

ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY

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Scripture: Mt. 5:5

“Kingdom Living (part 4): Blessed Are the Meek?”

THE BEATITUDES REVISITED

We are now in the church season of Advent; a season in which we not only look forward to the celebration of Christmas, but during which we also anticipate Christ’s Second Coming. And while there will be great persecution, suffering, wars and even signs in the heavens before our Lord’s return; it is not something to be feared by the believer. For Christ is not only coming back to judge the world, He is returning to save His people and to establish His Kingdom forever. And if there is one thing that is true about God’s Kingdom it is that it will be a continual state of blessedness.

We have been doing a series entitled “*Kingdom Living: Unlocking the Keys to God’s Supernatural Blessing.*” And we have seen how Jesus gives us the keys to being blessed by God. He does so at the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew chapter 5**. These keys are known as the Beatitudes. The word, “beatitude” is taken from the Latin word, “*beatitudo*,” which means blessed. In the Greek, the word is “*makarias*.” In fact, I am told that the Greeks even nicknamed an island *makarias*; the island we know today as Crete. Now if you were to travel to Crete, you would find that it is a barren and rocky island. However, in the ancient world it was an island that had everything one needed (like Hawaii today). It was filled with lush vegetation and fresh water; it had enough food and grain, even enough to export. It was “blessed” because it had everything you needed to live. Likewise, when we are blessed by God it means that we have everything we need to live in this life and in the life to come.

And one of the things you’ll quickly notice about being blessed by God is that it is not based on what you have materially or what you do. It is grounded in who you are. God is concerned about character. He is not concerned about outside appearance or the stuff of this world. That’s why we’re told in the Scriptures that God judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The truth is when you die, you leave all that you have and all that you’re doing, and the only thing you’ll take with you is all that you are.

That’s why it is more important to seek blessedness than happiness. Sometimes translators translate “blessed” in the Bible as “happy.” But I’ve never liked that translation. Happiness is only one aspect of blessedness. In fact, I don’t know if you’ve ever noticed but many people that search for happiness never find it. Why? You’ll never find happiness simply by seeking after it. The truth is happiness is something you’ll stumble over when you’re seeking blessedness. And blessedness is what you’ll find when you get right with God, when you follow the Lord.

“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK”

That’s what Jesus is talking about in the Beatitudes. He first says, “***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.***” Recall from our previous sermons that this is admitting our spiritual bankruptcy before God; admitting that we are nothing without God. Then Jesus says, “***Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.***” That means being broken over our sin. And then Jesus says, “***Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.***” Wow, have you ever thought about that? Inherit the earth? Talk about an inheritance. So who are these meek?

Well, first I think it is important to note that the world would never say, “***Blessed are the meek.***” The world would say, “Blessed is the mighty man, the muscle man, the macho man, the money man!” The world would never say, “Blessed is the meek man.” Why is that? Because people tend to think of meekness as

weakness. In fact, if you look up in Webster’s Dictionary you’ll find that a secondary definition for “meek” is “timid.” But that’s not the primary meaning of the word and it is certainly not what it means in the Scriptures.

MEEKNESS IS NOT WEAKNESS

In other words, meekness is NOT weakness. Our Lord said in **Mt. 11:28-29**, *“Come to Me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

What’s Jesus saying? The same word, “*praus*” (“meek” in the Greek) that is used in Mt. 5:5, is used here. So our Lord is saying that He is meek! Now let me ask you, do you think Jesus was weak? The One who went into the wilderness and fasted for 40 days? The One who took some cords of rope and made a whip and drove the money changers out of the temple? The One who stood up against the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the scribes? Do you think Jesus was weak?

In fact, do you know who the Bible tells us was the meekest man on the earth before Jesus? Moses. The same man who stood up against the Pharaoh. The same man who led the children of Israel out their bondage in Egypt. Now do you think Moses was a weak man? He wasn’t a weak man, but he was a *meek* man. And yet, so many go around thinking that meekness is being a pushover or a wimp.

