Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Only Way to Happiness: Be Meek
Scripture: Matthew 5:5
Code: 90-191

Let's turn to Matthew chapter 5, tonight we're going back to our series on true happiness...true happiness, the only way to true happiness. Jesus laid it out in the first sermon recorded of Jesus in the New Testament, Matthew chapter 5, often called the Sermon on the Mount because He went up on the mountain, it says in verse 1, sat down and opened His mouth and began to teach.

As Jesus began to teach that day on the mountain, He gave a series of statements which are known as the Beatitudes. They pronounce blessing. They are familiar to all of us who know the Word of God and we're looking at them one at a time.

Tonight we are drawn to verse 5, the third of the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Some translations say gentle, some say humble, meek is probably the best way to translate that. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."

This statement by Jesus like the first two, Blessed are the poor in spirit and Blessed are those who mourn, was, to put it mildly, shocking to the Jewish audience that day on the hillside where He spoke, equally as shocking as the other Beatitudes because it like them called for a heart attitude completely foreign to their thinking. They had already heard Him say that a broken spirit and a mourning heart were necessary to enter Messiah's kingdom, rather than self-righteousness and spiritual pride. And then Jesus further jolts their thinking by saying, "Blessed are the meek." This is just absolutely foreign to everything those Jewish people would have understood that day.

Let me tell you why. A little over a half a century before Jesus was born, in the year 63 B.C., Pompeii had annexed Palestine for Rome...thus bringing to an end Jewish independence. You remember that independence was gained at great expense in the Maccabean revolution. But that independence which the Jews so greatly treasured, that freedom to be whoever they wanted to be as their own nation was lost when they fell into the power of Rome. From that time on Palestine belonged to the Romans. It was ruled partly through the Herodian kings who were subject to Caesar's authority and partly by Roman procurators, or governors. The combination of the Herodians and the Romans was distasteful to the Jews who didn't like the idea of anyone ruling over them, particularly pagan Gentiles.

At the same time, virtually all other lands with which the New Testament is concerned had also been made subject to Rome. The Roman Empire had reached its zenith in the time of Christ. The Great Roman Empire stretched all the way across Europe into Asia, as far east as Balbek, east of Beirut,

east of Damascus. The Jews were then servants and slaves to the Romans in the truest sense.

That was a fact, by the way, they didn't like to acknowledge and in Romans...in John 8:33 they said to Jesus, "We are Abraham's offspring and have never yet been enslaved to anyone." Wishful thinking. In fact, at the very moment they said that they were the slaves of Rome.

So, the whole story of the life of Jesus, the background of it falls into a framework of a nation in bondage to Rome. A shadow of Caesar, frankly, is cast over all the pages of the New Testament. At the same time, the Jews had long been waiting for the kingdom of God to come. They were waiting for their Messiah, the Messiah was going to come, they believed, and He would establish the kingdom on earth, He would set up the promised kingdom of which the prophets had spoken. The Old Testament is very clear on this. There was to be a kingdom and they anticipated it greatly.

Their anticipation was heightened all the more as Roman oppression escalated. The tighter the Romans held control over them, the more they longed for the kingdom of God to come. And then the most wonderful thing, the most hopeful thing happened, John the Baptist came...John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets and announced that the King had come.

And then the King came, the Lord Jesus Christ. And what was His message? He said this, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." When Jesus first arrived there was tremendous excitement. You remember all of...all of Israel was going out to hear about the Messiah from John the Baptist. And when Jesus came, Jesus came saying, as Mark 1:15 puts it, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand." And they thought surely this is it. This is the time of the Messiah and the Messiah is going to come and He's going to overthrow Rome and He's going to set up the independent Jewish state and He's going to bring us the glories of the kingdom that have been promised through all the centuries by the prophets.

There were some Jews often called Zealots who believed that the Messiah would do this politically, militarily. He would simply come in and sweep out the Roman power structure and replace it. He would come and bring a coup, it would be a revolution of sorts in which He would conquer militarily and establish His own political kingdom, by sheer might overpowering Rome. The Zealots were the militarists, they were the pragmatists.

Another very prominent New Testament group were the Pharisees who really do dominate the scene in the New Testament and they believed that the Messiah would come and overthrow whoever was controlling Israel. In this case it would have been the Romans, but He would do it not so much militarily as miraculously. They were more theologians than pragmatists. They were more interested in the fulfilling of the power of God on a miraculous level than simply on a military level. And they were waiting for Messiah to set up His kingdom by some incredible wave of miracles...some miraculous act by which He would decimate the Roman power.

