

Sermon Title: Victorious Meekness

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 5:5 (Sermon on the Mount #4)

Date: 6-28-20

Come back with me to Matthew Chapter 5, the first of the three chapters in your New Testament which we know of as "The Sermon on the Mount," as we wade slowly and relentlessly into this great sermon from the lips of Jesus—and we're starting out, one Beatitude at a time; trust me, we will pick up speed as we go along here.

I wanted you to keep in mind that this wasn't delivered in a vacuum, and what is in your Bible is probably not a *transcript* of the sermon; it is the inspired record of the sermon that Matthew was given to preserve for us (see 2 Pet. 1:21). I think it's quite likely that Jesus made a big deal about this day. I think He probably announced, in the day or days prior to this, that He was going to do something and say something significant on that day. We know that because it stands out. It was at the height of His popularity during His year and a half in Galilee. Even on a routine day in Galilee, there would have been large crowds present. But on *this* day, we know that Jesus spent the entire night before this "in prayer" (Lk. 6:12; NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted), and the first thing we know that He did in the public eye on that day is that He announced the names of the 12 disciples whom He had chosen to be His Apostles (Lk. 6:13-16). I think He probably told people that, that was coming.

Then this sermon—which is in condensed form in our Bibles, as Matthew was guided to write it down—was delivered to these huge crowds. They were *real* people in a *real* place. Jesus knew all about them. He knew what was on their minds. He knew that the vast majority of them were without genuine saving faith, even though, obviously, they loved being around Him—they followed Him all over; even though they loved seeing the miracles, they found His words compelling, and they kept coming and coming.

Jesus also knew about all the major factions within the culture of the Judaism of His day. I reminded you of them as we began this series, and we know that there were at least four identifiable streams of thinking within the Judaism of that day, and we know that at least three of those four were represented in the crowd that day when He spoke these words.

One of them is the Sadducees. They were very powerful in the *politics* of Israel, if you will. Israel was not a political entity—they were under Rome, but they were allowed a certain amount of autonomy, as long as they didn't upset Rome and they paid their taxes. The Sadducees had a lot of control there. They were the aristocratic ones. They were the theological liberals. Remember Acts 23? They didn't believe in "resurrection," they didn't believe there is any such thing as "a spirit," they didn't believe that there is any such things as an "angel" (vs. 8). They rejected fundamental truths, but they controlled the priesthood (Acts 5:17), and they were probably the dominant influence on the Sanhedrin—that leading group among the Jews (see Lk. 22:66; Acts 5:21).

They *hated* Jesus because He was a threat (see Mk. 15:10; cf. Jn. 11:48). He was a threat to their powerful positions; He was a threat to their livelihood, because they derived *a lot* of income from the corrupt activities where they basically sold franchises for people to rip off those who came to Jerusalem for major national feasts. They *wanted* a king—they *wanted* a Messiah—but *they* wanted a king who was aristocratic like them, who came from their ranks and would validate everything they believed.

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There were also the Essenes. They had little or nothing to do with Jesus because...well, they had little or nothing to do with *anybody* except their own little group. They secluded themselves and insulated themselves from daily life. They regarded the highest level of spirituality to be total separation—not in the sense of holiness, which is just separation from sin (2 Cor. 7:1); they separated from regular people, separated from society. They lived in their own compounds, if you will—that's probably what they would be called today—outside of town. If they were looking for a king, it was probably someone with a strong mystical bent who would come and validate *their* ideas.

There were also the Zealots. They were the most political of these groups. The Zealots were excited because *they* wanted a king who would overthrow Rome's oppression. They wanted to "make" Jesus "king" (Jn. 6:15), and they wanted to establish Him as a political and military hero. So they got *really excited* about Jesus, but they were *bitterly* disappointed when, in fact, Jesus went to the Cross instead of going directly to the throne (Lk. 24:26). Oh, it just *grated* on them when Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21), because their idea was that the only thing they wanted to "render to Caesar" was a sword. They wanted a conqueror who would lead a rebellion.

