

Blessed Are the Meek

The Beatitudes #4

Matthew 5:5

But the wisdom from above is pure, then peaceable, then gentle and meek, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

There is a tremendous difference between thinking you are unsinkable and being unsinkable. There was a ship built in Belfast, Ireland you have heard of a time or two. It was called the R.M.S. Titanic. "Not even God himself could sink this ship," the builder said with gusto, hubris and bravado. The world believed him. Dignitaries believed him. Americans believed him. The British believed him. The Irish believed him. The newspapers believed him. And the passengers believed him. But on April 14, 1912, the ship thought to be strong, mighty, and powerful and impossible to sink sank to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

On April 16, 1912, a memorial service was held in Belfast, Ireland at the spot where the ship that was deemed impossible to sink was constructed. It was led by an American preacher who lacked gusto, hubris, and bravado. The world listened. Dignitaries listened. Americans listened. The British listened. The Irish listened. Newspaper people listened. The title of his message on that day was "The Unsinkable Ship." It was not about the ship thought to be strong, mighty, powerful, and impossible to sink. Instead, it was about a little ship in the Sea of Galilee that was about to be destroyed by a storm. It was about Jesus sleeping in the bow of the ship as the disciples fretted over their impending doom. It was about Jesus reminding them that as long as he was on board, they should have no fear that they could sink. It was about Jesus quieting the storm on the Sea and in their hearts. Oh, what a tremendous difference between thinking that you are unsinkable and being unsinkable. Oh, what a tremendous difference between the R.M.S. Titanic and this humble little boat in the Sea of Galilee. For this humble little boat was more secure than the Titanic in all its perceived greatness because the essence of meekness and strength under control was on full display in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

When Jesus said: "blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," he meant it. Literally. He meant every word of it. Meekness is a quality that we don't talk about much. But it is a quality that we must have to truly be unsinkable. And attaining meekness is impossible without already possessing the poverty of the spirit and the mourning that comes from it. But if it is a quality that we must have to truly be unsinkable, then it behooves us to solve the riddle of the 3rd beatitude. Specifically, how the meek are blessed to the point of inheriting the earth. To do that, we have to explore (1) what meekness is not; (2) what meekness is; (3) what the meek receive; and (4) why meekness matters.

1. What Meekness It Is Not

- **The Bearded Dragon:** (1) Dragons of lore are terrifying creatures that can incinerate humans with one puff of the nose. (2) But bearded dragons are nothing like the dragons of lore. They are the meekest of reptiles. When they see their owner, they run out to greet them. (3) But don't confuse their meekness for weakness. For if you are a threat to their food source, they will position themselves in front of you and show you why they are called a bearded dragon.
- **Meekness Does Not Mean Passive, Weak, and Easily Imposed Upon:** (1) When we hear of someone who is described by others as meek, three ideas often pop into our minds: (a) Passive: accepting or allowing what happens or what others do, without active response or resistance. And then we go a step further and say that the meek are passive and therefore (b) Weak: They break or give way under pressure and are easily damaged. And then we conclude that because the meek are passive and weak they are (c) Easily Imposed Upon through the demand of something unwelcomed in their spirit.
- **But Passive, Weak, and Easily Imposed Upon In the Scriptures Is Not Associated With Meekness. It Is Associated With Those Who Display a Lack of Conviction in the Face of Great Threat.** (1) King Saul appeared to others as a confident king, sure of himself and sure of his leadership abilities. But when the great Philistine Goliath taunted the armies of Israel, King Saul trembled. Why? He was passive (no active response). He was weak (broke under pressure). And he was easily imposed upon. (2) The Apostle Peter was loud, confident, sure of himself and what he brought to the table (I will never deny you, Lord). But by the time the rooster crowed for the third time, he was passive (no active response), weak (broke under pressure), and easily imposed upon (I'm telling you; I do not know this man).
- **So Don't Confuse Meekness for Weakness. If You Do, You'll Miss The Andrew Principle.** (1) Andrew had to be patient and meek. Here's why: He's referred to as "Peter's brother" on 10 different occasions in the Gospels. (2) But because he was patient and because he was meek, unlike his brother, he listened to Jesus and therefore understood the purposes of Jesus' plan to reach the Gentiles long before his brother. That's why he's always taking foreigners to meet Jesus in the Gospel. (3) Consequently, if you confuse meekness for weakness, you'll never get the chance to experience the blessing that comes through walking in step with the Andrew Principle. For the Andrew principle is listening to Jesus. And because you've listened and not given others your spiritual resume, you know exactly what Jesus wants from you. (4) That's why meekness wasn't weakness for Andrew. And it isn't for you.

2. What Meekness Is

- **The Headstall, the Bit, and the Reigns:** (1) Horse trainers have always fascinated me. Their singular objective is to be able to bring the strength of a massive equestrian beast under control. (2) To do this they use the headstall, the bit, and the reigns. The bit is attached to the

headstall. The reins are attached to the bit. Without the headstall, the bit, and the reins you have no bridle. (3) Meekness is God's bridle to bring the beast within under control.

