

## Blessed are the Meek

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### Introduction

I remember receiving a letter when I was in second grade. The letter came from my local township. It came just before Easter. The letter said there was going to be a big Easter Egg hunt in a nearby park. Second graders love Easter Egg hunts, and I was no exception.



Easter egg hunts are a very European tradition, although they have been later picked up by other parts of the world. Centuries ago, people who didn't live in big cities had to go out into the forests to hunt and gather food. In the spring, a lot of birds lay their eggs for the season. So, it was a good time to run around the woods looking for eggs. At some point, our farming techniques became so good that we could find all the eggs we needed at the local market. But the tradition continued. At Easter time, people would buy eggs, decorate them, and hide them in a field. You could then have fun telling children to look for them.

OK. Back to the local Easter Egg hunt of my childhood. The letter said that there would be prizes for this event. For example, there would be a prize for the kid who found the most eggs. Other prizes could be found in certain special eggs hidden with the rest. These were different colors. One in particular was the "golden" egg. That one caught my eye.



Now, if you're an adult listening to this, you're probably guessing that the colored eggs were plastic. They had a little something inside like a piece of candy. The "golden egg" might have something inside like a small gift certificate to a local store. However, I wasn't an adult. I was in second grade. When I heard "gold", I thought, "gold". This egg would have untold worth. It would be my ticket to a better life. ***And, it was going to be mine.***

So, that Saturday, my family went to the big event. I remember the day well. It was a beautiful spring day. The sky was a deep blue, like the kind you

see in post cards. The field was full of fresh spring grass. And, there were more kids there than I could count.

A quick note before we move on: If you ever want to sponsor an Easter Egg hunt, here's how you do it. You have different groups, based on age. You have one area for small children. You put lot of eggs in places that are easy to find. You don't let the big kids in that area. Then, you have other areas for the bigger kids, depending on age. If you don't do that, the little kids get plowed over by the bigger kids, and the little kids don't get anything.

The people who organized this event didn't know that. An large number of children of all ages lined up at the edge of the field, and someone blew a whistle. And sure enough, the big kids raced off, leaving me in the dust. Even though I ran as hard as I could, I couldn't keep up. I saw kid after kid find eggs and pick them before I could get there. I later realized that I was lucky I was only outrun by the kids. If two big kids found an egg at the same time, let's say there was some force exerted. The bigger kid usually won, and it wasn't always pretty.

In second grade, you're just learning about math. But, if you make it to second grade, you can count. Certainly, you can count to zero. That's how many eggs I got that day. Forget the golden egg, I didn't even get a boiled egg.

Now, I'm not sharing this story because I want people to say, "oh, that poor little boy". When I got bigger, I learned how to compete and keep up. Here's the reason I'm telling this story: Some people would say that the Easter Egg hunt I just described is like life. The world is like a big field full of stuff. Some of it we need to survive. Some of it we want to have to be happy. It feels like we run and run and run. Sometimes we get what we're running after – sometimes not. Sometimes it feels like someone else gets there first. Sometimes, they get there because they ran faster. Sometimes, we get there at the same time, and we get muscled out.

Is that how the world works? Is that all there is?

Review: We're studying the Gospel according to Matthew. Matthew says in his book that early in his ministry, Jesus called together his closest followers. He took them up on a mountainside and began to share with them his manifesto, the things a disciple needs to know to follow Jesus. This manifesto was very radical. It was very unlike the way that the world teaches us to approach life.

The manifesto starts with what many call "The Beatitudes". The Beatitudes are composed of eight statements that all start with the word "Blessed". The word means, "having received a good thing", "happy", "to be congratulated", "To be envied", or "To have arrived in a good place.

Let's read:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:3-5)

“Blessed are the Meek”. What did Jesus mean by that? To find out, we need to look at a few things.

Let’s dig in.

## **I. The reward for Meekness**

First, we need to see our motivation. Is there a reward for being meek? We just heard Jesus say, “Blessed are the meek...” Why? “...for they will inherit the earth”. So, whatever being meek means, people who have this quality will be rewarded with “the earth”. Wow! That’s a lot. I had trouble getting an Easter egg.

The way they’ll get the earth is important. They will “inherit” the earth. The word we translate as “inherit” is just like our English word. When someone passes away, they leave their possessions to someone else. Normally, possessions go to people that the deceased person cares about. Family and friends.

