

Matthew 5:5

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[0:00] Our text for this morning will be Matthew chapter 5 and verse 5. Just a couple of weeks ago, we began looking together at the Sermon on the Mount, this most famous of Jesus' teaching.

And we have discussed so far the first four verses, where we noted first in verses 1 and 2, who it was that Jesus was teaching.

Matthew records, For seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him, and He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...

So we see that Jesus was teaching His disciples. There's a larger crowd gathering around, and certainly the teaching spills out and beyond.

And as we get through His Sermon and on into chapter 7, there's great warning that's issued. And so it seems maybe even the audience's attention of Jesus shifts a little as it goes on.

[1:02] But we know, at very least, His primary core audience are those who were already following Him and His ways. He was speaking to those who were citizens of His kingdom.

Back in chapter 4, verse 17, Matthew records the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, where He writes, from that time Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The Sermon on the Mount is a declaration of the kingdom of God with Jesus as its king. And because the king has come, the kingdom has come.

And Jesus here is teaching what those who are citizens of His kingdom will look like. So He begins teaching them, verse 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We are, apart from Christ, spiritually bankrupt. You have no good thing to offer God. And if you are to be saved from the wrath to come, you will have to throw yourself upon the mercy of God found in Jesus Christ.

[2:26] It is those who see their spiritual poverty who possess the kingdom of heaven. And therefore, Jesus declares them blessed. In verse 4, Jesus says, Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Having recognized our spiritual poverty and the spiritual poverty of the world in which we live, citizens of the kingdom of God will be mourners over the brokenness that we see, both ours and others.

And it is those who mourn over sin who will be comforted. And therefore, Jesus calls them blessed. Now, I have said to you, this word, blessed, is a very difficult one for us to understand in English.

The original Greek word is so layered and textured. And so, we've been doing our best kind of week to week to give some feel to what the word means.

I don't have anything astounding to add to what I've said already, but just let me remind you that there's not a direct single word for this Greek word, makarios.

[3:44] We try with blessed, happy, joyful, we could say doing well, thriving. I've posited to you my favorite, flourishing from Jonathan Pennington's book.

Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of heaven enters into a world that has been turned upside down by sin. And His teaching seeks to turn it right side up.

It's about the kingdom coming. This kingdom that lives in contradiction to the kingdom of the world. And because the teaching has this intention to it, the carnal mind has a very difficult time understanding it.

It seems backwards. It is the humble, sad, meek, merciful, peacemaking, persecuted pursuers of righteousness that are well and will do well forever.

These are the kinds of citizens that flourish. We have before us this morning the third of Jesus' declarations of blessing.

[5:01] blessing. So join me in a careful consideration of Matthew 5, verse 5. Before I read it for our benefit, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us.

It was written for His glory and our good. And we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Matthew 5, verse 5.

Jesus said, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. So, what does it mean to be meek?

It's another one of those words that can have some difficulty for us trying to wrap our minds around exactly what Jesus means here by meekness.

and those who are meek are blessed. Let me start by saying that meekness is not a natural inclination. Those who belong to the kingdom of God gain a recognition of their spiritual poverty, a deep sadness over their sin and the sin of the world, and meekness by a work of the Spirit of God upon them.

[6:21] The natural inclination of man is not toward a small view of self, but a large view of self. The natural way of a person is to exalt themselves, not humble themselves.

Left alone, we are self-aggrandizing, self-protecting, self-justifying. The largely Jewish audience that Matthew wrote this letter for would have been absolutely dumbfounded by such teaching, especially from a man who claimed to be the Messiah.

They were looking to the Messiah for deliverance from their oppressor, Rome. They wanted the Messiah to come as a military conqueror, mighty and vanquishing.

They loved texts like Isaiah chapter 35, verse 3 and 4, which reads, Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who have anxious heart, Be strong. Fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.

[7:33] They loved texts like this, but did not want to read them in the greater context of the Old Testament prophecy. For example, that was Isaiah 35, 3 and 4.

Let me read to you Isaiah 53, 3 and 4. Speaking of Christ, the Messiah, He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And as one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

This was a strange teaching. Meekness is not the way of the world. Meekness is certainly a spirit-worked character quality.

It is also not a character quality that we possess with perfection on this side of heaven, but it is a quality in which we grow as God graciously works in us.

[8:43] I pray this morning that He will work in you and in me as we learn together more about this meekness. So, let's take a look at some examples of meekness from the Scripture to attempt to wrap our mind about what is really meant by the Word.

So I want to walk you through some characters. I'm going to invite you to turn with me to these passages. You'll keep your head more in the game if you're looking as well at the text that I'm going to read to you. And let's start with Abraham.