Then there are the Pharisees. The Pharisees were not huge in numbers; I've even heard it said that there were maybe only 600 official members of the Pharisees' party in Jesus's day. I don't know where that number comes from. But while there may not have been a large number of card-carrying Pharisees with name badges on, they had the broadest influence, because the Pharisees dominated the training of the rabbis, and *they* held nearly total control over what was taught week-by-week in the synagogues; so they had the most influence—the most time—on the most people. And if you were to be holding your clipboard and taking a poll as people arrived, as the gathering was coming about for the Sermon on the Mount, if you asked anyone in the crowd to answer the question, "Who among all of you here is the most spiritually mature? Where can I find those people?" They would probably direct you to the nearest Pharisee.

The Pharisees wanted a king who would validate *them*. He would validate them for their zeal—theologically, they were on the *opposite* end of the spectrum from the Sadducees; they not only believed everything that the Bible said, they added *hundreds* more rules and regulations to what was in the Old Testament. They wanted a king who would validate their zeal for keeping all of the minutiae of the spiritual rules and regulations that they came up with (see Mk. 7:3-4; cf. Col. 2:20-23).

So it's not a surprise that, when Jesus was talking about *who really is* going to be part of the kingdom of heaven, it was the *Pharisees* who were the primary targets of this sermon. Now, it's for *all* men and women in *all* nations, all cultures, all societies, all places, in all times (see Matt. 7:24-27), but the *primary* targets were the Pharisees. It was a *bombshell* to this crowd when Jesus stated the theme of this sermon. Now, I'm going to let you jump ahead; you can let your eyes go all the way down the page to Chapter 5, Verse 17. The introduction to this sermon is: the Beatitudes. And then, like any good sermon, He says what He's going to say, then He says it, then He summarizes it, gives the invitation, and moves on.

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Here's what Jesus says this sermon is all about: Matthew 5, starting at Verse 4:17—"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

That, my friends is a *zinger*. The Pharisees would have said "Amen!" about not abolishing the Law and the Prophets. They would have said, "Sic 'em! Let those Sadducees have it! Boy, they're just knocking things out of Your Word like crazy!" They would have said "Amen!" about fulfilling them, and then: "Oh, and we can help You with that!" They would have said "Amen!" about not missing "the smallest letter or stroke" of it.

When Jesus said, "Whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven," they would have said, "Amen!"—and their nametags would have been modified the next day: "Pharisee—Great in the Kingdom of Heaven!"—or so they thought. They would have been thinking that Jesus was talking about them; after all, they *were* the most righteous—*just ask them!* They were always ready to explain why they were the most righteous, and everybody else was inferior (e.g. Matt. 12:2; 15:1-2; Lk. 18:11-12; Jn. 7:48-49; 8:41; 9:34).

It was a *total shock*—not only to the Pharisees, but to all those people who, week after week, were under the teaching of the Pharisees—when they heard that the de facto spiritual leaders of Israel didn't even qualify *to set foot* into the Kingdom of Heaven! They were on the outside, and you need something *fundamentally* different that goes *infinitely* beyond what they teach you! (see Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:16; cf. Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10) Trust me: what we call Verses 17, 18, 19, and 20—it was a *bombshell!*

In whatever way those various groups of people expected the Messiah to come, *none of them* were expecting somebody who would come humbly and meekly. The idea of a meek Messiah leading meek, contrite people—that was the *opposite* of *any* of their concepts of the Kingdom. They understood military power. They understood miracle power. I explained to you, back when we were in the Gospel of Mark: they even understood the power of compromise; they had done some things that they probably had to bite their tongues and swallow hard about, but they had compromised with Rome to keep the peace and keep their limited autonomy, as best they could. But they didn't understand the power of meekness.

The people as a whole—all of those groups—they eventually rejected Jesus because He systematically disappointed their messianic expectations. They first rejected Him, then they "hated" Him (Jn. 15:24), then they killed Him, because instead of approving of their version of religion as *they* saw it, He condemned it; instead of leading them to independence from Rome, He *disdained* revolutionary acts—He offered a way of *even greater* subservience! He even told them to submit to *Rome!* Wow!

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So, same outline today as for the first two Beatitudes—and probably, we'll keep it as we go along; it's really easy to take: Number 1—Who is Blessed? Who does He say is blessed. And Number 2—What Does This Blessing Include?