Here’s an important point: When you inherit something, it’s **given** to you. You don’t normally have to work for it. That’s because the possessions belong to the giver. He or she can do whatever they like with what belongs to them.

So, people who are “meek” will receive a great reward. They will be given the earth. That gives us a little motivation, doesn’t it? So, whatever this business of being meek is, we want to find out. Let’s do that. Next, we’ll ask: What does the word “meek” mean?

## **II. The meaning of the word “Meek”**

The word that we translate as “meek” is used in several ways in the ancient world.

### **A. Refreshing**

Sometimes, it’s used to mean “refreshing”. Imagine that it’s a hot day, and you don’t have air conditioning. You’re sitting in your home sweating. You feel tired just thinking about doing something in that kind of heat. So, you decide to take a step outside. When you do, you feel a gentle, cool breeze. All of a sudden, you feel refreshed. The word that we translate as “meek” is sometimes used this way.

## B. Healing

At other times, the word can mean “healing”. Image that you develop a bad rash on your hand. It’s itchy. It burns. But there’s good news: Someone recommends a special medicine. It’s in liquid form. It’s kept in the refrigerator, so it’s cool. You pour it onto your hand. Right away, you hand stops itching. It stops burning. The rash can start to heal. That’s another way this word is used.

## C. Tame, Under Control

Here’s an interesting one. This word is sometimes used for domesticated animals. Tame animals. This one is hard for us to imagine. When we see horses, we see animals that have been on farms for generations. Back in ancient days, horses might still wander around free. So, imagine a stallion in a field. It’s leaping and running. It’s strong – you don’t want to get too close. This animal is so strong that if you’re on the wrong end of it when it bucks, you could get hurt. But somehow, a human captures the animal. The human then goes on to tame it. From there, the horse serves its owner. That’s another way this word is used. We’ll come back to that one in a minute.

## D. Humble and Gentle

So, with all this in mind, the word is sometimes used for people. When that happens, the word takes on the idea of being humble or gentle. Some English translations will use those words. Once again, we have a complex word that brings up a number of images. So, for our discussion, let’s stick with the word that the NIV uses, “Meek”.

## E. What it doesn’t mean

Before we move on, we have to mention what the word *doesn’t* mean. Remember that picture of the horse that has become tame? A horse is a very strong animal. So, the word that we translate as “Meek” doesn’t mean “weak”. Horses aren’t weak. They just choose to use their strength to serve their master. Because of this image, some people say that meekness is, “power under control”. Let me add to that. Let’s say that we can describe meekness is “power in the service of others”.

Maybe we can understand this concept even better if we look at some descriptions of meekness.

## II. Descriptions of Meekness

First, we have to look at some negative examples. The opposite of meekness is pride, arrogance and oppression. This would be power in the service of self. The symbol of those qualities is the fist.

Israel, at the time of Christ, had been invaded by the Romans. The Romans were powerful. And they weren't just powerful, they had the best technology of the day. They had the best weapons. They had the best armor. Those weapons and that armor were wielded by disciplined soldiers who believed in the might and power of the Roman Empire. When any individual fought with a Roman soldier, the Roman won. Period. So, the Romans conquered the region of the Mediterranean Sea at the time of Christ. The Egyptians and the Greeks were both at one time powerful and feared nations. But they both fell before the Romans. Once they conquered a nation, the Romans were able to take what they wanted. And they did. They were cruel and oppressive.

The Jewish nation had fallen, too. They could only watch as Roman legions marched through. They had their hard-earned money taken through high rates of taxation and dared not protest Roman tyranny. Protestors could be beaten on sight, or in the worst cases, they would suffer horrible punishments like crucifixion. So, you can imagine that the Romans as a group were hated by the Jewish nation.

If you were to ask any Roman who would possess the earth, it was the Romans! Anything they didn't currently control they would take by force someday. The earth would someday be conquered. The key was power - Power in the service of self.

So, if you were to ask most residents of ancient Israel who would possess the Earth, they would probably say, "the powerful". So, the Messiah was thought to be someone who would come in power. He would lead the Hebrews in a revolution. He would help the Hebrew people take revenge for the wrongs done against them.

But Jesus said something different. The world would someday go to the meek.

Actually, this wasn't different at all. Recall that the Hebrew people who lived in Israel were familiar with the book of Psalms. It was their hymnbook. They used it to sing whenever they worshipped. Here's one of those Psalms: Psalm 37.