Called Abram in the text I'll read to you this morning. His name had yet to be changed in Genesis chapter 13. So please join me there. Genesis chapter 13 and verse 8. So God has made a covenant with Abram.

Part of which included the giving to him of land. And you remember that Abram's nephew Lot tagged along with him. The promise was not given to Lot.

The promise was given to Abram. He is Lot's elder. He is his uncle. And he has a promise. And some contention arose amongst the herdsmen because there wasn't enough land where they were camped to keep the herds fed.

[10:05] Right? So they're starting to have conflict over who gets to graze animals where. And then verse 8 and following records for us. Then Abram said to Lot, Let there be no strife between you and me and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen for we are kinsmen.

Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand then I will go to the right. Or if you take the right hand then I will go to the left.

Here we find Abram had every right over the land. Right? The covenant promise had been given to him. He's Lot's elder. And his uncle. And he could have simply said, Hey Lot, you go there because I want this choicest of property.

But rather, we find Abram as an expression of meekness saying instead, Let's not have conflict amongst us. Right? You pick where you would like to go and I'll go to the other place.

I'll take what's left over. Turn over to Genesis chapter 45 and we read here of the story of Joseph. Remember Joseph, the youngest of his brothers received dreams that he'd be great amongst them and his brothers did not like him for this so they threw him in a well and rather than killing him pulled him out of a well and sold him into slavery.

[11:42] And he finds himself in Egypt and through a number of astounding and sad circumstances, he finds himself ruling over the provision of grain, putting it away and delving it back out.

And a famine grows up in the land and his brothers come to Egypt to bring grain back home. And when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, we read this in chapter 45 verses 1 and following.

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, Make everyone go out for me. So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

And he wept aloud so that the Egyptians heard it and the household of Pharaoh heard it. Now just picture, this is the man of power. This is the younger brother, but he has been placed in a position of power and his brothers have come to him as beggars.

And what does he do? He sends out the Egyptians and reveals himself to his brothers and he weeps over this. And Joseph said to his brothers, verse 3, I am Joseph.

[12:52] Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him for they were dismayed at his presence. So Joseph said to his brothers, Come near to me, please.

And they came near and he said, I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here.

For God sent me before you to preserve life. And then we read later, I think it's chapter 51, if I'm remembering correctly. We famously hear Joseph say, What you meant for evil, God meant for good.

And so here we see that Joseph entrusts himself to God and God's providence, his good purpose in the situation. And he doesn't seek retribution. He doesn't seek to defend his right.

He has been wronged as the younger brother, but rather offers forgiveness to his brothers. It's another expression of meekness.

[13:55] Okay. Flip back to the New Testament. Hebrews chapter 11. Let's look a little at the life of Moses. It's the writer of Hebrews.

Very brief summary of Moses' life found in chapter 11. You remember Moses has become the adopted son of Pharaoh.

Pharaoh held the power of Egypt as the new Pharaoh's adopted brother, but chose rather to stand up for his kinsmen to kill an Egyptian and fled off into the wilderness.

So in verse 24 and following, By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

He considered, I love this, right? Moses considered, so the writer of Hebrews is telling us, he considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

[15:16] So rather than receiving what was due him, which he could have laid claim to, he instead chose to go and be with God's people and to be mistreated as God's people because he was looking to something greater and beyond.

Numbers chapter 12, verse 3 records for us that Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.

Okay, back to the Old Testament. 1 Samuel chapter 18. You don't need to be ashamed for not being able to find these books quickly in your Bible, but you'll do well to learn how to find books quickly in your Bible.

Become familiar with this book. Hopefully this helps you in doing that. 1 Samuel chapter 18, beginning in verse 20.

Now, David at this point in 1 Samuel has already been anointed king over Israel. Saul is still reigning, king, but Samuel has anointed David king.

[16:38] David has already killed Goliath. He's become the champion of Israel as well. The middle of, I think it's chapter 16, records for us that the Spirit of God left Saul and the Spirit of God rested on David.

So he's got God's Spirit resting on him, which was a more unique thing in this day than it is in ours. So David already had a significant place and yet he found himself serving under Saul with a great deal of meekness.

Saul didn't want him in the temple any longer, so he put him in charge of a legion of men. He had hoped that he would be killed by the Philistines, but David, because of God's favor, was triumphing and triumphing greatly over them.

So, Saul offered his oldest daughter to David. David said, Who am I that I would become the son-in-law of a king? This is the beginning of chapter 18.

Saul instead gives his oldest daughter away to somebody else. So he had promised, then he went back on his promise and gave his older daughter away. And then verse 20 says, Now Saul's daughter, Michael, loved David.

