

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

February 18, 2024

I. Introduction

- A. **Matthew 5:3-12**, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [4] Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. [5] Blessed are the gentle (*meeek*), for they shall inherit the earth. [6] Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. [7] Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. [8] Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. [9] Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. [10] Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
- B. **REVIEW**: Last Sunday we talked about the first two beatitudes, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven,” and “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”
1. To be poor in spirit is (1) to recognize your true spiritual and moral condition, both past and present, (2) to heartily agree you deserve eternal damnation, (3) to recognize that you are incapable of solving your sin problem – from the power and practice of sin to the penalty for sin, and (4) to recognize that your only hope is to trust in God, submit to His will and word, and live accordingly.
 2. Those who mourn over their sin are sincerely saddened that in sinning, (1) they have disappointed God and pushed Him away, and (2) they have acted selfishly, and in so doing have mistreated, hurt, or even alienated those they have sinned against.
 3. As I said last Sunday, you need the kind of humility that makes you “poor in spirit” in order to sincerely feel sorrow and grief because of what your sin does to God and those around you.
- C. Today we are going to look at the third beatitude, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”
- D. Pray

II. [5] Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

- A. This third beatitude does not stand alone. It is dependent on the first two beatitudes because living according to the first two beatitudes puts you

in the right frame of mind and feeds the right kinds of attitudes for living a life of meekness.

- B. Within the context of the Christian life, meekness is a calm, gentle, tender temperament that is not easily provoked, angered, or irritated which enables those who are meek to remain patient and calm when faced with such things as unkindness, disrespect, mistreatment, injustice, hostility, cruelty, false imprisonment, or persecution.
1. Near the end of Matthew 5, Jesus gave two examples that require a good dose of Christian meekness to apply accordingly.
 - a. **Matthew 5:38-41**, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ [39] But I say to you, **do not resist an evil person** (*strive against, forcefully oppose*); but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. [40] If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. [41] Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.”
 - b. **Matthew 5:43-45**, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ [44] But I say to you, **love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for **He causes** His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”
 2. Paul spoke about this kind of meekness in **Romans 12:17-21**, “**Never** pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. [18] If possible, so far as it depends on you, **be at peace** with all men. [19] **Never** take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. [20] But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. [21] Do not be overcome by evil (*do not become evil yourself in response to evil treatment*), but overcome evil with good.”
 3. Jesus not only spoke about meekness, He was meek, and said so in **Matthew 11:29-30**, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle (*meek – same Greek word as in Matthew 5:5*) and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
 4. Finally, Jesus went beyond speaking about meekness to living accordingly, even in the face of gross injustice, deliberate cruelty, and painful suffering. We read about this in, **1 Peter 2:20-23**, “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure

- it with patience? But if when you **do what is right** and **suffer for it** you **patiently (meekly) endure it**, this finds favor with God. [21] For you have been called for this purpose (*to patiently endure ill-treatment*), since Christ also suffered (*by patiently enduring ill-treatment*) for you, leaving you an example (*of meekness in the face of ill-treatment*) for you to follow in His steps, [22] Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; [23] and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.”
- a. Jesus set the example of **not resisting** the evil people who were seeking to do Him great harm. And notice, instead of resisting, He put Himself and His well-being into God’s hands.
 - b. In other words, rather than fighting back, or becoming verbally abusive, or threatening those who were mistreating Him, He trusted God to bring about justice, to right the wrongs, to be His security, to protect His well-being, and to ultimately bring good out of an unjust, cruel, and painful situation – which God did!
 - c. The reality is, when most of us would have tossed meekness aside to protect ourselves, or at least to verbally revile those who were mistreating us, Jesus remained calm, gentle, and tender.
 - d. And we see His gentleness and tenderness at the height of His suffering when He appealed to God to forgive those who were mistreating Him, because they did not know what they were doing.
5. Now you may be thinking:
- a. “That was Jesus, and we are not Jesus. He was perfect, and we are imperfect. Besides, His purpose in coming to earth was to suffer and die in order to pay the penalty for our sin. So of course, He remained meek in the face of cruel and unjust treatment – it was what He had to do to accomplish His purpose for being here.”
 - b. Or you may be thinking: “being meek sounds really spiritual, but it’s not realistic, because it leaves us vulnerable to mistreatment.”
6. Sadly, the meekness spoken of here in **Matthew 5:5**, and exemplified by Jesus, is treated with disdain by non-Christians and as impractical by many Christians.
- a. But **why**? For the sake of self-preservation, or for the sake of not having to endure what we shouldn’t have to endure.
 - b. Think about it: when you have done or are doing what is good and right, and someone is relentless in making you suffer for it **or** in spite of it, responding with meekness leaves you vulnerable to their mistreatment, injustice, or even cruelty – like Jesus experienced.

