

## Numbers 12:1-15; Mt. 5:1-5

### The Inheritance Gained by Those that Surrender

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth – Mt. 5:5*

This third beatitude brings us face to face with the original problem of mankind. There's a sense in which you could say that God brings the suppliant for entrance into His kingdom back to the very point where that sinner forfeited the kingdom in the first place. It was his failure to submit to God, you see, that cost the human race the inheritance of paradise – or to use the term of this beatitude – it was his failure to be meek that cost the human race its inheritance.

Ever since the fall of man sinners have been striving through their own terms and in their own ways to regain the inheritance of the earth. This comes out clearly in Psalm 2 where we read of the kings of the earth setting themselves and rulers taking counsel against the Lord and against his anointed saying *Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.*

The conspiracy of sinners is of course futile – so futile that it gives God in heaven occasion to laugh – but this has never stopped sinful man from striving to set himself up to be the ruler of the earth. So what do we find in the world today – if we don't find competing demigods that all think the world should cater to their every whim and wish? This is the governing force within the sinful nature of every man. This is what we actually did inherit through the fall of Adam.

And when you view the third beatitude from this perspective then it enables you to see how greatly God magnifies His grace. There's a certain irony to this beatitude when you see it in the context of sinners trying to retake their forfeited inheritance – for we see in this beatitude the very promise held out for what sinners are trying to gain. Sinners who are at war with Christ have the opportunity to gain from Christ what they're striving to gain in their warfare. Of course there's no way they can gain it by their own terms. There's no way they can prevail against God Almighty – but here comes the grace of God and the irony of the beatitude – they can gain the inheritance on God's terms – i.e. they can gain the inheritance through surrender, which is the real meaning of meekness.

How often do you find in the history of warfare one nation surrendering unconditionally to another nation and the conquering nation in setting forth the terms of surrender grants the vanquished nation the very thing that that nation was striving to obtain? The terms would be different, of course. The vanquished nation would still be in submission to the conquering nation – but still – can you think of an example of such a thing taking place? Usually what follows the subduing of one nation by another is that the vanquished nation is reduced to little or nothing – her leaders are imprisoned or executed and her inhabitants become vassals to those that conquered them.

Only in the kingdom of heaven can you find exaltation through surrender. Only by the grace of God can the surrendered sinner be lifted up. And so this third beatitude marks the

beginning of a change in direction for the sinner who would gain entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Up to this point the first two beatitudes bring the sinner low. He sees the impoverished condition of his heart – he’s poor in spirit and he sees the cause for his impoverished heart condition – it’s due to his sin and so he mourns for his sin. He sees the futility of his sin. He laments all that his sin has cost him and he laments the terrible truth that he’s lost and condemned and deserves nothing short of everlasting condemnation.

But something else takes place in his heart as well. He now finds himself ready to submit to whatever terms God sets before him. He’s become meek, in other words and he’s ready to lay down his arms of rebellion for good and to follow the Lord, now, in the obedience of faith. And so now what happens to him is revealed in Ps 147:6 *The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.* This is why I say this beatitude marks the beginning of a new direction for the one who gains entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Upon his surrender to the terms of the gospel the Lord now lifts him up. By being poor in spirit and by mourning for his sin he has been prostrate before God in fear and trembling but the Lord lifts him up. And how high does the Lord lift him up? This beatitude tells us that he is actually exalted to such a degree that he inherits the earth.

What grace and what mercy! What blessedness is bestowed on those that are so unworthy! Can you not see how this beatitude magnifies the grace of God? What does this beatitude convey to us if not this theme:

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But what about this surrender? What does it really mean to be meek? This beatitude plainly indicates to us that if we would gain the blessing of the inheritance, then we must know what it means to surrender – or we must know what means to be meek.

Consider with me, then, first of all – that if we would gain the inheritance that comes to those that are meek:

### I. We Must Follow the Right Examples of Meekness

The meaning of meekness can best be understood by looking at the examples of those that demonstrate this character trait. And as we view these examples it will become apparent at once both what meekness is and what it is not.

We have read from Num. 12 this morning this parenthetical statement about Moses given to us in verse 3 (*Now the man Moses [was] very meek, above all the men which [were] upon the face of the earth.*)

This statement is very interesting with regard to Moses generally and with regard to the immediate context of the statement. Miriam and Aaron, you see, had lost their patience with Moses. They mistakenly thought that Moses viewed himself as being more important than they were. This simply could not be the case – they reasoned. After all the Lord had spoken to them also and besides that – Moses was married to an Ethiopian.

And at the very spot where you might think the narrative would give you Moses' defense of himself, instead we find him quiet. He commits his way to the Lord and it is the Lord who steps in to vindicate his servant. The thing to note here is that Moses did not feel compelled to defend himself – he surrendered his defense to the Lord. And we find him doing this often. When he's being criticized by the Israelites for bringing them out of Egypt – very often Moses response was to prostrate himself before the Lord and plead that the Lord would have mercy on those that were rebelling against him.