But in any case, they were all waiting for some catastrophic intervention of God that would be triggered by the arrival of Messiah. Daniel had said that He would come in clouds and glory and He would establish His kingdom. Even the disciples got caught up in all of this. In Acts chapter 1 verse 6 they said, "Is this the time You're going to bring the kingdom?" That had been their anticipation all along. In fact, they had joined up with Jesus assuming that they would therefore participate at a high level in His kingdom. And then Jesus said things that just devastated even them when He said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

When Jesus came He came into all of this anticipation. The hope of a political or miraculous conquering of Rome, a restoration of the land back to the people of Israel, all the glories of the promised prophecies fulfilled and it was only a pipedream at that time, as Israel lay in the grip of the grim power of Rome and Caesar was not about to give them their independence. Yet this hope burned in the heart of the Jews and it burned so hotly that it created an environment for many false messiahs to rise and fall, to come and go. They were so anxious for a Messiah to come and lead them out of Roman bondage that there were a rash of false messiahs who were trying to cash in on the dream. Occasionally the Zealots also called Zechareii(?), having to do with the fact that they carried swords, would strike Rome again and again like terrorists. Since they didn't have bombs in those days, they would find an appropriate official and they would stab him in the darkness. All that did was bring Roman reprisals. It accomplished absolutely nothing. And finally in 70 A.D. the Romans had enough of all of this and they moved in 70 A.D. and destroyed the city of Jerusalem and slaughtered a million, one hundred thousand Jews.

From 132 to 135 in the next century, under Emperor Hadrian, for all intents and purposes they put the whole nation to death. In 70 A.D. it was Jerusalem. But sixty to seventy years later the rest of the nation was slaughtered. Some writers tell us that Hadrian destroyed at least 985 towns and villages in the land of Palestine.

God's plan was not anything like they thought. Jesus disappointed the Zealots cause He wouldn't build a revolutionary force. He disappointed the Pharisees because they knew He had miraculous power, they saw it all the time. They saw Him raise the dead. They saw Him heal the sick. They saw Him give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and voices to the dumb. They saw Him create food out of His own hands. They knew He had miracle power but He would not use it to destroy Rome. He wouldn't do those cataclysmic miracles that they wanted Him to do. And, in fact, it irked them no end that He spent more time condemning the Jews than He did the Romans by far. In fact, in all the record of His preaching, He had very little, if anything, to say about the Romans and a whole lot to say about the Jews. They finally were so irked by Jesus that their irritation turned to bitterness, their bitterness turned to hatred and they cried to be rid of Him. He was a tremendous disappointment. Such a massive disappointment because they knew He had spiritual power, they knew He had miracle power and He wasn't using it to fulfill their agenda. That disappointment turned

to hatred. And eventually because of it they executed Him. And once He was executed He became even more intolerable. Jewish nationalism could never tolerate a crucified Messiah. That's why Paul in Romans tells us the crucifying of Christ made Him to the Jews a stumbling block.

But they should have known the direction wasn't going to go the way they thought and they should have known it from the very beginning, right here in verse 5 everything really got launched. Their disappointment really started here when He said, "Blessed are the meek." That's not what they wanted to hear. What they wanted to hear was, "Blessed are the powerful." You want to be blessed, you want to inherit the kingdom, it takes power, it takes might, it takes pride. They really were very ignorant of the servant character of the Messiah. They were ignorant of the meaning of Isaiah 40 to 66. Jesus pointed specifically to Isaiah 61 when He preached, as recorded by Luke. And He gave them some pretty clear indications of the nature of His kingdom when He said things like this, opening the book of Isaiah, the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are down trodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

He was going to come to the poor and He was going to come to the imprisoned and He was going to come to the down trodden. And He was going to preach the gospel. All of this indicated something of His humility rather than Him coming as a conquering hero. He continually refers to Himself as the humble servant. He says, "The Son of Man is not to...not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many." And then here in the Beatitudes He says, "His kingdom belongs to people who are broken in spirit, who have no self-confidence, who don't believe in themselves at all. The kingdom belongs to people who are weeping and mourning and now He says to people who are meek." How in the world can the Roman government be overthrown? How in the world can the great kingdom be established by those who are broken and mourning and meek? Just absolutely the antithesis of everything they would have assumed.

