiah said in Isa 53:2 –

He grew up before him like a young plant...like a root out of dry ground. He didn't have an impressive form or majesty that we should look at him, no appearance that we should desire him.

We know Jesus was a Son of David's lineage. But David himself was not physically preferred over his older, more developed brothers.

1 Sam 16:7, *The Lord said to Samuel, do not look at his appearance or his stature...humans do not see what the LORD sees, for humans see what is visible, but the LORD sees the heart.*

We don't know much about Jesus physically...but we do know about his attitude/disposition. The greatest man who ever lived – Jesus – was described this way:

Matt 11:29, *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart...*

Matt 21:5, *Tell Daughter Zion, see, your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a colt.*

2 Cor 10:1, *I, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ...*

What can we say about our Lord Jesus Christ?

- He was strong!
- He was kind!

(ILLUS: He is a Lion...but He is approachable!)

Fourth, meekness is a testimony in this life, and will also be rewarded in the coming life.

Notice what Matt 5:5 says, “*Blessed are the meek...for they will inherit the earth?*”

In the Ancient Near East = everything was driven by land and possessions.

Land = security, wealth, stability, future, legacy.

Land = was a sign of power and potential.

“*Inherit the earth*” –

- It may refer to the earthly reign of King Jesus in his millennial kingdom, in which he has promised believers will share with him (Rev 20:1-6).
- We know it at least includes the recreated/restored earth that accompanies the new heavens and the new Jerusalem (Rev 21-22).

Remember the promise to Adam/Eve in Eden → this garden is yours...enjoy this garden.

- Sin forever broke the beauty of the Garden.
- But the story of the Gospel is Christ's restoration of all things, including the earth.

- Heaven could be understood as “Eden restored” – inheriting the earth.

FACT. We rest in Christ...we can rest in the finished work of Christ’s cross...we have a new life on earth awaiting us for eternity.

Song – “Do you wish that we could see it all made new?” – we do!

Fifth, what are some practical steps to cultivate meekness?

Remember to be calm/gracious in your relationships with others.

- If God knows we are frail/broken (Psalm 103:14)...then...
- We must remember that our fellow humans are frail/broken.
- Don’t put the heavy yoke of unrealistic expectations on people!

Remember that our God is a God of justice/vengeance. He does not need your help getting even with people who have wronged you.

- Rom 12:19, *Vengeance is mine, says the Lord; I will repay.*
- If I really believe God is God...and He’s working all things out...why fret?

Make friends with kind/calm people – and avoid volatile situations.

Prov 22:24-25, *Don’t make friends with an angry person, and don’t be a companion of a hot-tempered person, or you will learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.*

Instead of exploding in rage, ask myself, is this going to matter in six months?

(ILLUS: Carrie...so good at it!) (Me...so bad at it...recently at airport).

Sixth, meekness is a picture of the Gospel. This is such a beautiful thought! Thanks to the meekness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am saved.

Think of what Christ could have done to me → punish me, condemn me, ignore me, judge me, never forgive me, keep reminding me of my sins, etc.

Instead, the hands that could destroy...are the hands that saved me! Christ is my salvation! Christ calmly and courageously took the punishment I deserved...and he gives me his righteousness as a gift!

- Not my will, but your will be done, Lord Jesus.

Fanny Crosby

Pass me not, O gentle Savior

Hear my humble cry

While on others Thou art calling

Do not pass me by

Savior, Savior

Hear my humble cry

While on others Thou art calling

Do not pass me by