

Empty (Part 3): Humble

Matthew 5:5

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If you are a guest this morning, we are so glad you are here. However, you need to know that our congregation is grieving the death of one of our precious babies. Our sweet Madeline Gravlin went to be with the Lord Friday afternoon. We are grieving her passing. We are grieving with her parents David & Linsey, and her grandparents, Tim & Darlene, and the rest of their family. Our mission statement says, *"We are a family in service together."* Yet, we are not only a family who serves together; we also suffer together. So, when one suffers, we all suffer, and this morning we are grieving.

How providential it was to preach Matthew 5:4 last Sunday. It not only prepared us for this moment but for the seasons of sadness that lie ahead. Matthew 5:4 says,

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

We believe that. We may grieve right now, but Jesus always gives His comfort because He is the Man of Sorrows who is acquainted with grief. He knows how to comfort His hurting people. Comfort will come, and that is very good news.

If you have been keeping up with our series on the Beatitudes, you will notice there is a progression in these verses. In the overview of the Beatitudes, I gave you the outline: *Empty, Filled, and Poured Out*. In this overview outline, you can track the progression of a person's conversion. Now, as we are working through each verse, we are seeing the progression of conversion in smaller steps. This morning we are covering what I'm calling the third part of being *Empty*—*Blessed are the humble*.

Think about the progression of conversion in the Beatitudes this way first, if you are *poor in spirit*, you realize that you're a sinner, or as we have been saying—you're spiritually bankrupt. You're a sinner, and you have no ability to save yourself. Second, *blessed are those who mourn* their sin and how sin has broken the world. *Mourning your poverty of spirit* is the emotional counterpart to that realization. In other words, it is no longer head knowledge; it is now heart knowledge. Finally, as this realization lands on you, it is *humbling*. It breaks your heart open so that Matthew 5:5 becomes true for us:

Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.

Or, as the ESV reads, which is probably a more familiar translation of the original Greek:

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

Friends, in the Beatitudes, Jesus is laying a gospel foundation on which He transforms our lives. He turns us into Citizens of the Kingdom of God.

He has taken aim at the human heart and is driving with the arrow of the gospel deep into our hearts. He leaves it there so that we will grasp our desperate need for him and his grace. It is the most loving thing he is doing.

Jesus is emptying us out in vv. 3-5. Those who are empty before God are blessed. The empty person is driven to his knees so that he cries out to Jesus in repentance and faith. When this happens, you are blessed, for you see God for who He is—holy! We said that this is a picture of conversion or being born again.

Let me read v. 5 again, and then we will get to work on it:

Blessed are the humble [meek], for they will inherit the earth.

Remember, when Jesus says, “Blessed,” he is saying that God has worked in this person's heart. The grace of God has been working in his/her heart so that they become *humble*.

Meekness is the quality a person exhibits because God has set his favor on him. *Humility/meekness* is a gift of God’s grace when a person understands he/she is a sinner in need of a Savior. No one earns humility. Humility is a gift of the Spirit of God working in a person’s heart, and that is why they are blessed.

Before we examine *what humility or meekness IS, let’s make sure we address some misconceptions of being meek and humble*.

First, humility most likely is not a bullet point on your resume. I had a friend at seminary who used to joke, “I am working on my first book. It is called, ‘Humility and how I achieved it.’” Humility is not something you become proud of because as soon as you do, you have just stopped being humble.

Here is what I mean. I want Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones to help me here. The Doctor (as he is known) wrote one of the most extensive commentaries on *The Sermon on the Mount*. It is actually a collection of his sermons, and they are very rich reading. In his commentary, he tells the story of a man he met while he was on one of his preaching missions.

The Doctor said when he arrived at the train station, a man met him there and asked for his suitcase. As a matter of fact, said Dr. Lloyd-Jones, he almost ripped it from my hands, saying, “I’m a deacon in the church where you are preaching tomorrow . . . You know, I am a mere nobody, a very unimportant man. Really. I do not count; I am not a great man in the church; I am just one of those men who carry the bag for the minister.” Lloyd-Jones observed, “He was anxious that I should know what a humble man he was, how poor in spirit. Yet, in his anxiety to make it known, he was denying the very thing he was trying to establish.”¹

The old saying is true. It is the man who glories in his poverty of spirit who actually proves he is not humble. We may laugh at this idea and even this illustration, but we must beware that we do not fall into this sinful trap of glorying in our humility.