Jesus says it isn't the self-sufficient, it isn't the self-righteous, it isn't the proud, it isn't the strong, it isn't the capable, it isn't the courageous, it isn't the confident, it isn't the satisfied, it isn't the angry, the powerful, the rebellious, who are going to bring the kingdom...who are going to come into the kingdom, it is rather the broken, the mourning, the meek, the hungry, the thirsty, the merciful, the pure, the peacemakers and the persecuted and the reviled and the slandered who make up His kingdom. They're the real kingdom citizens. Well this is an absolutely shocking message. And I believe it's right here that the hostility of the Jewish people toward Jesus is really inaugurated.

Now there's a flow here. Those who are poor in spirit are those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy, recognize their impotence, recognize their inability to do anything to please God, recognize their unworthiness, their unfitness to enter the kingdom, who know they have no resources by which they can please God. They are utterly bankrupt spiritually. Because they are bankrupt they mourn. They grieve over their sin, over their spiritual bankruptcy, over their inability. And naturally

people like that are meek. They don't assert themselves, just the opposite.

What does it mean to be meek? What are we really talking about when we talking...when we're talking about meekness?

If you look it up in a dictionary the dictionary might lead you astray. One dictionary that I looked up the word "meek" in said, "Deficient in spirit and courage." That's not what the Greek word used here means. When we talk about meekness what we're really talking about...and synonyms are given often for this...gentleness in the sense of humility. But the bottom line means someone who does not assert themselves, someone who is not consumed with his or her own agenda. Mild is another translation. Soft is another translation.

The person who is broken over his own condition, who mourns over his own sin is not about to assert himself. It shows rather a quiet, willing submission to God, standing in direct contrast to stubborn, willful, rebellious, self-centeredness of the natural man. Sometimes this same word, it's the word prausfrom praos, sometimes the same word is used to describe a soothing medicine. Sometimes it's used to describe a gentle breeze, something that doesn't knock you over. Farmers used this word to describe a colt that had been broken and was tame and docile and gentle, whose strength and power could be channeled for good.

It is not weakness...don't get that, is the idea. It's not weakness. It is power under control. It is a person who has yielded up control to someone else. All the strength is there, all the power is there, it's just not self-asserted. Wherever you have a broken heart, wherever you have a sense of spiritual bankruptcy, wherever you have a mourning over one's sinfulness, you have submission. And submission to God is meekness.

I guess you could say it this way. It's the taming of the lion, not the killing of the lion. The lion is just as strong only the lion has yielded up his will to another. Same lion but under control...not impotent, not cowardly, controlled. This is the person who literally gives up his power, gives up his agenda, gives up his will, gives up his purposes, his goals, his dreams, his ambitions to come under divine control.

Medicine, under control in the right dosage, is of great benefit...out of control and the wrong dosage, it's deadly. Wind under control brings a gentle breeze...out of control brings a devastating and deadly hurricane. A horse under control can be harnessed and used to great purpose...out of control wreaks havoc.

It's this power under control that is essentially this word praus. One writer put it this way, "This is the fruit of the Spirit which is found upon the soil of spiritual poverty, contrition and mourning, a noble flower which grows out of the ashes of self-love upon the grave of pride. On the one hand a man

sees his own utter ruin, his unworthiness and misery. On the other he contemplates the kindness and benignity of God in Christ Jesus. The internal characteristic is a disposition of heart which through the keen perception of its own misery and the abounding mercy of God has become so pliable, so flexible, so tractable, or movable, that no traces of its original ruggedness, of its wild and untamed independent nature remain." That's it. That's it.

The meek person has, in the language of Hebrews 10:34, learned to take joyfully the plundering of his own possessions knowing that he has a better possession, even an abiding one. He's willing to give up anything and everything in this world because he knows God has a better plan and a better world. This is, in a word, a person who has died to self, never mulls over injuries received, never mulls over shattered ambitions and dreams, bears no grudges. It's not a natural quality, by the way. It's a gift from God.

This verse, by the way, is really rooted in Psalm 37. Can I take you to Psalm 37 for a moment? There is more to say to you about this beatitude tonight than I can say, but there are some passages that will help to elucidate it. Psalm 37:3, "Trust in the Lord and do good, dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness, delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon day. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Do not fret, it leads only to evil doing for evil doers will be cut off but those who wait for the Lord will inherit the land," there is in verse 9 almost the identical statement, you wait for the Lord and you'll inherit the land. Jesus said the meek will inherit the earth. Meekness is waiting for the Lord. That's what it is.

