

MIRROR MIRROR, MT.5:5, Ps.37

Once Upon A Time #4

◆Intro: Our text says “Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.”

Jesus is simply quoting the Old Testament, Psalm 37. But what is meekness? It’s not a word we use a lot these days. When was the last time you walked away thinking, “Well, what a meek fellow that was?”

◆It sounds so much like our english word “week” that many of us may associate the two, but they are worlds apart. In fact to be truly meek requires great strength.

◆Maybe we are so unaware of meekness because people who have it do not paste their faces up where everyone can see them. And these days there are plenty of folks who do that!

◆Your average Hollywood celebrity speak as though the whole nation thinks what they have to say is important.

◆Your average rapper is all about getting “in yo face.”

◆Your average politician, it would seem, spends more time convincing us that he’s accomplishing great things, that the economy is better, that inflation is down, etc –than he does actually doing great things!

◆And what’s with the WWF? If it’s difficult to imagine a WWF contender politely nodding to the camera and inconspicuously preparing to actually wrestle his opponent –then you’re probably aware that meekness is not a virtue in WWF circles.

◆Says Ronald J. Kernaghan “At the beginning of the 21st century, reasoned discourse [is imperiled]. Reasoned discourse is increasingly giving way to in-your-face sound bites....Hardball is the dominant metaphor for American public life. Our interchanges are confrontational, divisive, and

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dismissive. Truth is not something we expect to emerge from a conversation. It is something we hope to impose. Balance and fairness are casualties on evening shows as two, three, and sometimes four voices contend simultaneously for dominance. Volume and intransigence are the new civic virtues.

◆ So, I think we have established that meekness is something our day knows very little about. We might guess it is similar to spinelessness, and we don't go for that. Blessed are the loud and pushy, maybe. Blessed are those in front of the camera, or the mirror maybe. But in the face of all this, Jesus comes along and says...

◆ **1. The path to happiness does not run past my mirror.**

◆ A. My mirror is where I gaze upon myself. My mirror is where I concern myself with myself. My presentation of me. My self-approval. My mirror represents my wanting to be not just somebody of value, but somebody of great value. Someone in the spotlight.

◆ My mirror represents the desire for fame, for winning, for being the "fairest in the land". Recognition. Being an American, not "person" but "Idol"! (Some of the folks of American Idol fame are actually the opposite of meekness. They stand in front of the camera and declare that they will be the next winner, just you wait and see. On the other hand, there are also contestants who do display meekness.)

◆ As is so characteristic of God's son, our savior Jesus teaches us that the way to happiness is not through personal magnificence. Nor does it come from being memorable on the "maleficent" side either. He tells us that

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happiness doesn't come through financial bulk, or through physical muscle, self-assertion, or self-aggrandizement –but by escaping these altogether.

- ◆ Who here hasn't been plagued by questions of our own significance?
- ◆ Which of us hasn't aspired, if only in our dreams, to places of prominence?
- ◆ *The mistake we often make is that the significance (love?) we so desperately seek is only found purchased with our accomplishments.*

B. Jesus teaches us that happiness doesn't need a mirror. I don't mean you shouldn't comb your hair, or brush your teeth. Please, do us all a favor. What I mean is real blessing comes to the person who humbly pays more attention to the ways of God than to herself. So we are ready for a definition of meekness: being free of myself, and happily focused on the greater purposes of God. Shall we take a look at the text?

- ◆ Psalm 37:
- ◆ *verse 3: "Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture." Psalms 37:3, NIV.*
- ◆ *"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." Psalms 37:4, NIV.*
- ◆ *"Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:" Psalms 37:5, NIV.*
- ◆ *"Wait for the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it." Psalms 37:34, NIV.*

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- ◆ What do you hear over and over? “the Lord”. A meek person can see beyond himself. A meek person lives beyond herself. We you live every moment of your life for yourself, that’s when you become pushy, arrogant, harsh, in-your-face. It’s because you want something for yourself, isn’t it?

- ◆ *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. ... (James 4:1,2, NIV).*

- ◆ So here’s a key; you and I can only become meek (ie, gentle, humble) when we do not make ourselves the center of our lives. A meek person lives for something greater than the self. For God and his purposes.

- ◆ *“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.” Proverbs 19:21, NIV.*

◆ **2. The Reward of Meekness:**

- ◆ **A.** Jesus said the meek would inherit the land/earth. Now, what does the “land” represent to the typical hebrew? Immediately we think of the Promised Land, the place God made for his people to be a people, right? Inheriting the land, for the Hebrew, was being given a place, a belonging. It was living in the daily blessing of God’s attention, finally at rest from the anxiety of homelessness and need so common in the desert wandering.
- ◆ Psalm 37’s central issue is described in terms of who gets the land, and what it means to have it. Look.