- **First, Meekness Is Strength Brought Under Control:** (1) Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire. It was a language with which Matthew and Jesus were very familiar with. Do you know what the Latin word for the horses bit on the bridle was? It was the word *mitas*, from which we get the word "meek." Blessed are the *mitas/meek* for they will inherit the earth. That has two direct implications: (a) at the entry to the Kingdom level – God gives you the *mitas* and brings your strength under control by making you poor in spirit (have mercy upon me, oh God, a sinner) and causing you to mourn over your sin. That's how the God brought the Apostle Paul's strength under control on the road to Damascus when he said: "Saul. Saul. Why do you persecute me?" With one question from Jesus, Paul felt immediately what it means to be poor in spirit, to mourn, and to have his strength controlled by the *mitas* of God. (b) at the everyday life level: Paul says in 2 Cor: "*I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food. I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. But he said to me, "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*
- **Second, Meekness is Controlled Strength Then Brought Into Service:** After Saul's conversion on the Road to Damascus, Luke begins to refer to him in the book of Acts by his Roman name "Paul" (because he was a Roman citizen) instead of Saul, his Jewish name. Do you know why? Paul tells us in Romans 11:13: "I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry," a ministry brought into service by God's *mitas* to bring his strength under control. That is what meekness looks like and acts like. It is not weakness. It is strength.

3. Why the Meek are Blessed.

- **There's a Lesson at the Red Light:** (1) When you choose to stop at the redlight by the Wawa on route 60 just before you get on the Interstate, you are demonstrating strength that's under control. You have the power under your feet to run the redlight. But if Roscoe P. Coletrain sees you do that, you won't inherit the glory of running free on the interstate. (3) It only comes to those who demonstrate meekness.
- **The Meek Are Blessed Because They Inherit the Earth Right Now, But Not In the Way We May Think.** (1) The way Jesus phrase the second part of this beatitude is vitally important. He says, "the meek shall inherit the earth." "Shall" is a being verb in the perfect tense, which means the action of it starts in the present and continues into the future. Thus, the meek shall inherit the earth now and then in some different way in the future. So, what in the world does this mean? (2) Jesus means right now that God has chosen the meek to be his instruments to bestow his blessings upon the world. There's a reason God uses the people that he does in the Bible. Noah was a drunk. Abraham was too old. Jacob was a liar. Moses had a stuttering problem. Gideon was afraid. Rahab was a prostitute. Jeremiah and Timothy were too young. David had an affair and was a murderer. Job went bankrupt. Peter denied Christ. Martha was worried about everything. Zacchaeus was too small. Timothy had an ulcer. And Lazarus was dead. Yet they all eventually received a gift from God over the course of their walk with Jesus: the gift of meekness, strength under control. And those are the types of folks he uses in his redemption story to bring forth his blessings to the world right now. The question is: are you one of them?
- **The Meek Are Blessed Because They Will Inherit the Earth in the Future, In A Much Better Way Than You Think:** The second to the last chapter of the Bible tells what's in store for those who come into saving relationship with Jesus Christ by first being poor in spirit, then by mourning, and then by having their strength brought under the control of God: "*Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people' (Rev. 21:1-3).*

4. Why Meekness Matters

- **The Preacher and His Son:** (1) I once heard the story of a preacher who was walking with his son down the street when a man approached him and started talking. Somewhere in the conversation the man asked the preacher his opinion of another man who had been at great odds with the preacher. "I think he is a good man," the preacher said. (2) When the father and son were alone again, the son said "I thought that man couldn't stand you. Why were you so complimentary of him?" To which the preacher responded, "because son, I wasn't asked what his opinion was of me, but what my opinion was of him." (3) Meekness matters a great deal, doesn't it in situations like that? Answering his son in such a way required strength under control. A lack of meekness in that moment would have been a weakness, not a strength.
- **The Practical Reason:** The lack of meekness is in reality a weakness driven by insecurity. And the lack of meekness will always manifest itself in boastfulness, tooting your own horn, and/or giving your resume – especially your self perceived "spiritual" resume to others. And the louder the boast, the greater the lack of meekness and the more insecure the boaster.
- **The Powerful Reason:** It takes strength and moral courage to let your actions, performance, and example speak for you. That is something people who "toot their own horns" lack the confidence to do. The Andrew Principle must apply to you and me as much as it did to Andrew.
- **The Prepare A Place for You Reason:** If we take Jesus at his Word in these Beatitudes, heaven will be filled only filled with those who are poor in spirit, mourn, and have had their strength brought under control by the *mitas* of God. I sincerely hope that is you. If it's not, it can be. It starts with saying, like the tax collector in Luke 18, "Have mercy upon me, Oh God, a sinner."