This is the third Beatitude. Just for momentum's sake, let's read the first three: Matthew 5:3, 4, and 5. Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth." That's the one for today: "Blessed are the gentle."

Now, "gentle" is the way that the New American Standard Bible translates the key word here. I love this translation; I use it all the time—but I'm going to probably, mostly today stick with the word "meek" instead of "gentle," and if you like to compare English translations, I think every other one that I read chose "meek." It's not that one is right and one is wrong, but I think "gentle" is a little bit too *gentle* of a word for what Jesus was talking about here. The Greek word means "mild," "patient"—yes, "gentle"—or, "tenderhearted." It describes a person who doesn't retaliate, a person who doesn't resent other people, a person who doesn't get bitter, doesn't root against anyone else, doesn't strike back in anger or personal revenge (see 1 Cor. 13:4-7).

You get a good idea of the meaning and the intent of this word that describes godly meekness when you look at all the uses of it in the New Testament. Now, you don't have to brace yourself—there are only four. Let me show you these four uses. The first one is Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 5—"Blessed are the gentle"—or, "meek"—"for they shall inherit the earth." So Jesus is pronouncing a blessing: "This is the kind of person who is going to be with Me when I rule the earth" (see Dan. 7:13-14; Mic. 4:1-8; Zech. 9:10; 14:9).

Then, Matthew 11:29—this is part of one of Jesus's *great* invitations. In Verse 28, He says: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." And then He says this, in Verse 29: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle"—or, "meek"—"and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." So Jesus says: "This is characteristic of Me."

Then, there's Matthew 21, Verse 5. This is when Jesus was entering Jerusalem in what we call the "Triumphal Entry"—again, *huge* crowds there, people shouting "Hosanna!" The crowds thought they were coming to the coronation, and Matthew quotes Zechariah 9:9. He says: "Say to the daughter of Zion"—that would be, to the Jews—"Behold your King is coming to you, gentle"—or, "meek"—"and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden." Now, how do kings come? They come on big white *stallions*! They come with *armies marching*! They come with *trumpets blasting*! They come with *crowns*! Jesus comes riding in on a *donkey*—talk about *assaulting* people's messianic expectations!

There's one more use of this word: it's First Peter Chapter 3, Verse 4. This verse is in the context of: what does a godly woman look like and act like? And he says that people ought to be able to observe your character, and describes it this way: First Peter 3:4—

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"Let it be the hidden person of the heart"—before that, the contrast is to dress and makeup and hair and all that stuff—"with the imperishable quality of a gentle"—or, "meek"—"and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."

So four times, that word is used. And you get a pretty good idea—whether you're going to translate it "gentle" or "meek"—you can tell, from those uses of the word, that meekness is a characteristic of true believers (e.g. Rom. 12:14-21; 1 Cor. 4:12-13; Phil. 4:5; Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Titus 3:2). That's *exactly* what Jesus is saying: "Blessed are the meek."

Secondly, you can tell that meekness is a characteristic of Jesus Himself (Is. 53:7; Phil. 2:6-8; 2 Cor. 10:1; 2 Pet. 2:23): "Come to Me *because* I am this way. You will want to be with Me, and I will provide rest for your souls."

And then it tells us that meekness is—and you can't get any more specific than this: "precious in the sight of God." That means: this is a quality that God values *highly*! You *want* to pursue this, because you want to glorify God (Ps. 115:1; 2 Cor. 5:9), because you want to be a good representative of who Christ is (2 Cor. 2:14; Phil. 2:15; 1 Jn. 4:17).

There is another form of the word that occurs in the New Testament; it's related to the same root, and the idea is also that meekness is the opposite of pride, the opposite of selfishness, the opposite of obstinacy, the opposite of inflexibility. Those all come naturally to us in the flesh, right? Pride, selfishness, being obstinate, being inflexible. This is the opposite of our fallen condition.

Just a couple of uses of the word that way: First Corinthians 4:21—Paul says to his friends in Corinth: "What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?"—or, "meekness." He had confronted all kinds of things—he *was* confronting all kinds of things in that church, and he says, "Okay, I'm going to come again. How you respond to this letter will determine what our relationship is going to be like. I mean, I love you enough that I will bring the rod." And he did not mean '57 Chevy—he meant a "rod of discipline" (Prov. 22:15). "I will come with Apostolic authority to correct what's wrong, *or*—you can respond to the Apostolic authority in my *letter*, and when I come, it'll be a whole different spirit.