Down in verse 11, "The humble will inherit the land."

Go back to verse 4. "Trust in the Lord,"...verse 3, "Trust in the Lord. Verse 4, "Delight in the Lord. Verse 5, "Commit your way to the Lord." Verse 7, "Rest in the Lord. Do not fret." Verse 8, "Do not fret." Verse 9, "Wait for the Lord."

All of those are the attitudes of the meek. They just give up everything for the purposes of God. They trust in Him, they delight in Him, they commit their way to Him, they rest in Him, they do not fret, they wait for Him. That's what it means to be meek...to trust, delight, commit, rest, cease. The psalmist is saying be meek, don't trouble yourselves when the wicked prosper. Don't trouble yourselves when your own plans don't come to fruition. God's blessing belongs to those who yield up to Him and what else can someone do who has nothing to offer? I mean, if you are broken in spirit, if you realize your spiritual bankruptcy and spiritual poverty and if you are mourning over your condition...what have you to do but to yield? Just commit your way to the Lord. It's not talking about cowardice.

The Lord may call you to do something that's going to take tremendous courage. It's not talking about indolence. The Lord may call you to do something that's going to take tremendous energy and effort. It's not a lack of conviction. It's not a wishy-washiness. It's not some kind of benign human niceness. It really is faith in the truest sense that trusts God. And it says this, "In my self nothing is possible, therefore I yield to Him in whom everything is possible." It says, "For me there is no defense, but I will come to the defense of my God." It's not a passive acceptance of one's sinfulness. It's a realization that you can't do anything about your sinfulness, all you can do is yield to God. You say, "Lord, I have nothing to offer, I am broken, I am bankrupt, I mourn over my bankruptcy, I must therefore be humbled before You and anything that is to occur in my life of value and blessing that pleases You, You must do. And so, I trust in You, I commit to You, I delight in You, I wait for You."

That's exactly the way Jesus lived His life...exactly. He said, "I only do what the Father tells me. I have yielded My life to Him. I only do what the Holy Spirit works through Me." He set the example for us. He was no coward. He was not weak. But He was meek.

In fact, the apostle Paul calls us to meekness in 2 Corinthians 10:1 when he call us to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He had His power under control and it was under control by God. It was under God's control. He yielded up the prerogatives to use His divine attributes. He gave up the right to independently use His attributes to God and therefore set the perfect example for us. Meekness does not mean I'm weak, it means I've yielded my power to the purposes of God. I yielded up to His control.

You don't think Jesus was weak. Twice He went into the temple and cleansed it. He blasted the hypocrites. He condemned the leaders of Israel. He fearlessly spoke judgment. He faced terrible, terrible hostility, mockery, persecution and even execution fearlessly. But His power was under the control of God.

That's a person who comes into the kingdom. If you want to be in God's kingdom you have to look at your own spiritual bankruptcy, you have to recognize you're in a hopeless condition. You mourn over that sin and literally cast yourself on God. That's what meekness means. You just throw yourself on Him who alone has the power to produce in you anything that pleases Him.

I want us to look at some examples of this. In the thirteenth chapter of Genesis, just a couple of them and then we'll make some practical applications and be finished.

In Genesis chapter 13 there is Abraham. Abraham, you'll remember, was living up in Ur of the Chaldees. Took his nephew with him, his nephew was Lot, and they had a family disagreement. They came down to the Negeb which is the southern desert near Israel, and in verse 7 there was a strife, a fight between the herdsmen of Abraham's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.

Now Abraham had the right to the land. He was God's man and Lot was a hitchhiker. He was just thumbing a ride with Abraham. But Abraham handled it in quite a remarkable way. Verse 8, Abram he's still called, said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen for we're brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me, if to the left I'll go to the right, or if to the right then I'll go to the left." Folks, that's power under control. Abraham had power, Abraham had authority but he yielded it up. He would not use it for his own benefit. There's real humility there. He had the authority. Anybody would have said he had the right, after all he was the man that God called out of Ur. He chose not to use it for his own benefit but rather to allow the purpose of God to unfold. This is a remarkable element of character.