1 Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong;  
2 for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.  
(Psalm 37:1-2)

So, Psalm 37 starts by saying that people shouldn't sit around being confused and worried when they see evil. The evil will lose someday. As we study the whole Scriptures, we learn it's not that we do nothing in the face of evil. It's just a question of where we start.

People who want to follow God focus on something else. Here it is:

3 Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

We are told to do good. Instead of focusing first on other people who do evil, we are to look at ourselves. We are to make sure that we're doing the right thing before we worry about others.

4 Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

So, when we look at ourselves to make sure we're doing the right thing, we don't do it with in a grudging way. We take delight in the Lord. We're told he'll give us the desires of our heart. Some people ask, "does that mean, if I want a sport car, God will give it to me?" Many commentators say, "no". If we delight in the Lord, we tend to want to do the right thing. We do the right thing because God places the desire in our heart.

Is this something I can do myself? No! We need God's help.

5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this:

6 He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

Then we ask: How does this happen?

7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Those who commit their ways to the Lord know that they can calm down. They start to develop patience. They wait for the Lord. They learn to let go when they are wronged. They learn to let go when they see people succeeding with evil schemes.

Now, this is important:

8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

When you sit around obsessing about the wrong things that others do, you get angry. Being angry feels powerful, but it brings with it lots of problems. One of the big ones being that being angry makes you easy to manipulate. It makes it easy to form your fingers into a fist. Anger makes you think about revenge. Revenge has a funny way of hurting us and innocent people before it hurts anyone else.

Next, know that God is in control.

9 For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.

So, God tells us to be patient. Hang in.

10 A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found.

And look at this:

11 But the meek will inherit the land.

That phrase “the land” is like the new testament phrase “the earth’.

So, Jesus wasn’t saying anything new. He was simply reminding his friends about what they sang many times in their worship services.

Arrogant, prideful people try to use power to meet their own goals. They conquer, they take, they oppress. They’re angry and seek to take revenge when they’re wronged.

Meek people have qualities like faith in God. They commit their ways to God. They look first to themselves to make sure they’re doing the right thing before they look at the wrongs of others. They wait quietly for God to help them. When they’re around, they’re like a gentle breeze, a healing medicine. They’re like the beautiful stallion that uses its power to serve its master.

### **III. The Source of the problem**

Why do we need to be reminded of the value of meekness? Where does this problem come from? Once again, we head back to the earliest days of mankind. We need to look again at the Fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden.

I know I do this a lot. One day, I’ll just walk into the pulpit and say something like “Let’s all just go home and memorize Genesis 3 this week.” But not today.

A quick reminder about Genesis 3: In the opening chapters of Genesis, God creates the heavens and the earth. He makes the first humans, Adam and Eve, rulers over the earth. Imagine that. The earth was one big perfect paradise. All the food Adam and Eve needed was hanging off the trees. All the animals got along. In fact, everyone and everything got along. The whole universe worked in perfect harmony.

There was just one rule. One. Don’t eat from that tree in the middle of the garden. If they could just follow one rule, Adam and Eve could live forever as rulers in paradise. They could receive the whole earth as a gift from a loving Creator.

But the Serpent comes in and says the following:

“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,...” (Genesis 3:5)

For now, we don't need to read further. The Serpent said that Adam and Eve could be “like God”. The funny part was, God always intended for them to be like him. To be like him in character - Like him in things like Humility, Wisdom, Faith, and Love. Humility is the thing we focus on today. Humility involves putting others first - Serving others. God did this: He created a whole universe and committed himself to serving it. If they were like him in those ways, they could enjoy not just the things God created. They could enjoy him.

But they would never be *him*. God is always God. He is the creator. He is the owner of all things. Humans are always the created ones who enjoy the fact that God graciously allows us to use the things that he has created.

If Adam and Eve had just let God be God, and if they could have been content to be who they were, the created ones, they could have had everything God created, the whole world, and they could have had him as their friend.

But they didn't want to be like God in the ways God intended. ***They wanted to be like him in his power.*** They let themselves imagine that they were better than God, that they were smarter. So, they reached into the tree to steal the fruit, thinking they were stealing God's power. Instead of obtaining God's power, they lost everything. Immediately, they realized they were just naked, tiny creatures. They lost their friendship with God, and they lost the planet he had given them.

Is it possible to get the planet back? Yes! And Jesus tells us, one of the pieces to the puzzle is this thing called meekness. So, let's see how this all applies to us.

