

Sermon—Meek and Mild Matt. 5:1-2, 5 John 13:1-20 (various verses)



1 Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee.

2 Lamb of God, I look to Thee;
Thou shalt my example be:
Thou art gentle, meek and mild;
Thou wast once a little child.

4 Loving Jesus, gentle Lamb,
In Thy gracious hands I am;
Make me, Saviour, what Thou art,
Live Thyself within my heart.¹

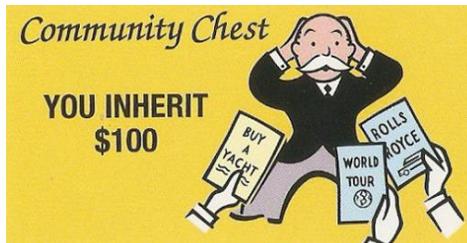
Some of you might have been taught
that hymn or prayer by grandparent
or learned to sing that song
in your childhood Sunday School class.
Jesus, Thou art gentle, meek and mild...
it's almost a little syrupy-sweet, isn't?
Dripping with innocence and naivety.
But I'm not always comfortable
with a gentle Jesus, meek and mild.
Most days I'd prefer
the sassy, snarky, border-line angry Jesus,
the one that rages in God's Temple
and throws down on the money changers.
Gentle Jesus, meek and mild
doesn't seem very effective to me,
if the Messiah is out to change the world.

¹ Gentle Jesus, Meek & Mild, Charles Wesley https://hymnary.org/text/gentle_jesus_meek_and_mild_look_upon

Which is exactly where I'm wrong.

Because the Messiah has never
set out to fit into my box
or our mold or expectations:
blessed are the meek—
not the proud-know-it-alls;
blessed are the meek—
not the over-the-top zealous
and in our faces for the Lord;
blessed are the meek—
not the condemning, judge-y, and nit-picky.

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



Inheritance is a funny thing, you know.
I've heard that you can split the Bible
into three buckets;
one bucket sound religious and moral teaching,
one is situations that deal
only with things of that day
and the last bucket is full of things
that probably didn't even happen.²

In which bucket do you think *the meek inheriting the earth* falls?

The realm of land inheritance
was the world of the Old and New Testament;
one of passing land through families,

² My somewhat interpretation from Adam Hamilton's bucket theory,
<http://www.adamhamilton.org/blog/homosexuality-the-bible-and-the-united-methodist-church/#.Wm02ASOZPOQ>

birthrights, heirs, and oldest sons.
But now-a-days what does inheritance
have to do with us?
What would inheriting the earth look like for us?
We might get the dividends
on life insurance policies.
We get to split 'the estate'
with our siblings, cousins, distant relatives;
we get assets, stocks and bonds...
and then there are those times
we might even inherit debts.

The good news is that creditors
usually come after the estates and assets
and if there are insufficient funds
to pay off the debts,
the debt is usually wiped away.³

That is a wonderful news, isn't?
Debts being wiped away—
sounds almost like the language of faith.
But back to the language of inheritance
—this week's beatitude claims,
*blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

And whatever that shakes down to be
it doesn't sound like a bad gig—
how do you think we can get in on
that kind of inheritance?
How can we
be one of the meek
that inherit the earth?
Does the language of inheritance
fit into the language of faith?



³ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/can-i-inherit-my-parents-debt_us_59196324e4b02d6199b2f127

Some of you might be familiar with the NETworX program,
that meets in our Jr. High room
on Monday nights.
This program falls under the umbrella
of the ministries CCM and Whit was a leader
in bringing NETworX to this area.
If you have forgotten or
don't know about what NETworX does;
here's brief summery:

*"NETworX is a faith-based initiative
that engages the community
to help move families out of poverty,
children succeed in school
and address systemic solutions to poverty.*

*At the core of the program
is our belief in the importance of faith
to further define the power of transformation and change.*

*Through a holistic, relational approach,
NETworX teaches Champions (participants)
and Allies (mentors) about overcoming poverty
with an emphasis on community,
relationships,
trust and reciprocity
as we learn to thrive in all areas of our lives.*

*Weekly meals and meetings
are the heart and soul of NETworX
and it is during these times
that relationships are built,
problems are identified
and solutions are discovered."*

That's the NETworX you'll see on paper.
But let me tell you about an example
that really gets to the nature
of this faith-based program

because at its core,
it shows us what the meek inheriting the earth
can look like.