- C. So why would God tell us to be meek, and add, we will be happy for it, if meekness exposes us to injustice, pain, loss, and even cruelty?
1. For the sake of love.
 - a. For the sake of showing that love does no harm to anyone, for any reason – which is why it should be the way for all of us.
 - b. And for the sake of showing that the love expressed by meekness cannot be deterred or stamped out by unkindness, selfishness, hatred, hostility, or even cruel persecution.
 2. But meekness is not just for the sake of love, it is also for the sake of righteousness.
 - a. For the sake of showing the world that God and His people do what is right and just – to **all** people, and in **all** situations.
 - b. And for the sake of doing what we can to keep at least a spark of decency and justice alive when so many have abandoned such things for personal gain or to promote their own cause.
 3. Think about this: every bit of love and righteousness – in its various forms – that is put into our world makes our world a better place, that is, more like God intended it to be. In contrast, every bit of selfishness, sin, and evil that is put into our world makes our world a worse place.
 - a. Every ounce of evil, everything that God calls sin, everything that falls short of love, everything that is of a selfish, unkind, disrespectful, discriminatory, unjust, immoral, angry, hostile, evil-for-evil, vengeful, relationship damaging nature – that gets put into a situation, makes that situation and our world worse.
 - b. And when I say such things make our world worse, I am including our homes, our neighborhood, our workplace, and our nation.
 - c. However, when we respond to the people mistreating us with meekness, that is, with love and righteousness, we are putting good into a bad situation, and making our world a better place.
 4. As God’s people, should we not want to join Him in making our world a better place, in putting good into our world instead of evil – even though people around us mistreat us for some personal gain, and some even seek to do us harm?
 - a. Was it not Jesus – the One who unjustly suffered at the hands of evil men for our salvation – who said, “[God] causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous?” (**Matthew 5:45b**)
 - b. God’s way is to keep putting good into our world in spite of there being so many people doing evil things to Him and those He loves. And we are called to join Him in this great work.

5. Beyond wanting to join God in putting good into our world, should we not also want our response to selfish and sinful people to make God look more like He really is, and make God's people look more like they ought?
 6. Jesus said that we are the light of the world. Therefore, we are to let our "light shine before men in such a way that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven."
 7. It is this same Jesus who is speaking to us about meekness. And though we will be richly rewarded for our meekness, we have the privilege – through meekness – to make God and God's people look good when confronted by evil people seeking to do us harm.
 8. However, if you can escape from those seeking to unjustly harm you without putting evil into the situation, then do so. But if you can't, choose meekness, choose love and righteousness over self-protection, over returning evil for evil, and over revenge. In other words, choose to do no wrong.
- D. There is a current event that clearly shows how fighting evil with evil and seeking revenge makes our world worse.
1. I'm speaking of the Israeli / Palestinian (Hamas) conflict. Though this conflict began October 7, 2023, its roots go back many years, and because of that, who struck first isn't as important as what each side has done and continues to do to inflict suffering and do great harm to the other side.
 2. It is obvious to me that both sides believe in using what power they have to either hurt or subdue the other side. Both sides believe in revenge. Both sides have extremists who want to drive out or annihilate the other side. And though Israel has more power and means to do harm, the Palestinians have done what they could to hurt Israel.
 3. In this current conflict, the reported (*though unverified*) number of Palestinians killed for every Israeli killed is approximately 15 to 1. The damage done to housing and infrastructure is massive in the Palestinian regions, while it is far less in Israel.
 4. People on both sides have lost family members, friends, and neighbors. Women and children have been killed or wounded. Some children, young and old, have lost both parents. And whether Palestinian or Israeli, each feels the death or harm done to loved ones, the loss of possessions, and the destruction of their homes – and not just in the moment, they will feel it for years to come.

5. So let me ask, has the behavior of either side made that area of the world a better place, or a worse place? Has it decreased the desire for revenge, or fed it? Has it modeled, and therefore encouraged meekness, love, and goodness, or is it modeled and therefore encouraged hatred, revenge, and evil? Will the young men who lost fathers, mothers, siblings, wives, possessions, and housing, forget what was done and seek peace, or will they remember and find a time and way to get even?
- E. We may never experience what Jesus endured, or have to deal with the atrocities inflicted by both sides in the middle east.
1. However, we are often tempted – even in our own homes – to use unloving, unrighteous, and therefore angry, unjust, controlling, and even cruel tactics to resist those who refuse to give up some selfish way, or who willingly take advantage of us, or who refuse to change something they know is unkind or clearly unfair.
 2. How do you handle these kinds of temptations? By nature, we are prone to fight fire with fire, to respond in unloving and unjust ways to unloving and unjust treatment.
 3. We are prone to elevate our happiness and well-being above love and righteousness. In fact, we are prone to believe it is acceptable, when necessary, to use unloving and unrighteous means to resist unloving and unrighteous treatment. However, this path puts evil into our homes, workplace, and world, rather than good.
 4. Do you want what God wants for your home, workplace, neighborhood, and world? Do you want to put good into these places, and in so doing make them better, or do you want to fight to make your life better and in so doing make those places worse?

III. Conclusion

- A. There is nothing wrong with wanting to protect yourself and those you love from meanness, injustice, cruelty, and persecution. But it is horribly wrong to add evil to our world by responding in ungodly ways to those who selfishly, unjustly, and even cruelly mistreat us.
- B. **Romans 13:10**, “Love does no wrong to a neighbor (*which includes those who seek to do us harm*); therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” And God gave the law to promote and protect the good of all.
- C. May we, as God’s people, want God’s honor to be upheld, God’s way to be reinforced, and good put into our world – be it ever so small, or even seemingly wasted given the amount of evil that surrounds us.