- ◆ *v3 dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture*

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- ◆ *v11 inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity*
- ◆ *v18 their inheritance will endure forever*
- ◆ *v19 in days of famine they will enjoy plenty*
- ◆ You see. It's security, provision and a future!
 - ◆ v9 whereas the evil will be destroyed, those who hope in God "inherit the land"
 - ◆ v22 whereas those God curses are destroyed, those God blesses "inherit the land"
 - ◆ v27 do good and what do you get? To "dwell in the land".
 - ◆ v29 whereas the wicked will perish, the righteous will "inherit the land"
 - ◆ v34 same thing.
- ◆ You see what the land is all about? Its about security, lasting, living, hope. Its the opposite of ...
 - ◆ ...being slaves in Egypt, used and abused;
 - ◆ ...being over run by Philistines who occupied their towns and taxed them
 - ◆ ...being in exile in Babylon where freedoms were no more and life was at the mercy of a foreign, pagan king.
- ◆ To inherit the Promised Land was to be taken care of by the loving hand of God who thinks you are a treasure just because.
- ◆ **B.** Now then, meekness, a confident leaning toward God, is about being a person of such confident security that he/she does not have to pump himself up. Greg Lafferty put it like this. The meek come to a wonderful, rewarding place in life where instead of

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- ◆ needing to lead, we can follow;
 - ◆ having to be first, we can go last;
 - ◆ keeping up appearances, we can be open and transparent;
 - ◆ rushing to judgement, we recall our own vulnerabilities;
 - ◆ touting our own competence, we can regard others more highly;
 - ◆ fighting for our rights, we can renounce them (what?);
 - ◆ needing to control, we can complement;
 - ◆ getting the last word, we can listen;
 - ◆ needing to win..., we have nothing to lose;
 - ◆ being touchy and defensive, we are unoffendable (whoa!).
- ◆ Anybody feeling convicted besides me? Anybody think the good side of those contrasts would be a great place to live? The Meek person is free from the tyranny of Me! God's promise of place, and home give him that. No wonder Jesus calls meekness blessed!
- ◆ **3. Cultivating Meekness.**
- ◆ Suppose God is right. Suppose our "once upon a time" story could live "happily ever after" through learning meekness. What can we do to become meek?
- ◆ A. I can become meek by listening more than I talk.
- ◆ *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, (James 1:19, NIV).*
- ◆ It's simply following the proportions of the human head. Each head has two ears and one mouth. So listen twice as much as you talk.

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- ◆ Many a marriage would last longer if we were experts at listening to each other instead of informing each other. When you come home at the end of a day, do you spend any significant time finding out what he/she experienced that day? (By the way, what they experienced is not the same thing as what happened. There's a difference.)
- ◆ Many a friendship would grow if we followed this simple practice of meekness. When you see a friend at school, or church and you say "Hey, what's happening in your week?" and they tell something that reminds you of a great story of your own –can you maintain interest in the other without pulling it to your own monologue? When we were flying home from Peru there was a male voice about 4 rows behind me. I know this because that voice never stopped talking. He knew everything about anything and we were all privileged to hear it. For the life of me, I don't know why he isn't president for something, (except that he was clearly Canadian, and to be President, some claim you have to be American.) I was sick of hearing him, and I wasn't even talking to him. If people try to get away from conversation with you, it could be that you have bad breath. It could also be that you dominate conversation. Want to be someone people want to be around? Be someone that gets others to tell about themselves. (Life group leaders take note.) Sharing others' stories builds relationship. A sign of love is listening.
- ◆ B. I can become meek by thinking about others' interests.

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- ◆ *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:4, NIV).*
- ◆ When the credits are passed out, how concerned are you that your contribution is acknowledged? Well, everyone else feels it too! So become an expert on praising others, affirming them. Maybe if we encouraged our friends golf shot more than we gripped about our own we would enjoy the game more.
- ◆ The meek person is strong enough to bless another, and then is blessed in the process.
 - ◆ *“A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.” Proverbs 11:25, NIV.*
- ◆ Check our text: v26, the righteous are “always generous and lend freely”. This is the character that “inherits the land.”(v29) Check out v21: the wicked take and take; “the righteous give generously”. That’s how you become meek. That’s how you inherit hope.
- ◆ C. I can become meek by serving somebody somehow.
 - ◆ *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, ...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, (Philippians 2:5-7, NIV).*
- ◆ Being a servant is denying yourself for the sake of another. How often do you do that? Jesus is saying that blessing comes from denying yourself for the sake of another. Not for the sake of showing how great you are. People deny themselves for that reason too. That one doesn’t wind up in blessing. Look for a chance today to show love by stepping out of the way.

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- ◆ **Conclusion:** “To love and admire anything outside yourself is to take one step away from utter spiritual ruin; though we shall not be well so long as we love and admire anything more than we love and admire God.” *Citation: C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity.*
- ◆ Nearly 1 million high school seniors were asked the following: How would you rate your overall leadership abilities? Here are the results:
 - ◆ 70% said they were above average.
 - ◆ 60% said they were in the top 10%.
 - ◆ 25% said they were in the top 1%!!
- ◆ What would you have said? Not a lot of meekness floating around these days, is there? Don't let your Mirror rule you, friends. God never said “Blessed are the good looking.” or “Blessed are the fairest of them all.” He said “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.” Happy are those who are free of themselves, and invested in God and his ways. These have a future.