Recently some friends in the church
contacted us to say they were moving
and had some furniture
they'd like to donate.
They wanted to know
if we knew of anyone that needed anything.
So I jumped on this opportunity
and texted Liz Goebelbecker,
the NETworX coordinator,
to ask if anyone in the NETworX program
needed some furniture.

It just so happens one of our champions
had just moved into her apartment and had nothing
—literally just mattress on the floor.
So I got pictures of the furniture
and sent them to Liz (thank you Jesus for the digital age)
and Liz sent them to our champion
to see if she might want use any of the items.
She, the champion was overwhelmed.
And she was so gracious and grateful.
And then she said, “Ms. Liz
I can definitely use that furniture,
but I don't want it all
because some one else might need it.”

Blessed are the meek.

We were blown away by her response.
A woman in great need
who had been gifted with things
to help her get her life out of poverty,
wanted to make sure that others in need
would have something too.
To me, this is the kind of beatitude

Jesus is talking about.
Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.
Having been gifted with abundance,
our NETworX champion
wanted someone else in need
to share in that abundance too.
Giving so that others can **have** too.
Sounds like language of inheritance.
Sounds like the language of faith.

Too often, meek is seen as weak or passive
and that isn't what Jesus had in mind.
The word for meek can mean,
meek, gentle or humble.
And while we usually aren't too keen
to be seen as meek,
being seen as gentle and humble—
well if that's part of God's kingdom,
those are characteristics worth holding on to.

The beatitude of blessing the meek
is more about a,
“patient, trusting that God will act in due time,
an insistence on being nonviolent
even in the midst of a violent society,
a contentment with the basic necessities of life
even in a possession-hungry world,
and taking delight in the gifts of God
and the many comforts of faith.”⁴

The meek, the gentle
that have a contentment
with the basic necessities of life
even in a possession-hungry-world
—that is the attitude I see in this champion.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth—
where we see scarcity they see abundance.

⁴ Thom Long,

Where we see things as dispensable,
perhaps they see gracious gifts.

When Jesus claims *blessed are the meek*,
he isn't introducing a new thing;
he is reminding his listeners
to what they already know
from the Psalms.

Ps. 37 claims,

“Refrain from anger,
and forsake wrath.

Do not fret—it leads only to evil.

(We can already tell which bucket this fall into, can't we?)

For the wicked shall be cut off,
**but those who wait for the Lord
shall inherit the land.**

Yet a little while,
and the wicked will be no more;
though you look diligently for their place,
they will not be there.

**But the meek shall inherit the land,
and delight themselves
in abundant prosperity.”**

Clarence Jordan, when he wrote
the Cotton Patch Gospels

has Jesus—in a south Georgia accent say—,

“They who are gentle are his people,
for they will be partners across the land.”⁵

It is the gentle and the humble,
those who are willing to wait patiently,
trusting that ‘God will act in due time,’
those insisting on being non violent
even when the violent and evil seem to prosper;
they who are simply content
in a world of possessions and things;

⁵ Clarence Jordan, Cotton Patch Gospel: Matthew and Luke

it is the meek that inherit the earth
—the gentle who will become partners
across the land.
The language of inheritance,
the language of faith.

So where might we find,
the gentle, the meek and the humble?
Which bucket of scripture should we dig in?
Well, in the gospel of John,
before the disciples and Jesus
share the last supper,
we see Christ do something
so, gentle, humble, meek,
and we learn he is inviting us to do the same.



Now before the festival of the Passover,
Jesus knew that his hour
had come to depart from this world
and go to the Father.
Having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the end...

And during supper ³Jesus,
knowing that the Father
had given all things into his hands,
and that he had come from God
and was going to God,
⁴got up from the table,
took off his outer robe,
and tied a towel around himself.

⁵Then he poured water into a basin

and began to wash the disciples' feet
and to wipe them with the towel
that was tied around him.

