

“Blessed are the Meek”

Matthew 5:1-12

On Tuesday, at our circuit pastor's conference, I was responsible for presenting a study on our Gospel reading – this portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Looking at the Greek, the structure of the language is very straightforward. “Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . Blessed are those who mourn . . . Blessed are the meek.” So, as I have a fondness for the writings of Martin Luther, I presented what he wrote about these statements of Jesus commonly known as the Beatitudes – because “beatus” is the Latin word for “blessed.”

There is so much material to work with, and as we are recognizing All Saints' Day, I want to turn our attention to just one of the Beatitudes.

Blessed are the meek. Do you consider yourself to be meek? Do you want to be meek? You should. The word “meek” is another word which our society has stolen away from the church and has applied negative connotations to it. Our culture has done the same things to words like “submit” or “tolerate.” The intended meaning has been changed.

I looked in a dictionary and meek is defined as “gentle, mild, patient, long-suffering” and those are aspects of meekness – and rightly so. But

then the dictionary also uses words such as “unassuming and spiritless.” That is a new, unintended understanding of the word “meek”. It also is the predominant usage of the word “meek”.

When Jesus proclaims “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”, His words are practically a quotation of Ps. 37:11, “But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves with abundant peace.” That Psalm goes on to describe the meek in a very different way than the “spiritless, downtrodden, cowering in the corner, unassuming doormat” of modern English usage.

The Psalmist equates the “meek” with the “righteous” and says, “The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom . . . The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their stronghold in the time of trouble . . . He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in Him.”

The meek are filled with wisdom and are strong in times of trouble because they entirely place their trust in the Lord – rather than in themselves. Pray that you are filled with meekness in the Biblical sense – of having a humble, joyful, and confident dependence on God. The people of God, and Christ Himself are described as being “meek” because we rely on the good and gracious will of our Father in heaven, rather than trusting in our own strength.

Luther writes about those who “roar and bluster violently” to defend their property or peace. The bold and the brash who flaunt their own strength, trust in their own abilities, and view their place in life as being

rightly superior to those around them – these are the people glorified in our society. But Luther goes on to say that those “who are always arguing and squabbling” ultimately cost themselves.

The humble servant of God who quietly does his or her job will often get passed over for the promotion. I know from experience that a pastor at a small church in small town, no matter how faithful, will be considered less important than a pastor at a big church in a big city. That is how our sinful world works; that is how our sinful mind thinks. Our world evaluates us on outward appearances and tangible success.

But that is not how things will ultimately end. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” On this observation of the celebration of All Saints’ Day, we turn our attention to those who have departed the earth, who have heard the only evaluation that matters. We long to hear Christ say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” There will be a new heaven and a new earth, and the meek shall inherit that earth.

It is very frustrating for us in this life, as it seems that the unrighteous and the obnoxious have inherited the earth. Just keep in mind that this earth will not last. Whatever pleasure that comes from sin is always short-lived and always ends badly.

The meek will never be the stars of society. Having a humble, joyful, and confident dependence on God does not get your foot in the door at work or get you noticed in society’s circles. However, the meek shall inherit the earth.

When you rely on yourself, when you trust in the strength of your character; the greatness of your deeds; or anything else within you – that is not a sign of meekness. And if meekness and righteousness go hand in hand, then the lifestyles of the brash and obnoxious is a dangerous way to live.

We must look outside of ourselves in order to find the value we have within us. Humble, joyful, confident dependence on God – faith in our loving Father who sent His Son into this sinful, selfish world to suffer at the hands of evil men, so that our suffering might end.

Just like the joy of the unrighteous and obnoxious is short-lived, the suffering of the saints is short-lived. It will end. Christ has guaranteed that. The unrighteous have joy for a short time and suffering for eternity. The meek, the righteous endure suffering for a short time, but as God's saints, our inheritance of the new earth will be for eternity. As we hear in John's Revelation, "God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes."

God knows that the suffering you endure in this life is real. The pain that sin has brought is real. The pain of death hurts – which is why our loving Father had to send His Son. He had to come in meekness. He had to endure all the pains, all the angry words, the betrayal of friends, and everything that we suffer, even death. As the letter to the Hebrews says, "He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses."

Christ came in meekness so that He could say to all of us, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Amen.