Or, there's Galatians Chapter 6, Verse 1—"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness"—or, "meekness"—"each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." That verse is kind of a one-verse summary of the aspect of discipleship that we tend to call "Biblical Counseling." When someone stumbles, when someone wanders into a "trespass"—"trespass" is one of the nine words in the New Testament for sin—"you who are spiritual, restore such a one." And how do you do it? You come with "a spirit of meekness." Now, you call sin what it is (Matt. 18:15; Eph. 4:15; cf. Gal. 2:11), but you also realize: "*I could fall there!*" (see Jude 23). Be careful "that you too will not be tempted." So "meekness" or "gentleness" describes the attitude that has to accompany the restoration of a sinning brother or sister.

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One more: First Timothy 6:11. Paul says to Timothy: "But flee from these things"—things that are of the world—"you man of God, and pursue"—"pursue" is the Greek word *diōkō*, and it means "pursuit." When I was in second-year Greek, I had a couple of guys in my class, fellow students, who had both played linebacker in the NFL. They loved this word! "That's how I made my living! That guy who's carrying that oblong thing—*pursue him! Go after him!*" The opposite of it is "flee"—that's the word *pheugō*, from which we get "fugitive." We should *pursue*—it should be our *dogged endeavor* to keep going in this correction! "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness"—or, "meekness." Servants of God are exhorted to pursue meekness.

Every author that I've ever read on this subject—and I've read every one that I could ever find, either commenting on this passage or lexicographers, word-study books and things like that—every one that I have ever read on the concept of meekness, as conveyed by these Greek words that are from the same root, are always quick to point out: "Meekness" is not "weakness." "Meekness" is not "cowardliness" or "cowardice." The meek do not lack a sense of will; they don't lack a sense of duty; they don't lack commitment (compare Num. 12:3 with Acts 7:22). They're not namby-pambies, to be using a Hebrew word.

The meek *are* capable of strenuous action on behalf of others. Jesus says, "Come to Me *because* I'm meek." "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, *for* I am gentle"—or, "meek"—"and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). But understand: That's Jesus! That's *the same Jesus* who was *very angry* with the religionists of His day—especially the Pharisees—for twisting spirituality into the mere performance of duties. To use the terminology of Luke 18, they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (vs. 9; cf. Rom. 9:31-32; 10:3). Jesus was angry about that.

He was angry with those legalists for putting silly "burdens" on the backs of everyday people (Matt. 23:4); He says, With all of your things that you've added to the Scriptures, you take someone and you make him your disciple, and you make him "twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (vs. 15). *That's* what legalism does for you! Jesus was angry in a synagogue where He had miraculously healed a man's paralyzed hand, and the people refuse to believe; it says Jesus was angry with them (Mk. 3:5). Jesus was angry at the corruption of the temple that was brought about by the money changers and those selling animals—those were the ones under the leadership of the Sadducees. And remember: twice—at the beginning of His ministry, and then at the end of His ministry—He came in and He cleared out that entire outer court of the temple (Matt. 21:12; Jn. 2:15). And He did *not* say [timidly]: "Please, would you please leave?" He made a whip! And He was enough of a man that *nobody* resisted Him! That's Jesus who is "meek," so "meekness" obviously is not "weakness."

Jesus got angry at Peter when Peter was obstinate about getting the point. Peter says, "Oh, no, I'm not going to deny You! I'm going with You all the way to death!" And Jesus said, in a polite way, "Oh, Peter, shut up! You have no idea what you're talking about!" (see Jn. 13:38)