[17:49] And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. Saul thought, Let me give her to him that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.

Therefore, Saul said to David a second time, You shall now be my son-in-law. Right? So it's being set up as a trap. Saul commanded his servants, speak to David in private and say, Behold, the king has delighted in you and all his servants love you.

Now then become the king's son-in-law. And Saul's servants spoke these words in the ears of David. And David said, Listen to what David says. Remember where he is, who he is at this point. Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king's son-in-law? Since I am a poor man and have no reputation. See what David thought of himself.

Right? He had a reputation by this point. I have no reputation. And the servants of Saul told him, Thus and so did David speak. Then Saul said, I'm reading this to you just for closure on the story.

[18:54] Thus shall you say to David, The king desires no bride price except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines that he may be avenged of the king's enemies. Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

And if you read on, he delivers twice, twice as many of the price that Saul demanded of him. So here again, this expression of meekness.

Why would the king want to make me his son-in-law? David was very clearly a mighty man and had done mighty things and had a great reputation.

Okay, a couple of New Testament characters. Stephen, Acts chapter 7. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. I hope that you don't mind this. This seems better to me than reading you the definition out of a theology book.

[19:58] Stephen is the first Christian martyr. He's on trial before the Sanhedrin. He speaks boldly out.

They get furious with him because of the indictment of the speech that he brings to them. Verse 58, we read in following, Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him.

And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, this is what I want you to see from the text, as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And falling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, Would any of us, like when you're thinking, think about being stoned, right, for simply following Christ and proclaiming his truth. And as you're being stoned, this is the affection you have towards those stoning you. He says, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

[21:02] He seeks forgiveness, much like our Lord did on the cross for those who were stoning him. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Paul is a great man of meekness, a man with a great deal of Jewish pedigree, certainly as an apostle, arguably, but I would suggest, the smartest of the lot, the most influential of the lot. His ministry was further reaching than any of the other apostles. And yet we can see and we pick up letter after letter after letter this great deal of humility in the way that he writes.

He gives all glory and honor to Christ for working in and through him. Just a quick example, Philippians 3, verses 3 and 4. He says, For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

He says, Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. But he says, I have none.

[22:15] I have no confidence in my flesh whatsoever. And then we know in Philippians 4, 13, a verse not about football games. He says, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Right? I can serve the goodness of God and the glory of Christ to all peoples everywhere because I'm strengthened by him.

But of course, we would not do well if we didn't look to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as the ultimate and highest example of what it means to be meek. Jesus said this of himself that he was meek.

Matthew 11, 29, he said, Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle, same Greek word, for meek. I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls.

And then Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, sets Christ up as our example in this, verses 5 through 8. Have this mind among yourself, 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 he 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.

[23:47] So God himself incarnate, is what Paul is saying. God here in human form, creator of the universe, here emptied himself and became a servant and served to the point of death on a cross.

This is meekness. The meek do not seek their own good, but the good of others. The meek do not seek retribution, but trust in the providence and justice of God.

The meek do not seek to defend their rights, knowing what they truly deserve. The meek do not think too much of themselves, but make much of God.

Now, meekness, and I hope in all of those references and characters, you got this. Meekness should not be equated with weakness. The two are not the same.

Meekness often, as I said earlier, is translated as gentleness. Meekness is strength bridled and steered for the glory of God.

[25:08] It's strength aimed in the right direction. Meekness is Jesus welcoming little children to himself in Matthew chapter 19.

And then two chapters later in 21, making a whip and driving the extortioners out of the temple. And then another two chapters later in chapter 23, inditing the scribes and Pharisees and declares woes over them.

And then another two chapters later in chapter 25, surrendering to his accusers in the garden of Gethsemane. All of Jesus' strength is aimed at defending and magnifying the fame of his father. He yields his strength to the will of God. So let's look at some further instruction to gain a little better understanding of this teaching in Matthew 5.

A couple more texts for you. We're going to stay in the New Testament now, I think. Yep, we're going to stay in the New Testament. Matthew chapter 26, verse 50 and following. we find Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, having been betrayed by Judas and his captors are coming to take him and run him through this series of trials and finally in his crucifixion.

[26:43] we ought not to forget who this Jesus is, right? Able to command legions of angels.

He'll say this in our text in verse 53. Verse 50, Jesus said to him, this is the leader of the guard, friend, do what you came to do.

Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with him, this is Peter, we know from Luke's account, stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Malthus, I think, is that guy's name, and Jesus healed his ear in John's account. Then Jesus said to him, to Peter, put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? And the point that he's making to Peter here is that there is a task at hand.

