

Happiness through Meekness

Matthew 5:5

Jesus, the master architect of the soul, establishes in detail the steps we must take to be happy in an unhappy world. He reveals the blueprint of happiness for all men and women to follow for all time.

In our previous studies we have seen that for one to be happy there must be a decision to receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior, as well as our brokenness before God. Second, there must be mourning for wrongdoing. And today we will see that there must be meekness.

Jesus said, "Happy are the meek." Does that sound absurd? In our hard-ball society, meekness is considered a liability, not an asset. Years ago a baseball coach by the name of Leo Durocher, after winning the league championship, was asked about his style of play. His reply was this: "Nice guys finish last." And that pretty much expresses the mind-set of our society, because most Americans believe that the way to get ahead is to be as mean as a junkyard dog.

It will do us well to remember to whom Jesus is speaking. At this point, the Jews are living under severe political oppression. Since 63 B.C. they have lived under a series of brutal rulers appointed by Rome. One of them, Herod the Great, executed nine of his ten wives merely on the suspicion of infidelity. He issued standing orders that his son was to be executed the day he died - so that at least someone would mourn his passing. The Jews had a saying: "It is better to be Herod's swine than his son."

Jesus' listeners were looking desperately for a messiah who would come on the scene and crush Roman imperialism. The legalistic Pharisees wanted a messiah of miracles. The liberal Sadducees wanted a materialistic messiah. The Essenes were looking for a monastic messiah. The political-activist Zealots, who wanted to send their tormentors back to Rome in body bags, wanted a military messiah.

So what happens? Along comes Jesus of Nazareth, whose teachings and miracles have aroused the entire nation. Anticipation builds among the people. Could this be the promised Messiah? They hang on every word. He continues the Magna Carta of Happiness by saying, "Happy are the meek..."

A man in the crowd throws up his hands and says to his friends, "Can you believe this guy? Get serious! You don't conquer Romans with meekness. You don't come to a cold-blooded killer like Herod with your hat in your hand. Happy are the meek? Nonsense! Might makes right! Meekness is weakness."

But I submit to you today that meekness is *not* weakness. Aristotle defined meekness as "The mean between two extremes – intense anger and excessive indifference." **In other words, it is the happy medium between too much anger and too little passion.** William Barclay suggested that this beatitude be translated, "Blessed is the man who is always angry at the right time, and never angry at the wrong time." I am convinced that Matthew Henry said it best in his commentary on the book of Matthew, "The meek are those who quietly submit themselves before God, to His Word, to His rod, who follow His directions and comply with His designs and are gentle toward men."

Meekness can also be translated "kindness" or "gentleness." **The concept of a man being a gentlemen was born in the Christian faith. He is a man who is gentle, courteous, and considerate.** Meekness and gentleness are characteristics of a strong, not weak, person. This is the idea that is presented to us in Galatians 6:1, where Paul says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself or you also may be tempted." **A gentle person is considerate of others even when they have done wrong.**

It is also true that gentleness encourages others. Paul admonishes us to be encouragers in Philippians 4:8-9, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." **Ladies and gentlemen, as long as you are willing to maximize others' faults while minimizing your own, you can never be happy.**

In other words, the "meek" are God's gentlemen. The word used here has the idea of "self-control." Weakness is giving in to the worst that is in you. **Meekness is mastery over it.** The "meek" are not intimidated by loud-mouthed mental midgets. To be "meek" does not mean that you are cowardly, but it does mean that you are strong enough not to retaliate when wrongly treated. **To**

be “meek” means that you are cool and calm in adversity. The “meek” are those people who have warm hearts, not hot heads.

Such self-control results in peace with oneself. Those who cannot control their anger, greed, lust, tongue, or ambition will never be at peace within. They will constantly be at war with themselves.

In spite of that truth, our culture has rejected meekness as a principle of happiness. This rejection of meekness creates a vacuum filled with barbaric behavior. We don't want to hear about meekness. Give us Rambo!

We don't want to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit whisper the words found in Galatians 5:22-23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control." We have rejected meekness as a path to happiness.

What does it mean to be "meek"? The answer can be seen in the lives of godly men.

Consider Moses, the Old Testament's champion of meekness. The Bible says in Numbers 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth." Moses was meek.

When we think of Moses we associate him with fearless boldness. We think of the time that he killed an Egyptian who was beating his Hebrew brother unjustly. We think of him fleeing to the desert and amassing a fortune over forty years. We think of him in Exodus 5, when he returns to face Pharaoh, the mightiest monarch of the world in his day, and demand, "Let my people go!" We think of him as he lead a horde of escaped slaves across a desert wasteland for forty years, to a land flowing with milk and honey.

We think of Moses standing to make intercession for the children of Israel when God was ready to slay them down to the last man. It was the voice of Moses that rang out, "If you kill them, Lord, kill me too!" And because of Moses' insistence, God does not kill the people of Israel. That is meekness! The fact is - meekness is not weakness.

