

THE BEATITUDES

MATTHEW 5

Justice & Righteousness Series

OPENING PRAYER

God, as we give thanks for your love, we also pray that our minds will be open to learning about you and our hearts will be open to people that we come in contact with. May your love and life shine through us. Amen.

EXEGESIS

The Sermon on the Mount gives us a great deal of instruction on what it means to be a follower of Jesus. In the first section- the Beatitudes- Jesus tells his listeners what will happen when they do as he instructs. They will be blessed for having to deal with those things in life that are not always easy. He offers instruction that often seems counter-intuitive to what we may understand will make for a good life. One of the things that Jesus tells us is that the meek are blessed and that they will inherit the earth.

It seems that, over time, meek has become synonymous with weak. We have come to see a meek person as being someone who may be shy, or not assertive. They seem to be the type of person that we expect to end up working in a job that most other people may not want. They speak up very little about things that many may feel are important. They live their lives and few people know much about them.

The Greek word that is translated as meek in this passage is translated as gentle in many other places in the New Testament. (see Eph. 4:2, Phil. 4:5, Col. 3:12, 1 Tim. 6:11, 1 Peter 3:15) Meekness has a great deal to do with gentleness. Meekness is about how we live our lives in relation to others. Another way that it could be translated is that meekness is not weakness, but power under control. (Give Bruxy Cavey a listen for more on this.)

Meekness has more in common with wisdom, according to John Piper. He points to James 3:13 and 17 for his connection of the two. James 3:13 says, 'Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behaviour his deeds in gentleness of wisdom.' (NASB) And James 3:17 says, 'But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

Wisdom and meekness, according to Piper, have many of the same attributes. A wise person is teachable, as is a meek person. A wise person is peaceable and open to reason, as is a meek person.

REFLECTION

Jesus' teaching is also a call to a way of being- an ethical response to much of what happens in the world around us. This is as true today as it was in Jesus' day. In Jesus' day, there was the ever-present oppression of Roman rule, and the threat of action at the hint of any kind of opposition to their rule. Today, we live in a world that seems to feel more and more unsafe, constantly on the verge of war.

The meek are not necessarily the people who have to go and prove how right their truth is. They are not the ones most likely to go out and conquer the world in an attempt to make the world safe or to make themselves wealthy and powerful. They are the people who care for those who are hurt by wars and other devastation. They are the ones who rebuild lives and communities after disasters. They are the ones who make sure that people are fed and cared for.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does being meek or gentle improve our relationship with others?
2. How does being meek improve our relationship with God?
3. What are some ways that meekness enhances wisdom?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, may we strive to live as you lived and taught. As we meet people who have much, may we be an example of humility, showing that living simply can bring much happiness within ourselves and to others. With people who have little, may our gentleness and generosity help change lives. Amen.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- For more on the Beatitudes, listen to the Woodland Hills Sermon Series: 'The Blessedness of the Revolution' at <http://whchurch.org/sermons-media/sermon-topics/blessings>.
- Bruxy Cavey on meekness: <http://bit.ly/1MZc9LE>, Bruxy Cavey, Woodland Hills Sermons, "Blessed are the Meek", October 29, 2012.
- John Piper on meekness: Piper, John, Desiring God, website, "Blessed are the Meek", <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/blessed-are-the-meek>, February 9, 1986

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