Then there was Joseph. Joseph had the power when he had become prime minister of Egypt to avenge himself against his brothers. You remember his brothers sold him into slavery and he was hauled off to Egypt. He was in prison there and eventually because he could tell dreams, because the Lord allowed him to be able to do that, he got out of prison and he rose to becoming the prime minister of Egypt. His brothers came down there looking for food when there was a famine in Israel and he had the power in his hand to avenge himself on his brothers, but he refused. And, in fact, just the opposite. He demonstrated love and compassion to his brothers. Again, power under control. He submitted himself to do what was right.

Then there was David. I think back so often about David, the remarkable situation where Saul was chasing David. And in 1 Samuel 24...this happened on several occasions...Saul was trying to chase David but David came upon Saul in a very indelicate position where he and his men were hiding. Now remember, Saul was the greatest enemy that David had on the face of the earth, the most formidable one because he was a king. And Saul was the one that David was going to replace. And we might have assumed that since he had a right to the throne, he would have been doing the bidding of God had he taken out his sword and run it right through the throat of Saul. With one stroke of the blade he could have killed Saul, taken his throne, it was rightfully his. And that's exactly what some of David's men urged him to do because Saul, after all, was trying to kill David. He should act while he could. David wouldn't do it. What he did do was take his sword and cut off a piece of Saul's robe. He had the power. He had the right. But it was under control.

I believe in all these cases these men were following the prompting of the Spirit of God in their life and they were yielded up to that. He would only act in behalf of God, not himself. Joseph would only act in behalf of God, not himself and so with Abraham.

In 2 Samuel 16 David's son Absalom forced his father to flee into the wilderness, started a revolution against his father, literally he ran him out of town. This is one of the terribly sad times in David's life of which there are many. But one of Saul's men, a man named Shimei cursed David. As David was fleeing he cursed him and threw stones at him. David was the king. Abishai who was David's

nephew said to the king, this is in 2 Samuel 16 down around verse 9 or 10, Abishai says to the king, "Let me go over and take that guy's head off." David said, "Let him alone." David would not act in his own defense. Abraham wouldn't act in his own benefit. Joseph wouldn't seek vengeance. And David wouldn't act for his own exaltation, or even his own defense. He had a trusting subservient attitude of total submission to God's will and power. And I think at that time David knew he was really reaping some of the consequence of his failures in dealing with Absalom.

There was Moses. According to Numbers chapter 12 and verse 3 it says, "The man, Moses, was very meek." In fact, it says and this is remarkable, it says, "Moses was meek above all men who were on the face of the earth." He was the meekest man in the world.

You say, "I find that hard to believe." If you ask any Jew just in general who the greatest leader in Jewish history was, who will they tell you? Moses...Moses. The two greatest leaders in Jewish history are Moses and Charlton Heston. (laughter) Moses is the great leader and yet God said of him he was the meekest man who ever lived.

Now what are we talking about here when we're talking about meekness? We associate him with fearlessness. We associate with him boldness and courage and power. We see him go marching in there to Pharaoh and laying it on the line and saying to Pharaoh, "You let my people go and if you don't let my people go, there are going to be some serious judgments fall." He was strong when he went, slew an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew, slaughtered him on the spot. He was confrontive. He was firm in his convictions. In Exodus 5, Moses who once had fled from Pharaoh in fear returned to stand before Pharaoh in boldness and say, "Let my people go."

And so we ask the question, how can this man be meek, he seems anything but meek? Well, his meekness shows up in places like Exodus 3 verse 9, "Now behold the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me...God says...furthermore I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them, therefore come now and I'll send you to Pharaoh so that you may bring my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, `Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?'" That's his meekness. He had no confidence in whom? Himself...none...none, he knew he was absolutely inadequate. Exodus chapter 4 verse 20, "Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand." Verse 29, "Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. The people believed when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction. Then they bowed low and worshiped." Moses charged right back in. He along with Aaron took the leadership.

Meekness is the absence of confidence in myself, not an abstinence...absence of confidence in my God. Do you understand the difference? It's when you get to the place where you know only He can

do it. To attempt in any sense to represent God on your own is foolish if you're trusting in yourself.

Paul had the same attitude. Philippians 3:3, he says, "I can't trust the flesh." Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." That's meekness...that's meekness. It is an absolute and total lack of confidence in oneself to accomplish anything eternal and total confidence in God to accomplish everything.