A second misconception is that meekness is a weakness. Here is what being meek does not mean. It is not being cowed and spinelessness. It is not willing to have peace at any price. It is not always getting run over in relationships. It is not the inability to say “No.” These are just a couple of misconceptions of humility. There are others, but these are probably the most common.

What is humility in v. 5? What does it mean to be meek? Humility is essentially the same as gentleness. It has its roots in the classical Greek language and was used to describe the taming of a wild animal for use for a good purpose. An example would be the taming of a wild horse that now carries a rider.

Think about it this way. It is the diesel truck that can haul thousands of pounds of supplies or a bull dozer that can move thousands of tons of dirt, or a jet that can carry hundreds of people at supersonic speeds thousands of miles.

However, no one would stand in front of this equipment and say they were weak and unusable. Without being under the control of the driver, they would flatten you. This would be “*strength out of control*.”

But when the Holy Spirit is in the driver’s seat, this illustrate what it is like to be meek. When the Spirit fills the heart of the sinner, it is strength under control for God’s purposes. A meek person is a person with godly self-control. For example, when a meek person is angry, their anger is balanced and infused with godly wisdom.

Think about it this way? Have you ever gotten a speeding or traffic ticket from a Highway Patrolman or Police Officer? When they come up to your car to write you and ticket, they are not yelling and screaming about

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word Series: Sermon on the Mount*, 18-19.

how fast you were going or anything like that. They walk up to your car and tell you that you were speeding. Write you a ticket and politely encourage you not to speed.

How can they do that? It is authority under control. It is a picture of what being meek really looks like. You can be a very strong person and yet at the same time very gentle, humble, and meek. You see, meekness is being emptied of your strength and being filled with Jesus' strength.

Here is the deal, Jesus was not teaching anything new. He was actually drawing upon rich Old Testament teaching. He drew His teaching on being meek from Psalm 37. It is from the life of King David.

Let's examine the portrait of a humble person in Psalm 37. First, he *delights in the Lord*. Look in vv. 1-4:

¹ *Do not be agitated by evildoers;
do not envy those who do wrong.*
² *For they wither quickly like grass
and wilt like tender green plants.*
³ *Trust in the Lord and do what is good;
dwell in the land and live securely.*
⁴ *Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you your heart's desires.*

The one who delights in the Lord even when it seems like the wicked are prospering does not get agitated or anxious but trusts in Jesus.

Second, because He delights in the Lord, he can confidently *commit* his decision to the Lord and trust Him. Look in vv. 5-6:

⁵ *Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act,*
⁶ *making your righteousness shine like the dawn,
your justice like the noonday.*

Next, in v. 7, He waits on the Lord. The meek person rests in Jesus even though it seems the evil person has overcome.

⁷ *Be silent before the Lord and wait expectantly for him;
do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way,
by the person who carries out evil plans.*

We don't always have to go before the Lord with lots of words and constantly talking and pleading. Often, we can make our request known to Him and then simply remain silent before Him. We can wait and listen and confess our trust.

However, don't hear what I am not saying. I am not saying you cannot go before the Lord and pour out your heart to Him. You can, but sometimes, we can make our request known and then simply sit, kneel, or lay before Him in silent worship and wait *expectantly on Him*.

Fourth, v. 8 tells us that the humble person gives up his/her anger and rage because they are waiting on the Lord Jesus.

⁸ *Refrain from anger and give up your rage;
do not be agitated—it can only bring harm.*

Godly wisdom teaches us that our anger will accomplish very little, if anything at all.

Lastly, in vv. 9-11, it is the humble person who hopes in Jesus who *inherits the earth*:

⁹ *For evildoers will be destroyed,*

*but those who put their hope in the Lord
will inherit the land.*

¹⁰ *A little while, and the wicked person will be no more;
though you look for him, he will not be there.*

¹¹ *But the humble will inherit the land
and will enjoy abundant prosperity.*

While Jesus gives us the portrait of the humble person from King David's life in Psalm 37, what we need to realize is that Psalm 37 actually looks forward to the true Man of Meekness.

If we want to know what it looks like to be meek and humble, we must keep looking at our Savior. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus says this of Himself:

*"Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
²⁹ Take up my yoke and learn from me because I am lowly and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is
light."*

For our sakes, our Savior was gentle and lowly. He calls us to come to Him. He laid down His power so that we may be filled with the strength of His humility.