But that has nothing to do with meekness. To be “meek” literally means “to yield.” It has the idea of strength under control. Having the strength and the ability and the capacity, but controlling it. And I think the best illustration of meekness is a horse being broken. When a horse has been domesticated or when an ox is trained to bear the yoke, the proper term for that horse or ox is “meeked.” The animal has been broken and now it yields to the rider, it yields to the yoke. It is strength under control. The horse still has the same strength, the same drive, the same instincts, but now it has a bit and a bridle, and a there is a driver.

Now there are two other ways you can deal with an unbroken horse. First, you can just let the horse run wild. And we have that in the world, don’t we? The idea of self-assertion. Do your own thing. Don’t put any restraint on yourself. If you want to get drunk, get drunk, if you want to fight, fight, if you want to fornicate, fornicate. Don’t worry about any self-restraint. And the devil will take the reigns and he’ll have a field day. And we can see all the damage being done by watching the news or just looking at the lives of some of the people around us. And there is nothing worse than parents who don’t restrain their children. For if a child doesn’t respect his or her parents, there will be no respect on the playground, in the school, at work or in public.

But then there’s another way you can deal with a horse. While some want to let the horses run wild, there are those who want to cripple the horse, so he can’t run at all. And the clearest expression of this response is found in Buddhism. Buddhism is a philosophy. Buddhism teaches that the problem in our world is desire. The problem is that we have certain desires and we get frustrated when those desires are not met. So the answer to this problem is to simply negate all your desires. And so you go about doing things that can separate yourself from all your desires until you come to the place where you don’t desire anything so you will never be disappointed. And then you will come to a state they call “Nirvana.” Well, friends, that’s not Biblical Christianity. You don’t let the horse wild and you don’t cripple the horse. That’s no way to handle our desires.

God gave us our desires and He gave us our strengths. And He wants us to use those desires and strengths for His glory. And the only way that can happen is to let God energize and control the horse. Do you see a pattern here? We first recognize our bankruptcy; that shows our condition. Next we are broken over our sin; that shows our contrition. And then we are meeked. We are now controlled by God. We have a new master.

Listen to St. Paul in **Romans 6:19**: *“For as you have yielded your members to unrighteousness and lawlessness, even so NOW yield your members to righteousness and holiness.”* That means the same members,

the same eyes, the same ears and tongue. But now rather than using my tongue to curse, I use to my tongue to praise God. Instead of following my selfish ambitions, I seek to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the same strength, it's the same me, but now God is in control. God doesn't hobble the horse, he energizes the horse, He puts the bit on, the bridle on, the saddle on, and He does the riding. Blessed are those who have yielded.

HOW DOES ONE BECOME MEEK?

The truth is if you have never been broken, if you don't recognize your bankruptcy before God, you will never be meek. Meekness is the inner attitude and outward demonstration of someone who is bankrupt and broken before God. And meekness enables us to be the people God wants us to be. That's why *praus* (“meek”) is translated from the Greek also as “gentle,” “humble,” “considerate,” and “unassuming.”

Now if these character qualities are going to be evident in our lives then we need to do three things. First, we need to...

1) Submit to the Son of God. Turn the reigns over to him, stop trying and start trusting Jesus Christ.

Mt. 11:26 Jesus said, *“Come to ME all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

As noted earlier, an ox that has a yoke is meeked. So Jesus gives us a picture of two oxen side by side. And He says, “I want *you* to take *My yoke* upon you.” It is no longer only you, but you and Jesus. Now whenever the yoke is upon the oxen one of the two is the leader. Jesus is saying, “Let Me lead you.” And do you know what? It will fit right because God love us so much. But that doesn't mean it's going to be a cakewalk. It doesn't mean you won't pull or have to work. Jesus didn't say, “My yoke is lazy.” He said, “My yoke is easy.” There's still work to do. But God is right there leading the way and helping us accomplish it.