In 2 Chronicles there's a good contrast to this. Let me read it to you. It's about Uzziah the king. He was king for 52 years in Jerusalem, a long time."He went out and warred against the Philistines, broke down the wall of Gath," those are Philistine...that's a Philistine city, "and the wall of Jabneh, another one, and the wall of Ashdod," those are all Philistine cities along the coastline of Palestine. "He built cities in the area of Ashdod and among the Philistines. God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians who lived in Gur-baal, and the Meunites." God helped him, it says. "The Ammonites also gave tribute to Uzziah and his fame extended to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong." I mean, the man literally dominated that part of the world. "Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, at the corner buttress and fortified them." I mean, his position after he had won the war was to position himself with the strong posture in the cold war so that his enemies wouldn't attack him because he was so fortified. He built towers in the wilderness and hewed many cisterns, for he had much livestock...that's to provide the resource for water for the livestock...both in the low land, in the plain. He had plowmen and vinedressers in the hill country and the fertile fields for he loved the soil."

I mean, this is a remarkable guy, great soldier, great agronomist, agriculturalist. "Uzziah had an army ready for battle. He was a builder. He was a military man. He encounter...he entered combat by divisions according to the number of their muster." In other words, he was very well organized, he had the whole thing laid out. "The total number of the heads of the households, of valiant warriors is 2600. Under his direction was an elite army of 307,500, a third of a million." No wonder nobody wanted to attack him. "They could wage war with great power to help the king against the enemy. Moreover Uzziah prepared for all the army shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows and sling stones. And in Jerusalem he made engines of war invented by skillful men to be on the towers and on the corners for the purpose of shooting arrows and great stones. Hence his fame was spread afar, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong."

How did he get where he got? He was marvelously...what? Helped by whom?...by God. He was helped by God. But "when he became strong his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense."

You know what he did? He...he stepped out of his role as a king into the priestly role and violated the priestly standard. He thought, "Well, I'm such a great king, think of the priest I might make." And God

hit him with leprosy and he died. And until his death he had to live in a separate house because of the contagion of his leprosy. Literally he was slain.

"He slept with his fathers. They buried him with his fathers in the field of the grave which belonged to the kings, for they said, `He is a leper.'"

That's the very opposite. A guy who wanted to take all the credit. Do it in his own strength. Do it in his own power. Listen, those other men all had a sense of their sinfulness, all had a sense of their impotence, all had a sense of their weakness, all had a sense of their inadequacy. They mourned over their sin. They mourned over their weakness. They had a healthy sense of sin and shame and infirmity that humbled them before God and caused them to seek only His causes and defend only His name and fight only His battles and use only His weapons. In fact, it caused them to do what the next beatitude says "To hunger and thirst after righteousness" because they knew they didn't have any. They knew they were nothing. And they found that the road to being something was the path to God.

What was the result? "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." First of all, they're blessed, that means happy, true joy, salvation joy, the joy of eternal life. The joy that belongs to all who are in the kingdom belongs to the meek.

You have to understand the Jewish leaders were proud, self-sufficient, self-righteous, believing that they could attain to the level of righteousness which would satisfy God. They were the opposite of this. They would not inherit the earth.

What does it mean to inherit the earth? Well, Israel had been promised the land all the way from Genesis 13 on. And they were in it there but they really weren't controlling it. They're in it again today, partially realizing the promise of God. But the real glory of the inheritance of that land is going to come in the kingdom promise to them. They were waiting for the King who would come and establish the glory of His kingdom. But the only way to participate in that kingdom was to be meek.

The word "inherit" is from a Greek verb which means to receive an allotted portion, kleronomeo, it means to receive that which is apportioned or allotted to you. And if you want an allotted place in the kingdom of the great King, the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll get one when you come into His kingdom broken, mourning and meek, realizing your sinfulness, your spiritual bankruptcy, grieving over it, depending on God for everything. There is going to be a literal earthly kingdom in the future, it's promised. We will be a part of that kingdom, all who love Him, both Jews and Gentiles. We'll be there as long as we believe in Jesus Christ, we'll be a part of that kingdom. In fact, when Jesus returns to set up His kingdom in Revelation, we return with Him, it says He comes out of heaven riding on a white horse and behind Him are all the saints robed in white riding white horses, we come back to enter that kingdom with Him. And there is beyond that the new heaven and the new earth,

the eternal kingdom. But it belongs only to those who come this way.