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What we deduce from those examples in the life of Jesus—and by the way: you see the same thing in prophets and others in the Bible—is that the Lord became angry, but *only* for the correct reasons, *only* with the correct motivation (cf. Ps. 7:11; Ezek. 22:31; Rom. 2:5; Rev. 14:9-10). The appropriate anger that comes in the life of a meek person is not *petty* anger, it's not over personal offenses and preferences, and "I like it done this way," etc. It is not unreasonable anger that results from losing control of your human passions (see Gal. 5:19-20; Jas. 1:20; cf. Acts 23:3). You've noticed how people like to do that—they'll pop off and they'll say something totally angry and absurd, and say, "Oh, well, I was just angry!" Well, just take that out—don't say "I was *just* angry." "I *sinned* in my unrighteous anger!" We have to understand: we can't excuse things that aren't excusable. The Lord's anger was always a *holy* reaction to what is *wrong* (e.g. Jn. 2:17). True meekness *has* a backbone. The backbone stands up for truth and for righteousness. Now, it does it "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), but it *does* it (Acts 17:16-17).

Understand, then, that true Christians—the ones who realize their spiritual beggarliness, that they have nothing to offer to God; those who mourn over their sins—they are the ones who are moved by the things that offend God (see Ps. 69:9; 119:136; Ezek. 9:4; Acts 17:16; 2 Pet. 2:7-8). And as a matter of fact, do you know: there's even a *command* in the New Testament that tells you to *be* angry? If you haven't thought of it before, there sure is! Ephesians Chapter 4, Verse 26—"Be angry"—and by the way, that *is* a command; that *is* an imperative; God tells you: "Be angry"—but He doesn't put the period there—"and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger." That's an allusion to Psalm 4:4, where it tells you that you *should* shake, you should quake, you should *tremble* in the proper fear of the Lord *so that* you do not sin (cf. Prov. 16:6b). And so he's saying: even when you're angered by the things that offend God, don't do it sinfully.

And then, Paul was guided to add the last part of that verse that makes a personal application. If there is something between you and another person; he says, "Don't leave it unresolved." He says: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." That's a proverbial way of saying: "Don't just ignore it—*deal* with it." Any violation of something that is holy and pure and good—it *should* evoke a response from you if you're walking with the Lord; you should want to make it right (Ps. 139:23-24).

So, "meekness" is *not* passive acceptance of sinful things; it's not a passive acceptance of evil practices in the world. It's also not grasping for peace at all cost, and ignoring truth and right. It has been well said that meekness is "anger controlled by God." It's where you care about what *God* cares about! You stand for truth. You stand for God. You want God's glory to show. You know what is good to do, and you want to do the good thing (Ps. 119:5). Meekness does not act out of self-interest; it acts boldly in the interest of God and His truth in the world, and it wants to bring *as many people into the circle as possible* (Acts 26:28-29; Rom. 9:2-3; 10:1; 1 Cor. 9:22; 2 Cor. 5:20; 2 Tim. 2:10).

I like this summary from Dr. Lawlor, one of my favorite commentators on the Sermon on the Mount. I quoted him the first week in this series. He writes this about meekness: "Whatever further may be said of this meekness, it is an inner state—an internal attitude of mind and disposition of heart which bows to the will of God with unquestioning

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submission. Inner meekness toward God works for outer meekness toward men. Perhaps the whole matter might best be explained as: Being controlled by God, and not by self." I like that; that's well done.

Who is Blessed? The meek, the gentle. What Does This Blessing Include? The last part of Verse 5—"Blessed are the gentle, for *they shall inherit the earth.*" Before we move on to the "inheritance" part, don't let the pronouns slip by you again. In the Beatitudes, the pronouns are very important. The word "they," like we've seen in the first two Beatitudes, is an emphatic pronoun; it's a nuance that you can do in and Greek that you can't do in English, without adding a bunch of words and making it sound rather loquacious. The meaning is: "They *and they alone*, only them, nobody else." *They* will inherit the earth.

God's way of doing things is the *opposite* of the world's way (Is. 55:8-9; cf. Matt. 21:42; Lk. 16:15b). "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs"—*and theirs alone*—"is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3); nobody else is getting in. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they"—*and they alone*—"shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4) as they are cleansed from their sins (Ps. 51:7-8). "Blessed are the gentle, for they"—*and they alone*—"shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

Oh, does *that* have connotations! "They shall inherit the earth" is obviously referring to the Millennial Kingdom, above all (see Rev. 5:10; cf. 1 Cor. 6:2). But we know that "the earth" belongs to the Lord (1 Cor. 10:26). Right now, the earth is under the control of a rebel king—Satan (Lk. 4:6). That's going to change in the future. Satan is now "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), he is "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4)—but that's going to change when Jesus returns (Rev. 20:2-3), and those who are to "reign with Christ" (Rev. 20:6) are going to inherit what is rightfully His (Rom. 8:17). And what is His? Well...*everything*! He is King of the earth. He is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:17; Rev. 17:14; 19:16). In Revelation 21:7, it says even the "new heaven" and the "new earth" (vs. 1) are part of the inheritance of the saints!