## **V. How This Applies to Us**

Jesus started his Manifesto by saying that the spiritually poor are blest. To be a disciple of Jesus, you must start by recognizing that you have disobeyed God, and that makes you spiritually bankrupt before God. There is no way to fix the problem we have created through our sin. We need God's help.

Next, Jesus said that people who mourn are blessed. We learned that this means, not only do we recognize that we have sinned, but that we deeply regret our sin. We mourn about it. When we mourn about our sin, we have the motivation to repent, to turn away from our sin.

In this session, we've been reminded of the reason for our sin. Adam and Eve thought they were better than God. So, they tried to be God. We too, think we're better than God. Is there a

better explanation for why we disobey? We think God doesn't know what he's doing. We think we'll get away with disobedience.

That's why God blesses people who are meek. Meek people are humble: they know that God is God, and they are the created ones. They realize that they have no power without him, so they put their trust in him. They wait for him. They develop qualities like patience. They know how to calm down. They concern themselves first and foremost with the condition of their own hearts, rather than fretting about the hearts of others. They concern themselves with their own actions, rather than obsessing about the evil of others. They know that they can do none of these things without God's help.

Jesus said that it's people like this, people who are meek, who will inherit the earth. Someday, it will be given to them.

### ***The hard part.***

What about you? Now, please understand: If you feel that you fall short in any of these areas, God is there to forgive, and to help. So, let's ask: Do any of these things describe you?

We've said that meekness is like a gentle, cool breeze on a hot day. Are you like that? When people spend time with you, are they refreshed? Or, are you more like a hurricane, blowing people over when they don't do what you want?

We've said that meekness is like a healing ointment on a rash. When you spend time with people, do they feel healed? Or, is being around you like having sandpaper rubbed on a wound?

Being meek is like a wild horse who has been tamed. It lives to serve its master. It uses its strength and power to serve others. Are you like that? Do you happily obey God? Do you happily serve others? Or, do you buck like a wild animal in the wilderness? When God calls to you, do you delay and make excuses? Or worse, do you openly rebel? When you do that, you're essentially saying you don't think God knows what he's doing. You're saying that you think you're better than God.

Jesus says that the meek are blessed. If these things aren't happening in your life, come to him. Ask him to help. He's not going to ask you to do anything he hasn't done. Here's what he says:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

All the qualities we've described are found in our Lord, Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said this about Jesus:

Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:  
Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!  
(Philippians 2:5-8)

Paul says that Jesus was equal with God. He had all the power of God. But he didn't use his power for himself. He used his power for others. He humbled himself. Jesus, who was meek, became a servant. He was obedient to the point of dying for you on a cross.

And note one last time: Jesus certainly wasn't weak. For example, at one point he used force to clean out the temple. He drove out money-changers and thieves with a whip. This can be a complex concept, and we'll see more about this in coming sessions. Jesus had great power – he just used it for his Father and others. That's the example we must learn to follow.

## Conclusion

We started with a story of an Easter Egg hunt that went bad. I went to that event planning on using all my resources and all my power for my own benefit. I wanted the golden egg. I went away with nothing. I was outrun, overpowered, and outsmarted by bigger kids. I foolishly played their game.

But you know something? At one point during all the running, I stopped to take a breath. I looked over and saw a little girl. She was much younger than me. I think she had only recently learned to walk. What was she doing out in the field? ***It turns out, she was there with her father.***

As everyone was getting ready to begin, this little girl looked up at her father. He held out his hand and said, "honey, let's go look for some Easter eggs". She happily took his hand. After all the other kids ran off, the father walked out into the field with his daughter. He patiently walked no faster than his little girl could go.

You know what? When big kids go running out into a field excitedly looking for eggs, they miss some. In fact, they miss a lot. They're running too fast to see everything. I was trying to keep up, so I missed a lot, too. When I looked over, the man said, "look honey, here's an egg". He pointed to a spot that all the big kids had overlooked, and the little girl happily picked up an egg. She beamed with delight.

I don't know how many eggs she got that day, but whatever she got, she was happy. I don't know which kid got the most eggs that day, but I know which kid was the happiest. It was that little girl.

The world sometimes feels like that Easter egg hunt. We run and run and run, and it never seems like we run fast enough. But on those days, if we're willing to stop and look up, we'll see that our Father in heaven reaches his hand to us. He offers to help. In order to receive that help, we need to be meek. We need to realize that God is God, and that we are the created ones. We need to be willing to receive his help.

If we will do that, Jesus gives us a promise: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

