

MEEK, NOT WEAK

If I asked you to picture someone "meek," what comes to mind?

Maybe a pushover. Someone who gets walked on. Someone who says "it's fine, don't worry about it" when it is, in fact, not fine. We use "meek" almost as an insult — the opposite of strong, the opposite of someone who gets things done.

VIDEO: Gentle Lion

A full grown male lion has a bite force around 650 to 1,000 pounds per square inch (PSI), which is strong enough to crush thick bones. And those massive paws can lift roughly twice its body weight and deliver a paw swipe strong enough to knock down or severely injure large prey.

But this father lion, while looking fierce and possessing the power to destroy this cub is choosing to restrain that power and to instead be gentle with the cub. This is the picture of meekness.

So when Jesus stands on a hillside in Galilee and says, "*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth,*" it should stop us. Because Jesus doesn't hand out blessing to the doormats of the world. He's not congratulating weakness. He's describing a kind of strength most of us have never been taught to recognize — let alone want.

This is the third beatitude, and it sits right in the middle of a series of statements that turn the world's values upside down. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Not the impressive. Not the powerful. Not the people who win. The meek.

The life that Jesus is inviting us into looks radically different than the one the world is selling. In His kingdom strength isn't about control, it's about restraint, it's about choosing humility when you could flex, choosing peace when you could fight, choosing to serve when you could dominate.

The way of Jesus is not weakness it's actually strength. It's just different than how the world defines it.

The Greek word behind "meek" is ***praus***. In the ancient world, it wasn't a word for weakness at all. It described a particular kind of strength — strength that has been brought under control.

The classic illustration: a wild horse, powerful and dangerous, is trained until its strength is harnessed and made useful.

Nolan Ryan was one of my baseball idols growing up. He was a power pitcher and was the first pitcher who was recorded throwing over 100mph. (Today sports scientists say that number is actually 109mph). He also threw 7 no-hitters (the next best pitchers have four), 5,714 strikeouts (Randy Johnson has 4,875 Ks). But when we was in high school and college, he threw hard but was wild. Infamously, in a high school playoff game he hit two batters in a row, one broke his helmet, the other broke his arm.

He eventually learned to harness that power into something that could be useful.

The wild horse doesn't lose its power. It gains the discipline to use that power rightly, at the right time, for the right purpose. The Greeks used *praus* for exactly that kind of animal — tamed, not tame; strong, but no longer wild.

That's the picture. Meekness is power under God's control, rather than power unleashed for our own advantage.

Jesus himself uses this word for himself. In Matthew 11:29 he says, "I am gentle" — *praus* — "and humble in heart." And in Matthew 21, when he rides into Jerusalem, Matthew tells us it's a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy: "*Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey.*" Same word.

Think about what that means. Jesus had, by his own testimony, all authority in heaven and earth. He could have called down twelve legions of angels — he says so himself, later that same week, in Gethsemane. He had more raw power available to him than anyone who has ever lived. And he rode into the city that would kill him on a borrowed donkey, not a warhorse.

That is meekness. Not an absence of power. A refusal to use power the way the world uses it.

There's an Old Testament echo here too — Psalm 37, which almost certainly stands behind this beatitude. That psalm keeps circling back to one command: don't fret over the wicked who seem to be winning. "*The meek shall inherit the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity*" (Ps 37:11). The psalm was written for people watching evil people prosper and wondering if goodness even matters. And the answer isn't "grit your teeth and pretend it doesn't bother you." The answer is: trust God's timing over your own need to seize control.

That's what meekness costs. It's the decision to not grab, not force, not manipulate, not dominate — even when you could. Even when everyone around you is doing exactly that, and it looks like it's working for them.

Here's why this beatitude cuts so close to home. Almost everything in our formation tells us the opposite.

We're told: if you don't advocate for yourself, no one will. Get ahead. Protect your interests. Don't let people take advantage of you.

And look — some of that isn't wrong. There's a difference between meekness and being a doormat; Jesus was never a doormat. He confronted the Pharisees, overturned tables, spoke hard truths to power. Meekness isn't passivity.