Or, consider these words from the Apostle Paul—and I *love it* that this is embedded in First Corinthians, which is the letter to the most messed-up church that Paul dealt with; they had the most problems! Listen to what Paul says to them: Though they were immature in their faith, though they had their factions, though they were doing all kinds of immature, foolish things—in First Corinthians 3:21 to 23, he says: "All things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas"—that's because three of the factions in the church were following Paul, Apollos, and Cephas—"or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God." So if God gives an inheritance to Christ, and you are "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3) by "faith" (Gal. 3:26), you are a "fellow heir" of His, *exactly* as it says in Romans Chapter 8 (vs. 17)—and we will reign with Him when He reigns (2 Tim. 2:12a; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21). The world might not recognize it now—and in our culture, it's *definitely* going the opposite direction—but the world is *ours*; the earth is *ours*. The rightful owner is coming back to take possession, and He is going to *boot out* the trespassers—the ones who don't belong (Zeph. 3:11-12). Then it will truly be ours by inheritance.

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I told you this sermon wasn't preached in a vacuum. It was to real people in a real place in real time in a real setting on a real day, in actual history. But it also didn't come from a vacuum, in that Jesus, during that night in prayer before this, He didn't start sketching down ideas on the back of an envelope, of clever things that He might say. He was speaking from the heart of God—He was God in human flesh (Col. 2:9). And there's a lot of parallel between this Beatitude and Psalm 37.

Jesus had read Psalm 37. I know that. He knew the whole thing; He inspired it all. In *that* context, it's addressed to Israel, of course; it's in the Old Testament—"Psalms" is like the hymnbook of the Old Testament—and it is reaffirming promises to Israel and their inheritance of the land that God promised to them. He told Abraham (Gen. 12:7), Isaac (Gen. 26:1-5), Jacob (Gen. 35:9-12), and then He reaffirmed it to King David, that he would be the king (2 Sam. 7:8-11), and his heirs would be the king over that part of the world (2 Sam. 7:12-18; 2 Chr. 7:18). And in that psalm, there's a lot said to the meek; the meek are told not to "fret" (vs. 1), not to become impatient or overanxious over the apparent success of the ungodly in the world. They actually *have* success in the world—but it's fleeting; it's going to end (see Prov. 10:25a; 24:20; cf. Ps. 1:5; 73:16-20; 92:7). And Jesus, I think, in this one-sentence Beatitude, was, in essence, giving a miniature exposition of a big chunk of Psalm 37. Psalm 37 talks about Israel inheriting "the land" (vs. 9); Jesus talks about His people—which is *beyond* the Jews, Jews *and* Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-16), "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9)—inheriting "the earth." So He's reasoning from the lesser—which is *spectacularly* fantastic—to the greater, which is "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

So I want you to look at part of Psalm 37. I think that in my tenure at Heritage Bible Church, this is probably the longest single cross reference I've ever used, but this is cool. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." I think this was in the mind of the Lord as He said this. Come with me to Psalm 37, just the first 22 verses. You'll notice: it is formatted as poetry, because it *is* poetry; this is a poem, it is a song. You don't recognize poetry when it's translated from one language to another, because you can't detect the rhyme, you can detect the meter and all of that, but Hebrew poetry goes in "parallelism," where each line builds upon or contrasts with something before or after it. But it doesn't *sound* like poetry. "There was a gas man named Peter, who, while looking around for the meter, he touched a leak with his light, he arose out of sight—and, as anyone can tell by reading this, he also destroyed the meter." That's how I illustrate the fact that you can't put poetry into a different language.