We find a similar example of this in the life of David. Following David's sin with Bathsheeba a rebellion arises from within his own house. David is driven out of Jerusalem by his son, Absalom, who would set himself up to be the ruler in Israel. As David in his humiliation makes his way out of Jerusalem – a man by the name of Shimei tags along in order to curse David. He calls David a bloody man and accuses David of usurping the throne from the house of Saul and he heaps scorn and contempt upon David by casting stones at him and kicking dust into the air as he curses David continually as David and his house are in retreat. Eventually Shimei's cursing pushes the patience of Abishai over the limit and he says to David in 2Sam. 16:9 *Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.*

David would not have it, however. Like Moses – he would commit his cause to the Lord and so replies to Abishai that he should let the man curse. *It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day* (2Sa 16:12).

We see, then, from these two examples of Moses and David that meekness makes reference to committing our way to the Lord. We are surrendered to His rule and we view every circumstance of life as being dispensed by God. We feel no compulsion to exalt ourselves or to even defend ourselves. In this respect meekness stands in contrast to Miriam and Aaron who attempted to exalt themselves to the level of Moses. Or it stands in contrast to David's son, Absalom, who would exalt himself to be king. Meekness takes the seat in the back and is grateful for any seat at all. Meekness You could say that meekness shares something in common with the charity of 1Cor. 13 in that *vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up* (1Cor. 13:4).

It's important to remember the order of the beatitudes. We've been brought low from our own sense of poverty of sin. Humility, you could say, is the necessary prerequisite to meekness. Pride, you could say, is the absolute antithesis to meekness.

And then we have the greatest example of meekness in the person of Christ Himself. *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* (Mt 11:29). We know of Christ that He never sought to exalt Himself. When He went about performing miracles He never did so with the aim of drawing fame to Himself. His word to those who were the subjects of His miracles was continually to say nothing but to go and make the proper sacrifice in worship. His fame grew in spite of Him not because of Him.

And when it came time for Christ to suffer we find the greatest example of meekness to be found anywhere. If ever there was a good example that provided a precise definition for meekness it would be found with reference to Christ in 1Pet. 2:23 *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed [himself] to him that judgeth righteously.*

Christ's entire life and death can be viewed as a model of submission to His Father's will – and this is what constitutes meekness. The words He spoke were words given to Him by His Father. The works that He performed were the works that His Father gave Him do. And even when it became most unjust and most unfair for One who was holy and harmless to be put to death – still Christ's obedience would be unto death, even the death of the cross.

This is where we must look, then, when meekness seems hard. When you view your own treatment as being unjust and unfair and the temptation is to assert yourself the way Paul did for an instant when he called the high priest a whited wall because of the high priest's unjust call for Paul to be smitten – remember that in the end Paul repented and so we read in Ac 23:5 *Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.* It didn't matter the ruler of the people was speaking evil of Paul or that the ruler of the people had Paul smitten – still Paul would commit his cause to the Lord and leave his own vindication to the Lord.

This was probably not terribly hard for Paul when he called to mind the unjust treatment of Christ not to mention Paul's own unjust treatment of Stephen. I believe that meekness calls upon us to obey the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment which calls for submission and respect not only to your parents but to every legitimately ordained authority.

And could I say here – since we are now in the process of praying for God to raise up elders in our church – that the mark of those that are called to lead is that they know how to follow. The mark of those that can rule well is that they respect authority and submit in a spirit of meekness to authority. Those that buck against authority are the same ones that would abuse authority if authority were to be given to them. May we be watchful, then, for those that are meek.

And before we leave this point let me just mention what needs to be said because of a tendency to equate meekness with a form of personality that is laid back or easy going. Some perceive meekness to be a form of passivity that amounts to fatalism. Certainly in the example of Moses you may dismiss such a notion. Can you see the meekest man in the earth as he descends from Mt. Sinai with the tables of stone in his hands? Upon his arrival from the mount he discovers the entire camp has sunken into idolatry and the immorality that accompanies idolatry. Does a meek man simply accept such a thing – though it may grieve him? The answer is, of course, that there is a place for holy indignation and Moses manifested that indignation by grounding the golden calf to powder and sprinkled that powder in the river and made the idolaters drink of it.

And in the case of Christ – we find the One who is meek and lowly nevertheless chasing the money changers out of the temple, turning over their tables and expressing His disapproval for what was taking place in His Father’s house. Meekness, then, is not passivity – nor is it compromise at any cost. It is submission to God and it is a submission that’s accompanied by a jealousy for God’s honor.

If we would gain the inheritance that comes through surrender, therefore, then we must follow the right examples. And the right examples teach us to commit our ways to the Lord and to rest in Divine sovereignty. Consider next that not only must we follow the right examples but:

## II. We Must Practice the Right Things

Meekness, you see, is not merely a disposition of resignation. There are certain things that are practiced and that are avoided by those that are meek. And I should also point out that meekness not only has a God-ward disposition but it also has a man-ward manifestation also.

You heard Psalm 37 read earlier the service. There those that believe that the beatitudes allude to Ps. 37. This is certainly true with the third beatitude. Look at how many times reference is made in this psalm to *inheriting the earth*.