[27:58] God has willed that something would happen, and I could stop it from happening, but I submit my strength to the will of the father for the sake of his name.

we are not to be militant for our own sake if we are found meek. Now I want to be really clear at this point, and I cannot develop this idea in its entirety, so my apology to you on this, but I am not a pacifist, and you shouldn't be either.

I believe in just war theory, Google that, you can check out what that means, but we must think very carefully about when it is proper to take a life, and when it is proper to lay down our lives for the sake of others.

Paul instructs the Ephesians in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, and the word here translated gentleness is the same as in our text this morning for meek. Paul writes, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness with patience bearing with one another in love.

We are to lay aside our preferences and our sensitivities for the sake of love. We are to be willing to not stand our ground and demand what's ours in every circumstance for the sake of love.

[29:35] And again, Colossians 3.12, Paul writes, put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Paul writes to Titus in chapter 3 verses 1 and 2, instructions for how he should instruct the church in good works. The word here translated gentle is a different word than in our text this morning, but I believe Paul is getting at the whole idea of meekness in the following verses.

So this is Titus 3 verses 1 and 2. Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Beloved, is this something that characterizes the American church today? I'm afraid it's not, at least not in what we see published for our consumption.

It seems so often that the church is loudly railing against anything and everything that might come its way.

[30:57] Listen to what the apostle Peter says, 1 Peter 3 verse 18. Here we're going to see the word gentleness again, very same as the Greek word for meek in our text today.

He says, in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy. Christ the Lord as holy. Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone asks you for a reason, for the hope that is in you.

So be ready to give an answer to those that would ask, what is this hope that you have? Then Peter says, yet do it with gentleness and respect.

It is generally true that the minority of any particular kind feels the need to be the loudest. We can witness this so often in our day.

They're hoping that their volume will have them heard. But we are instructed to be meek and respectful.

[32:05] As faithful Christians are continually pushed to the margins of our society, a great temptation will rise within us and I believe has risen within us and has been poorly dealt with.

This temptation to get obnoxious, to complain about what picture is on a Starbucks cup.

Who cares? Who cares? Is this the thing we want to be known for? May it not be. This would not be meek.

This would not be taking our mighty dollar to vote for how we'd have such and such dealt with. Hebrews 10, 34.

I'll give you a final example. meekness in the scripture. This runs beloved, counterintuitive.

[33:06] It runs against the grain of the world. This to the world's thinking, what I'm going to read to you, Hebrews 10, verse 34, is upside down. But what I'm saying to you is that the world's actually upside down.

This is right side up. This is what people who are citizens of God's kingdom look like. This is how they behave. in the midst of oppression.

The writer of Hebrews says, for you had compassion on those in prison. So those who were thrown into prison had no care. It's not like the prison systems of our day.

They had no care unless someone came to them, identified with them, and provided for them. Meals, water, medical, care. The job of the jailer was just to keep them in.

That was it. So these early Christians were identifying themselves as Christians as they went to go care for those who were in prison because they were Christians.

[34:06] And look what happens, this strange thing. And you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. So they're being labeled as, maybe they're traveling to the prison.

People are coming in, destroying their homes, taking their property. But they joyfully accepted it. Why? How did they do this?

Since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Which brings us to a final question which I'll answer in brief.

Why are the meek declared blessed? Jesus declares his proclamation over them, blessed are the meek. Why? Because they shall inherit the earth.

Jesus is making an eschatological statement, primarily. Maybe there's some temporary bleed through, but he's making primarily an eschatological, an end times statement.

[35:13] He is saying that one day all things will be made right, and the righteous will have their proper inheritance. Those of us who walk in this world as children of God will not receive what we believe we ought to receive.

But we are looking to a greater possession, a greater treasure, and an abiding one, one that will last forever beyond this world.

Jesus here in Matthew 5.5 is quoting directly from Psalm 37 verse 11. Before I read verse 11 to you, though, I want to read verse 10.

Those of us who are in Christ, we're looking to this day. If there's anyone here who is not in Christ, maybe you're even asking yourself this question as we've just skipped a rock off the surface of what it means to be!

meek, you'd say, this doesn't characterize my life at all. I am self aggrandizing, I am self seeking, I do want to stand up for what's mine. You may find that you're not a citizen of God's kingdom.

[36:23] And what you're awaiting is a final and full and eternal destruction. Psalm 37 10 says this, in just a little while the wicked will be no more.

Though you look carefully at his he will not be there. But verse 11, Jesus hears quoting, but the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

What a glorious promise this is to us. I pray, beloved, that we would find ourselves those in the kingdom who Jesus would declare of us blessed because he finds us meek.

Bridling strength aiming it at the glory of God. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Please join me in prayer. Amen.