

*Bind us together.* A sermon preached at St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC on March 4, 2018 by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Lessons; PSALM 15

I CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

MATTHEW 5:5

The third of the Beatitudes must have come as a jaw dropper to Jesus' first listeners.

For they lived under Roman military occupation – an occupation not known for kindness and gentle, fair treatment of the places they occupied or the people in those places.

As well, the religious leadership in Jesus' time had ossified or stultified into enforcing the rules, Keeping the Law – and much of this law – particularly those related in cleanliness was well-nigh impossible in a dusty country not filled with an overabundance of water.

Further though the people prayed for Messiah who would drive the hated Romans out – the people thought Messiah would do this by conquest and military power.

Yet here in vs 5- Jesus turns the world's view, The culture's givens upside down

**Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth**

Like Jesus' first listeners I suggest even now there may be a bit of a jaw dropping reaction to the third of the Beatitudes

Meek? We conclude Jesus is asking us followers to be doormats to the world's feet

He's calling us to be wimps

Meek? – Come on Jesus – are you having yet another bad day

Meek? I'll be steamrollered by the aggressive  
You can't run a business on the basis of being meek  
You're not going to get ahead in the world by being meek

This is a push, push, push world...meek...reality check Jesus

Meekness...it's, it's...its unnatural today Jesus!

EXACTLY

Jesus would way – it's unnatural by the world's voices and definitions

But remember – Jesus' followers are called to live in, but not be OF the world

Our values as followers of Jesus, our perceptions, viewpoints, attitudes, and perspectives are to be Kingdom of God based

Yes, okay Jesus – but to say **blessed are the meek**  
To promise that **they will inherit the earth.**

What are we missing might Jesus' first listeners say?

What are WE missing today?

Meekness as Jesus saw it was not indolence,  
or laziness

Meekness is not flabbiness in attitudes.

Nor does meekness mean niceness.

Certainly there are people who have nice  
dispositions and come by it naturally – but that is  
not meekness as Jesus sees it

Still less does meekness mean a spirit of  
compromise or peace at any price in all situations.  
I have seen too many people becoming doormats to  
the world's feet because they say they are being  
meek – just like Jesus taught.

Stuff and nonsense – you are just caving in.

You are saying – anything to avoid a disagreement

Let's all be nice and joyful and happy.

That sort of definition of meekness ruined the  
credibility of British Prime Minister Neville

Chamberlain in the months leading up to WWII.

If Hitler had been playing by the same rules as

Chamberlain, which he certainly wasn't – then  
appeasement might have worked

But Hitler was a bully – pure and simple –

*Compromising with a bully is not meekness as defined by  
Jesus.*

Well, if this is what meekness is not, then to  
what is Jesus calling us when he says

**Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the  
earth**

Before we seek to answer that question, a reminder about this and all the Beatitudes, In fact a reminder that holds for all the commands of Jesus.

*To practice each and every command of Jesus does not come naturally.*

*They are learned skills and empowered by God's Holy Spirit.*

*From the get go in the Christian life – we cannot convert people; make them decide to follow Jesus.*

*Only the Holy Spirit can and does that.*

*We can prepare the person...but we do not convert.*

In the same way, meekness comes as a gift from the Spirit.

Meekness is learned by observation of the behavior of other Christians.

There is a story told about Chuck Norris (actor and martial arts expert) of an earlier generation.

Norris is also a Christian and makes no secret about it.

Well, Norris had just finished a long day of shooting in a Texas town and had gone to get some dinner.

While he was enjoying his meal, a loud and obnoxious man of great girth and many tattoos came up to him and said in a nasty and threatening way, "you're sittin' in my booth".

Norris did not like the man's tone, but he just picked up his plate and coffee cup and moved to another booth,

Careful not to make any unintentional threatening or challenging moves.

Not easy given the man's girth.

And of course, Big boy had friends around him – sort of friends you ask yourself – I wonder which one has the brain today?

A few minutes later, the same man came over to Norris's booth.

But his tone and demeanor had changed dramatically.

In an almost sheepish way he said to Chuck Norris, Excuse me; you're Chuck Norris aren't you?"

Norris calmly replied-"yes I am."

Big boy said – "A few minutes ago, you could have dropped me and my friends without breaking a sweat, but you didn't? Why?"

Norris invited Big Boy to sit down which he did and proceeded to talk with him

When Norris finished his meal, they shook hands – both were smiling.

Norris had made a friend of the man.

Norris' reaction to Big boy is an illustration of *meekness – strength submitted to the control of God and His will*

It is the opposite of arrogance, pride, ego and self-exaltation.

Another story, because as I said moments ago, we learn meekness as it is shown in the lives of other believers.

The Beatitudes were not meant by Jesus to be just nice thoughts put on a calligraphy hanging, And then we can behave with others as we choose.

No, Jesus meant us to put all of his commands and calls to change as guidelines to practice in daily life around and with other people and ourselves.

This story concerns General Robert E. Lee (Commander of the Army of the Confederacy during the American Civil War and a Christian)

It is a story about one man's experience with General Lee following the battle of Gettysburgh.