Just summing this up and giving you some practical things to think about, meekness is commanded by God. Only the meek are saved, that's right, only those who do not trust in themselves. Psalm 149:4, "Only the meek are saved." Only the afflicted experience salvation. James 4 says God gives grace to the humble and rejects the proud. It is commanded by God to be meek.

It is not only commanded by God to be meek, it is necessary if you're going to receive God's Word. Do you remember what it says in James 1 verse 21? "Putting all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness in humility receive the Word which is able to save your souls." You have to be humble to receive the gospel. You can't be proud and self-righteous. Meekness glorifies God because it gives everything back to Him, it confesses utter and total inability so that whatever is accomplished for good and for God's glory is from Him. In fact, in 1 Peter 3:4 it says, "A meek and quiet spirit is precious in the sight of God...precious in the sight of God."

One last consideration. How do you know if you're meek? I think you can know. Simply we could start this way, do I recognize that I have no ability to save myself? That's where meekness begins. Do I recognize that apart from the grace of God, the power of God, I cannot be saved, I cannot enter the kingdom? Do I recognize that I can do nothing to be saved? Furthermore, do I recognize that as a Christian I can't accomplish anything in my life on my own fleshly strength? Do I recognize that? If I do, I'm meek. It doesn't mean you slither around and say, "Woe is me," or mumble, "I'm nothing, I'm nothing." It means you understand and recognize your inability to accomplish anything on the spiritual and divine level and you therefore submit to God for all of it.

You can ask yourself this, do I respond humbly and obediently to the Word? That's a test of meekness. Another one is, am I angry when God is dishonored rather than when I am dishonored? Am I more concerned about God being disgraced than my own shame? Am I more concerned about God's purposes not being fulfilled than mine? Do I always seek to make peace? Do I always defer to someone else? Am I more concerned about others than myself? Do I receive criticism well and love those who give it? All of those are evidences of meekness. And if I see those in my life then God in His might grace and power has brought me to a place of meekness and He has blessed me by bringing me into His kingdom and make me...making me an inheritor of all that His Kingdom involves on this earth and in the glory to come.

A final thought. Meekness in a word is to be finished with myself for good. That's it. I'm nothing but a sinner with no rights and no power and I subject myself gladly to God's will that I might be made happy and that I might inherit all that He promises to those in His kingdom. It's the end of me.

Father, bring us to that point if we're not there. That's where You've called us to be. We have to look into our hearts and if we don't see that selflessness then no matter what we might think about a decision in the past or a prayer we prayed, if Your will is not our desire, if Your kingdom is not our passion, if Your glory does not motivate us, it may well be that we don't belong to You, we're not in Your kingdom. Or it might be that we have fallen into patterns of selfish disobedience and we've allowed pride into our lives. We may be facing chastening or experiencing it. Help us to be meek. Do whatever You need to do in our lives to crush our pride and self-will, to bring us to the end of ourself for good. Slay self, mortify the flesh in us. And may we be like Christ who said, "Learn of Me for I am meek and lowly." My, it is an incomprehensible condescension that we see in Christ, though He was equal with God thought it not something to be grasped but yielded it up, took upon Him the form of a servant, was made in likeness as a man and died the ignominious death on the cross. How far down He came. How meek He was, utterly yielding up all His power to Your control and He did it voluntarily, though He did not need to, to gain any end other than to fulfill Your will which was His greatest pleasure.

Father, we need to humble ourselves that we might be saved from sin and then to enter into the fullness of Your will that we might rejoice. May we learn Christ and may it be that we're characterized by the very meekness that characterized Him. O the joy of the person who is always angry at the right time and the right issue and never at the wrong time and the wrong issue, always angry over those things that dishonor You and not those things that disappoint him. How happy is that person who has every instinct and every impulse and every passion submitted to you, God controlled, who realizes his own ignorance, his own weakness and is therefore brought into Your kingdom and in humility becomes a king among men. What a great privilege.

We pray, Lord, tonight for those who may not know Christ, who have not entered the kingdom that they would come to this place of recognition of their spiritual bankruptcy, that they would grieve over their sin and in meekness and humility demonstrate a hunger and thirst for righteousness that only You can give. And, Lord, for Christians, help us to renew the commitment to be humble and meek, take pride out of our lives and self-will, our own purposes, and our own plans and our own petty desires and may we be consumed with that which brings You honor and glory and may we realize our weakness and infirmity and only in Your power can we accomplish anything. We yield to that. Use us mightily through Your power, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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