But underneath a lot of our self-protection is a deeper fear: if I don't secure my own outcome, no one will secure it for me. If I don't grab what's mine, someone else will take it. If I don't win this argument, I lose something essential about who I am.

Before you feel the need to push your agenda to defend your image to prove you're right, or to grab what's yours, pause and ask yourself "what's driving me right now?" Is it insecurity, control, is it ego?

Meekness says: I don't have to grab, because I'm not the one who ultimately secures my future. God is.

That's the hinge of the whole verse. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Not the loudest, not the most dominant, not the ones who push their way to the top.

Notice the word — *inherit*. Inherit the earth does not mean we all get parcels of land or that God has promised us we would climb the corporate ladder.

You don't inherit something by fighting for it, earning it, or seizing it. You inherit it because someone else, who loves you, gives it to you. An inheritance is not a reward for grabbing. It's a gift that belongs to you because of whose child you are.

The people who "inherit the earth" aren't the ones who conquered it. History is full of people who conquered the earth and it turned to ash in their hands — empires, tyrants, self-made men who clawed their way to the top and died afraid and alone. Jesus says the earth actually, finally, belongs to the ones who trusted God enough to stop grasping for it.

So what does meek strength actually look like in an ordinary week?

It looks like a parent who has every right to say "I told you so" and doesn't — not because they don't care about being right, but because they care more about their kid's heart than their own vindication.

It looks like someone at work who gets passed over unfairly and doesn't spend the next six months undermining the person who got the promotion, because their worth was never actually riding on that title.

It looks like holding your opinions — even your correct opinions — in a conversation, willing to actually listen, because you're not trying to win, you're trying to love the person in front of you.

It looks like Jesus in front of Pilate: fully capable of defending himself, fully in the right, and yet silent — not because He was weak, but because He trusted His Father with the outcome more than He trusted His own defense.

None of that is weakness. All of it is harder than grabbing. Anybody can grab. Ava just started working at the preschool, preschoolers are adept at grabbing things they want and yelling "MINE! MINE! MINE!"

It takes strength under control to hold back a power you actually have, because you trust someone bigger than yourself with how the story ends.

Here's what I want to leave you with. The world is going to keep telling you that the earth belongs to whoever grabs it hardest — the loudest voice, the sharpest elbow, the person who never backs down. And for a season, it will even look true.

It breaks my heart to see so many prominent Christians today doing this. Grabbing for power, forcing compliance and bragging about how we won't be pushed around anymore.

Jesus says: no. The earth belongs to the meek. Not because meekness is a strategy for winning — it isn't, not by the world's math. But because the earth was never actually up for grabs in the first place. It already belongs to the Father, and he has already decided to give it to his children.

So you don't have to grab. You don't have to force your way, manipulate your way, dominate your way into the life you want. You can let your strength be shaped and held by God, the way a strong horse is trained rather than broken — and you can trust Him with the inheritance.

Blessed are the meek. Not the weak. Not the passive. The meek — the ones whose strength is finally, fully under God's control.

May that be true of us.

Amen.

MEEK NOT WEAK

Matthew 5:1-12

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Small Group Discussion Questions

Meekness is often confused with weakness. Based on the way Jesus lived (see Matthew 11:29, where he calls himself "meek and lowly in heart"), how would you define meekness in your own words? How is it different from being passive or timid?

This beatitude echoes Psalm 37:11 ("the meek shall inherit the land"). Read Psalm 37 in full. What does that psalm say about how meek people respond to the wicked or to injustice? How does that shape your understanding of what Jesus is promising?

Jesus says the meek will "inherit the earth" — not just a spiritual reward, but the whole earth. Why is this a surprising, even countercultural, promise for people who don't assert or grab power for themselves? What does it say about how God's kingdom operates differently from the world's systems?

Meekness involves both a posture toward God (submission to his will) and a posture toward people (gentleness, restraint of power). Can you think of a biblical figure (Moses is called "very meek" in Numbers 12:3) who displayed this? What did meekness look like in their story?

Where in your life right now do you feel tempted to fight for control, status, or your "rights" instead of trusting God with the outcome? What would it look like this week to respond to a specific situation with meekness rather than self-assertion?