Dane Ortlund, in his book *Gentle and Lowly*, says:

What helium does to a balloon, Jesus' yoke does to his followers. We are buoyed along by his endless gentleness and supremely accessible lowliness. He doesn't simply meet us at our place of need; he lives in our place of need. He never tires of sweeping us into his tender embrace. It is his very heart . . . [So] Only as we drink down the kindness of the heart of Christ will we leave in our wake, everywhere we go, the aroma of heaven, and die one day having startled the world with glimpses of a divine kindness [that is] too great to be boxed in by what we deserve.²

Friends, we are blessed when the humility, gentleness, and lowliness of Christ are the aroma of heaven that we leave in the wake of our lives. It means the smile of God is on your life.

However, no one manifests the characteristic perfectly. No one is so strong that his or her response is always love and wisdom. We will all continue to fight pride and self-justification, and self-righteousness.

However, Jesus' warnings are unmistakable. If there is an absence of gentleness in your treatment of others, then beware. If you are characterized by harshness and mistreatment of others, then you need to evaluate if you really belong to Christ.

If you are characterized by being self-centered. In other words, always looking out for number one, then you need to evaluate your heart. If you are vengeful and *known* as someone you do not want to cross because you always get your pound of flesh, then beware. Your heart is not meek. If you are characterized by uncontrolled rage so that you explode when you don't get your way or people you consider foolish interfere with your life, beware. You may not be born again. You need to check your heart.³

Listen, if you struggle in these areas, it does not mean you are not a Christian. It does mean you need some help to overcome these sins. It means you need to practice repentance and ask for forgiveness from those whom you have offended.

² Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*, 22-23.

³ Hughes, 36.

Here's how this works out in the life of a truly meek person. The truly gentle, lowly, humble person won't be discouraged and wallow in self-pity. They won't say, "*Oh, what a mess I am. What a wretched person I am. I'm a failure, after all. I will never be a disciple pleasing to Jesus.*" This is not repentance; it is self-pity. There is a big difference between repentance and self-pity. Practicing self-pity is not being meek.

To be meek means to humble yourself by taking your eyes off of yourself and putting them on Jesus. The humble person comes to Jesus and says,

"I take my mind off myself, even as I confess. Not self-pity. Not hurting myself and provoking myself and punishing myself, but instead, Lord, I see what I've really done wrong has hurt you. I own it. I confess it. Lord, help me change."

The late Tim Keller says:

The quietness and openness, and vulnerability of meekness is a very beautiful and a very painful thing. It goes against all that we are by our sinful nature. It requires supernatural help. And that help is available, thank God!⁴

Friends, the humility of Christ is a gift, and you are blessed when Jesus begins to work that spiritual gift into your heart by His Spirit.

As we close, let's consider the promised reward for being meek:

"For they will inherit the earth."

First, "*to inherit the earth*" does not mean that if God's people become meek, then all of the sudden, they will own real estate, oil wells in Texas, property in California, and prime property in downtown New York. Listen, this is a real promise, but it is not a promised inheritance in how the world thinks.

This promise began in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve were given the earth to cultivate, subdue the land and have dominion over it. Their sin in the form of failure to humble themselves and trust God broke that promise.

Since then, inheriting the land meant something different. In the Old Testament, God's people were given the Promised Land to inherit, but they never really took full possession of it. Like Adam and Eve, even God's chosen people failed to humble themselves and trust Him so they might possess the land.

Brothers and sisters, on this side of the cross, we have a fuller understanding of what it means *to inherit the land*. In the New Covenant, we understand that Jesus is our Great Inheritance, and we are His.

In principle, in Christ, we possess all things, but it is not yet complete. We have a taste of inheriting the earth now in Christ, but it is not yet completely fulfilled.

The fullness of this reward comes when Jesus returns to make all things new. This promise will be fulfilled when Jesus returns, and He will make all things right. It is a promise to be fulfilled when Jesus wipes away every tear because everything that was sad has become untrue. It is a promise that will be fulfilled when He makes a new heaven and a new earth.

Friends, this is what we are waiting for in this life. We are waiting for Jesus to return and regenerate the universe. He will remove every stain of sin, and He will remove every remnant of the curse. His righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and the new earth forever.

As Revelation 21:1-4 says:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. ³Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling

⁴ Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more because the previous things have passed away.