Gettysburg was a particularly bloody battle in a war that saw too much carnage.

One of the union (northern) casualties was a soldier who already hated the Confederacy – and that was before his leg was shattered by a musket ball in the early stages of the battle.

He lay, bandaged, but helpless on the battlefield near Seminary Ridge where he could see the last great push of the Confederates – Picket's Charge – fail and General Lee's forces forced to retreat.

As the Confederates retreated, it so happened that General Lee himself and his officers rode right past the wounded man.

Although he was weakened from the loss of blood from his leg injury.

The man was so bitter that he looked General Lee right in the eyes, managed to raise his hands and yell "Hurrah for the Union!"

Lee suddenly stopped his horse,  
Dismounted and came over to the man

The man said later, that he thought his life was over

But instead he said that Lee looked at him with such a sad expression in his face that it took all the fear from him.

Lee took the man's hand and said. "My son, I hope you will soon be well."

The soldier did of course recover but lived the rest of his life with a painful limp. He later wrote, "If I live for a 1000 years I shall never forget the expression on General Lee's face

There the General was – defeated, returning from a field of battle that had cost him and his cause almost their last hope

And yet he stopped to say words like that to a wounded soldier – an enemy – he did not even know.

And I had taunted him

As soon as the general left me. I cried myself to sleep there on that bloody ground!"

So often, people just do not do what Robert E. Lee did that day

Even really good people – like many of us here –  
when we're mistreated, our friends tell us how bad  
those people are

And how we are certainly justified in getting them  
back

And we make catty or snide remarks and  
sometimes get our revenge

That's just what some really good people do! Yes??

But what General Lee did cut this man to the  
core and softened his hardened heart

This I believe is *meekness in practice*.

Robert E. Lee was not powerless there that day – he  
could have himself shot the man or had him shot

But he restrained his power

He did not take things into his own hands – an  
action which rarely brings good results by the way!

Lee entrusted Himself to God and did what  
was right – even in the face of cruel taunting – my  
observation and not part of the Union soldier's  
story.

But where would such restraint come on that day  
except from the presence and power of God at work  
in Lee's life?

We all know of Another who behaved like Lee in a  
time of taunting and insults – Jesus.

If you and I with the help and guidance of God  
would live like Jesus in front of people like that



taunting soldier – *it would have a powerful effect in the hearts of those around us.*

And there is so much residual anger, frustration, criticism and negativism around us isn't there.

Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter (1615-1691) who still figures largely in the history of the Christian church wrote “

People would sooner believe that the gospel is from heaven, if they saw more such effects of it, upon the hearts and lives of those who  
 profess it”

That is still ever so accurate isn't it?

Who then are the meek of vs 5

They are those who have a deep confidence that God is for them and not against them

They truly commit their way to God

*Nothing in my hand I bring,  
 Simply to the cross I cling...*

They are those who are able to be quiet before God and wait for him.

That is not a synonym for indolence or laziness  
 Waiting for God is really difficult most of the time.  
 How often do we say to God – let's get on with it...and he says Wait, not yet!

Meekness also means you are free of the frenzy that is so around us

The meek do not fret over the wicked – all things are under God’s sovereign hands

So, obstacles and opponents of this life do not produce the kind of bitterness and anger and fretfulness with the meek as Jesus understands it,

*Meekness begins and ends with God.*

And so how do we cultivate this meekness to which we are called by Jesus?

*Practice it in little ways*

- Speak as little as possible about yourself.
- Mind your own business, rather than meddle in others’ affairs. – there is a difference between being concerned and meddling. Therefore stop rationalizing meddling as concern – you know very well the difference!
- Avoid curiosity that leads to gossip
- Accept contradiction and correction graciously – remember in some cases you may indeed be wrong!
- Be kind and gentle when provoked
- Take the high road – avoid lashing out.

One of the great things about social media is instant communication

One of the dark things about social media is instant communication.

When provoked or slighted we want to vent  
 immediately don't we  
 Nothing wrong with venting – provided that we do  
 it in the right way at the right time to the right  
 people.

Too often though I have seen and received texts  
 from people that ought never to have been sent  
 They are pure vitriol and caustic.  
 They only succeed in ratcheting up bad feelings.  
 With the push of a send button, friendships and co-  
 operative working situations regretfully end.  
 For what often happens is that those nasty texts are  
 forwarded to others – intentionally or not and the  
 heat is really turned up! – reply, reply to all?  
 I often wonder, did the individuals ever do a face to  
 face with each other or with a mediator before they  
 started texting to one another?

I suspect in many cases, the answer is no!  
*Cultivate meekness by choosing to always exalt God and  
 give him credit – rather than taking the credit for  
 yourself.*

*Choose to honour others before you seek to honour  
 yourself.*

I for one really do believe that God is working  
 within each of our lives right now to make us the  
 people he so eagerly wants us to be.

St. Paul to the Romans – chapter 8 verse

**We know that all things work together for good  
and for those who love God who are called  
according to his purpose.**

Presently as we again mark Jesus' actions in an  
Upper Room with his disciples,  
Think on the question – how shall you respond to  
what Jesus has done for you first and already?