⁶He came to Simon Peter,
who said to him,
“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”
⁷Jesus answered, “You do not know now
what I am doing,
but later you will understand.”

⁸Peter said to him,
“You will never wash my feet.”
Jesus answered,
“Unless I wash you,
you have no share with me.”

⁹Simon Peter said to him,
“Lord, not my feet only
but also my hands and my head!”

¹⁰Jesus said to him,
“One who has bathed
does not need to wash,
except for the feet,
but is entirely clean...

After he had washed their feet,
had put on his robe,
and had returned to the table,
he said to them,

“Do you know what I have done to you?”

¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—
and you are right,
for that is what I am.

¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher,
have washed your feet,
you also ought to wash one another's feet.

¹⁵For I have set you an example,
that you also should do
as I have done to you.

¹⁶Very truly, I tell you,
servants are not greater than their master,
nor are messengers
greater than the one who sent them.

¹⁷If you know these things,
you are blessed if you do them.

It was an ordinary hospitality
to offer guests water
to wash their feet
after a journey in sandals
on dust roads.
Anyone with middle schoolers
who wear Chaco sandals in the summer
knows how stinky and funky feet can get.
You see a host was not expected
to wash his guest's feet for them,
but a slave might be assigned this task,
or disciples might wash their teacher's feet.⁶
But in a reversal that startles everyone,
Jesus washes the feet of the disciples;
the master becomes the servant.



We've always interpreted the feet washing
to be a literal act
and there no reason
to think otherwise.
There isn't much that is more humbling
than washing someone else's feet.
But could it also be a miracle of sorts
—because a miracle story always points to the message—

⁶ HarperCollins Study Bible, notes on John 13:1-20

could this be a story
that teaches us as followers of Christ,
the message is to imitate
the gentleness of our Lord?

Is this an example
of how to claim a posture of humbleness
when we don't understand what the Lord is doing,
yet we still are those,
"who wait for the Lord"?

Even in the midst of the violence
That is about to take place in Christ's life
He seeks to be gentle and humble.
This small act of taking delight
in being present with the disciples
to show that the meek will in fact be those
who are claimed as heirs
in God's kingdom.

Language of inheritance, language of faith

Often those gentle, humble, and meek souls
are not the people we are looking for—
they aren't loudly proclaiming their truth,
instead they are simply living it.

They are those who aren't campaigning
that they have the only truth,
instead they are quietly sharing
the lives, the pain, the joy of their neighbor
—is there anything more truthful than that?

The meek aren't those who
are insisting possessing the earth,
instead they are co-creators with life itself.

The meek **are** the ones
inheriting the earth
being partners across the land,
because they can hear
the earth and the heavens
cry out in praise to the Creator.

The meek are they who have a share with Christ himself.

When Jesus washes the disciples feet
he says that unless they are washed
they won't have a share with him
...that's the language of inheritance
and the language of faith.

It is the very language we use
at the table.

To have a share with Christ,
means to be welcomed
into his way of life,
welcomed to into his home
at his table where, as we say,

he is the host—

but the host who gently removes his outer robe
to wash your feet.

The host who entertains

with a feast from the earth,
a feast of bread and grain;
a cup of grape and vine
—shares of our inherited earth.



Booker T. Washington,
the renowned black educator,
was an outstanding example humility.
Shortly after he took over the presidency
of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama,
he was walking in an exclusive section of town

when a wealthy white woman stopped him.

Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight,
she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars
by chopping wood for her.
Because he had no pressing business at the moment,
Professor Washington smiled,
rolled up his sleeves,
and proceeded to do the humble chore
she had requested.

When he was finished,
he carried the logs into the house
and stacked them by the fireplace.
A little girl recognized him
and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman
went to see Mr. Washington
in his office at the Institute
and apologized profusely.

"It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied.
"Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor.
Besides, it's always a delight
to do something for a friend."⁷

*Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.*

To gently call that woman, "friend"
—well I think that is certainly the language of faith.
And it was said that later,
impressed by Washington's character,
this woman sent Tuskegee
a share of her inheritance.

⁷ <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/h/humility.htm>