- Ps 37:9 *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.*
- Ps 37:11 *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*
- Ps 37:22 *For [such as be] blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and [they that be] cursed of him shall be cut off.*
- Ps 37:29 *The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.*
- Ps 37:34 *Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see [it].*

From these verses we can see that those that are meek are also ones that wait on the Lord. The term *wait* speaks of *looking for, hoping, expecting*. The term expresses the language of faith as the meek anticipate that the cause of Christ’s kingdom will prevail in the end. This is why we find the grace to commit ourselves to the Lord. This is why we patiently endure when the things of this world are cruel and unjust. Our hope is not set on this world but we look for a city whose builder and maker is God.

The wicked may seem to hold sway. And the fact that they hold sway for so long may lead us to discouragement. The psalmist recognized this in his day. *I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree (v. 35) Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.*

Those that are meek, you see, have learned to submit themselves to the long look. They view the world with eternity's values and eternity's duration in view. Because they know that Christ's cause will triumph they not only submit – they not only patiently wait and endure but indeed they delight themselves in the Lord. They rest in Him. They learn to refrain themselves from fretting over the wicked.

I think Christians need to hear the exhortation of the Psalmist often to *fret not yourselves because of evil doers*. If you give yourself over to such fretting then you'll undoubtedly find much to fret about. We know all too well that iniquity has come in like a flood. We draw little if any encouragement from those in the political realm who would stand true. How you must, therefore, learn to be meek. How you must heed Christ's own instructions when it comes to meekness. He tells you to *take his yoke upon you and learn of him* (Mt. 11:29). Only by keeping our minds and hearts stayed on Him will we find the grace to submit to Him.

These are some of the things, then, that we practice toward God when we put meekness into action. We trust in Him – we rest in Him – we delight in Him and we wait for Him. But I want you to see that meekness is not only practiced toward God but it's also manifested toward others.

We saw not long ago in our studies of Galatians that meekness must characterize the way we restore others that are overtaken in a fault. So we read in Ga 6:1 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*. Meekness, you see, carries with it a sense of our own vulnerability. We must never lose sight of the effect of the first two beatitudes. We are poor in spirit and we have much to mourn over regarding our own shortcomings. And if we fail to manifest that kind of spirit when it comes to dealing with others then we'll come across as proud with a kind of *holier than thou* attitude. But so long as meekness springs from our sense of poverty and our own sense of sin then we'll be in a much better position to minister to others and see them restored that are overtaken in a fault.

Along these same lines Paul writes to Timothy in 2Ti 2:25 *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*; You see how meekness must accompany instruction. Meekness must be demonstrated toward those that oppose themselves. And a true spirit of meekness will realize in such a circumstance that a brother in a fault is not really opposing the one that would correct or restore him – carnal pride would tempt us at times to think this was so – but in fact that man at fault is opposing himself. And so long as you can see the circumstance that way you will be enabled to confront him with great humility and patience.

In this way, then, the kingdom of heaven advances. It advances when the people of God are meek toward Christ and it advances when the people of God demonstrate meekness toward each other. I like the point that John Piper makes with regard to the entire sermon

on the mount. He points out in the light of Mt. 5:16 that Christ's aim in this sermon is to teach the subjects of the kingdom of heaven to so let their lights shine that others may be moved to value God highly. Meekness is essential to such an aim being accomplished. When we lose meekness – then the devil makes his gains because pride prevails and pride is the work of the devil. Those that have become meek have been enabled to do away with pride.

And so we see that if we would gain the blessing of the inheritance then we must follow the right examples and we must practice the right things. When these things are done then and only then:

### III. We May Expect Great Blessing

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

There's a future aspect to this beatitude to be sure. The ones that are meek, you see, are the ones that have been wrought upon by God's Spirit. Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit. These are the ones that Christ has redeemed by His blood. Because of their redemption they have gained a rightful claim to the world. The very word *inherit* contains a form of the word *law*. And so the term carries the idea of inheritance by right.

That right, of course, comes to the meek because they have submitted to the One who has by His life and death earned the right to rule the world. All authority has been committed to Christ. He sits enthroned in heaven now as the rightful heir of the world. And those that have submitted to Him in the Spirit of meekness to His will and His word have become joint-heirs with Him. The meek will inherit the earth because Christ has earned the inheritance.

But I believe there's also a present aspect to this beatitude that enables us to inherit the world right now. We are, to use Paul's words in 2Cor. 6:10 *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and [yet] possessing all things.*

This is true because Paul could earlier write in 1Cor. 3:22 *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.* Because you are Christ's and Christ is God's – all things are yours. You know the familiar way we often refer to this truth from Ro 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.*

So the ones who have in meekness surrendered to Christ not only will inherit the earth but they have inherited the earth. God saves them. God lifts them up. God beatifies them with salvation. The meek increase their joy in the Lord (Isa. 29:19). The meek know a peace right now that the proud know nothing about. And as we submit to Christ and know His peace and joy then we also promote the glory of Christ and are used in the extension of His kingdom. May the Lord help you, then, to follow the right examples and to engage in the right practices of meekness that you might know the present blessings of future joys.