Consider Abraham, the Old Testament's champion of faith. In Genesis 13 he and Lot had a conflict. Actually their herds and livestock were becoming so large that the land could not support them both. Besides, the Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. A dispute ensued between

Abraham's herdsmen and those of Lot. Now Abraham could have gone to Lot, being his elder, and said, "Don't you know that God has promised this land to me? Because it is mine by divine right, you can have whatever I don't need." **But that is exactly what Abraham did not do.** And Genesis 13:8 tells us that he went to Lot and requested there be no quarreling between the two because they were brothers. And in Genesis 13:9 Abraham said, "...take whatever you want and I will have what is left." **So naturally, Lot took the well-watered plain near Jordan.** Abraham's attitude, as a result of his trust in God, was meekness.

Consider the apostle Paul, the New Testament's champion of evangelism. He writes in Ephesians 4:1-2, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." In Titus 3:2 he says, "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." In Colossians 3:12 he says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." In 1 Timothy 6:11 Paul instructed Timothy to "pursue meekness."

Paul was meek. **But was he weak?** When on the isle of Malta, he shook a deadly viper from his wrist as men gasped in wonder. When dragged into court, Acts 23:3 tells us that he glared at his persecutors and said, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall." (whitewashed walls is the terms used to describe the Pharisees as hypocrites). When, in jail in Philippi, the jailers discovered he was a Roman citizen and tried to release him secretly, but in Acts 16:37 Paul said, "Oh, no, you don't! You put me in here publicly and you are going to let me go publicly. Go get the mayor, the city council and CNN headline news. Then let me out!" **Paul was meek. But he was not weak.**

Consider, also, Jesus Christ, the world champion of salvation. It was Jesus himself who proclaimed in Matthew 11:28-30, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." **When Jesus refers to himself as gentle, it is the same Greek term found in Matthew 5:5. Jesus is meek and humble in heart.** When Matthew wanted to characterize the person and ministry of Jesus he quoted Isaiah 42:1-4 that says, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the

smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”

What a beautiful picture of our Lord and his way with people. Yet, we see the Son of God as He invades the temple with a whip of cords, His eyes blazing with righteous indignation, as seen in Matthew 21:13, "It is written...My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers."

Hear Him rebuke the Pharisees in Matthew 23:33, "You bunch of snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

And yet, we see a Roman guard slap His face and mock Him, as seen in Matthew 27:29, "Hail, king of the Jews!" He does not revile them in return, but bears insult with dignity.

Listen to the cat-o-nine-tails slash through the air, ripping His back to shreds. Look to Calvary, where He willingly let His hands and feet be nailed to the cursed cross.

See Him now, seated at the right hand of God the Father, the ultimate position of power in all the cosmos. When He returns to the earth, He will rule the nations with a rod of iron. He is meek. **But He is anything but weak.**

Meekness is mastery of self. The Bible says in Proverbs 16:32, "Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city." We are living in a time when it seems to be easier for man to control his universe, and harder for him to control himself!

Meekness enables us to be led by the Holy Spirit. Meekness is the opposite of pride. Another way of defining meekness is that it is the opposite of selfish anger. **Selfish anger is always sin! Why?** Because pride is always involved when selfish anger is involved! **You see, when our pride is hurt, selfish anger always rises to the surface!** And unless we recognize it for what it is, our selfish anger will dominate our flesh reactions! **And because we are blinded by our hurt pride, we usually cannot see the damage that we are doing to others trying to have our way!**

We need meekness in the home. Most of the conflicts in marriage and in the family are conflicts over pride. **Someone's pride is threatened. Someone's**

pride is wounded. Someone in the family cannot humble themselves to say, "I'm sorry." **Because of their pride they are not willing to admit that they are wrong.** They are not willing to admit that they have faults. Your rights will not keep you warm at night.

We need meekness in the church. How many problems arise at the church because of pride. Hurt feelings because of a slight. **That is pride.** There is an interesting passage of Scripture found in 3 John 9 that says, "I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes (Di-o-tree-fees), who loveth to have the pre-eminence, among them, receiveth us not." John was writing about the problems of the church. They had a real problem because here was one who loved "pre-eminence."

Unfortunately there are a lot of Diotrephes (Di-o-tree-fees) in the churches who love the place of "pre-eminence." They want to be in front. Unless they are consulted; unless they are the chairman; unless they are leading; they will have nothing to do with it. **In fact, what they cannot run they try to ruin!**

The truth of the matter is that whether it is at church or in the home, *PRIDE* and *SELFISHNESS* are destructive forces.

Our society has planted the seeds of violence and we are reaping the whirlwind as a result. But according to the teachings of Jesus, it is time to plant the seeds of meekness and reap a harvest of happiness!

Look once more at our text that says, "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." When Jesus said this, He was quoting the words of King David as recorded in Psalm 37:11, "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." **The violent try to take the earth by force.** But Psalm 24:1 reminds us that "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." **As Owner, He can will it to whomever He pleases.** And He has already made out the title deed of planet Earth to the "meek."

The Word of God teaches us that Jesus Christ is coming to earth again, and when He does He will literally rule as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The first time He came, He was dragged before Pilate. The next time He comes, Pilate will bow down before Him and confess that He is Lord.

The first time He came, He was crucified on the cross. The next time He comes, He will sit on the throne of His father David and rule the earth with a rod of iron.

What about your relationship to Jesus today? Will you stand before Him as Savior or Judge?

If you are not saved why not today?

Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

I confess that Your Word is true. Give me the courage to live my life with balance as I seek to live my Christian profession in my everyday life. In Jesus' name. Amen.