And realize that God will not force you to follow. I can't talk you into it. You have to choose. Jesus said, *“Take my yoke.”* Every one has to make a decision. Will you take the yoke or not? You can refuse if you wish and that is your privilege, but you will never be blessed unless you take Jesus' yoke. And the way we do that is submitting to Him. Now we not only must submit to the Son of God, we must also receive to the Word of God.

2) Receive the Word of God. **James 1:21:** *“Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.”*

What's James talking about here? Receiving the Word of God into our hearts. That is, let the Word of God be your control, let God's Word be your bridle and your bit. Now in the Greek there are two words that can be translated, “receive.” The first is a Greek word “*lambano*” which is sort of a self-prompted taking, reaching out, grasping. And that's how some people think they can learn the Bible that way. They say I'm going to study the Bible. You know they get a Bible, a Bible dictionary, and various study helps like a concordance and commentaries, and they sit down at their desk and they say I'm going to learn the Bible. Well, they're not going to learn the Bible. You might learn some facts about the Bible, but you aren't going to learn God's Word until you receive it with meekness, until you are ready to be taught. This often happens to many seminarians and professors and even priests. They might know all the facts and have snatched some truth, but they don't know the Word of God because they have not received it with humility.

Another word for receive, is “*dechomai*” – that's the word that's used here. It means “to welcome with humility,” not to take, but to welcome. Have you ever welcomed the Word? Have you ever sat down to study the Bible absolutely prepared to do everything it says? Not just parading the Word of God pass the judgment bar of

your mind, deciding what you think is right or wrong, or what you think is interesting. The Bible is not meant to be interesting it's meant to be disturbing! It's meant to change our thinking, to change our lives.

But not only are we to submit to the Son of God and receive His Word with humility, we must always...

3) **Be filled with the Spirit of God.** Did you know that “meekness” (also translated “gentleness” in **Gal. 5:21-22**) is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit? When we say Jesus put your yoke upon me, when we say I receive the Word with meekness, when we say to the Spirit work in me, the Holy Spirit will produce in us meekness. We don't produce the fruit, God does. But then we bear it!

OUR INHERITANCE

Now in closing, I want to talk about our inheritance. Jesus said, ***“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”*** What does that mean? It refers to now and the hereafter. How do we inherit the earth right now? We need to understand what we have in Christ. St. Paul tells us...

1 Cor. 3:21-23: ***“So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come – all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.”*** We're talking about inheriting the earth, all things.

2 Cor. 6:10: ***“As sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor (doesn't sound like you are inheriting the earth), yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.”***

You see it doesn't matter what you have, if you don't have blessedness, you can't enjoy the things of this world. For blessedness doesn't come in things. And then again it doesn't matter if you have nothing; if you *have* blessedness you have *all* things. It's a paradox, but it's the truth.

Now how does the devil come to us? First, the devil comes to us as a roaring lion to terrify us. He says, “If you don't follow me, I'll take everything from you.” And do you know what I say, “Devil, you can't take anything from me, because I don't have anything.” That's what the Word says – *“as having nothing.”* So how are you going to take something from me, when I have nothing!

The devil thinks, “Well, if I can't terrify you, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll come not as a roaring lion, I'll come as an angel light to entice.” And so the devil comes to us and says, “If you follow me, I will give you this and this and this.” And do you know what I say? “Devil, how are you going to give me anything, when I already have everything?” And so what can the devil do?

The truth is for the believer, all things are ours: ***“as having nothing and yet possessing everything.”*** And it's not only in this life, but it's in the life to come. We pray, ***“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is on heaven.”*** There's coming a time when the kingdom of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. There's coming a time when Jesus shall reign when the sun shall not shine or the moon wax no more. There's coming a time when we will inherit all things. The Lord didn't make this world for the devil's crowd, He made it for us. He made it for His people. ***“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”*** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!