Psalm 37:1-22. Listen to this: "Do not fret"—mark that phrase and listen for it; it's a theme here. "Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrongdoers. For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb"—in light of eternity, they won't be around that long. Verse 3—"Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him"—like we're waiting for the Lord to come and bring the Kingdom. "Do not fret"—there it is again—"Do not fret because of him who

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prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger and forsake wrath; do not fret; it leads only to evildoing." Now, let that one sink in: How much does fretting over things in the world—things that are going *wrong* in the world, *evil people getting away with evil things in the world*, the world *blessing* evil people (Rom. 1:32), the world telling you that you're stupid and wrong and *divisive* for actually standing for the truth! Fretting *only* leads to "evildoing." It never makes you more holy. It never makes you more happy. It never makes you more sanctified. "Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing."

Read on: Verse 9—"For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will"—here it is—"inherit the land. Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; and you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there. But the humble will"—here it is—"inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity. The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees his day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow to cast down the afflicted and the needy, to slay those who are upright in conduct. Their sword will enter their own heart, and their bows will be broken. Better is the little of the righteous than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked will be broken, but the Lord sustains the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their inheritance will be forever"—there it is again! "Blessed are you...for you will inherit."

Verse 19—"They will not be ashamed in the time of evil, and in the days of famine they will have abundance. But the wicked will perish; and the enemies of the Lord will be like the glory of the pastures, they vanish—like smoke they vanish away. The wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives. For those"—now, see if this sounds a little familiar—"those blessed by Him will inherit the land, but those cursed by Him will be cut off." Why, you might even say: "Blessed are the gentle, for they"—*and they alone*—"shall inherit the earth."

That's three Beatitudes down. It's pretty easy to see how to apply those first three Beatitudes. The first one is: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs"—*and theirs alone*—"is the kingdom of heaven." So, that leads you to ask: How do you feel about your spiritual condition? It's popular these days to say: "I'm *spiritual*, but not *religious*." And that's code for: "I don't want to talk to you! I reject everything you say before your mouth even starts moving." That's a way to say: "I've got my way, you've got yours, and I'm not about to deal with right and wrong." That's one of those good-sounding ways to deny what the Lord taught in the first Beatitude. Do you *understand* that on your own, you are *beggarly poor* when it comes to spiritual things? You have nothing—*nothing*—that will bring you a millimeter closer to God (see Phil. 3:9; cf. Gal. 3:21). No one but the people who realize their poverty of spirit will enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Lk. 18:13-14).

Second Beatitude: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they"—*and they alone*—"shall be comforted." So, how do you feel about your sin? The obvious difference between a Christian and an unsaved person is the attitude toward sin and toward Jesus Christ. Do you love the Lord and cringe from your sin (Jn. 14:15, 21; Rom. 7:22-24); or do you love your sin and cringe from the Lord? (Ps. 36:1-2; Pr. 14:2; Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn. 2:15; Jas. 4:4)

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If you don't want to spend time with the Lord in His Word, *there's a very good chance* that maybe you're afraid of something you know you will find there (Heb. 4:12; cf. Jn. 3:20; Ps. 119:5-6). But if your sin makes you mourn (Ps. 38:18; Jer. 8:6; cf. Jb. 42:6), you will indeed find His Word to be a comfort to your soul (2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 30:11-12; 32:5; Is. 61:10; Rom. 15:4).

And then today's Beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they"—*and they alone*—"will inherit the earth." How do you feel about yourself? Are you the most important thing in your life? Someone once said: "A man wrapped up in himself is a small package, indeed!" But that's where we all are, right? That's why Jesus—and the Old Testament as well—says: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39). We all love ourselves (Eph. 5:29). If you would only put as much effort into taking care of your neighbor as you put into taking care of yourself, what a wonderful world it would be! (Rom. 13:10)

Meekness says: "I'm not here to defend myself, but I'm here to stand for the Lord. I will die defending the Lord and His truth." (Acts 5:29; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:7; Rev. 12:11) Meekness shows itself in humble obedience to the Word of God (Jn. 10:27; Rev. 14:12). Meekness means: I'm finished with *me* for good—I want what the Lord wants (Lk. 9:23).

If you are meek, all of your efforts that you render now—they're going to be rewarded. You might have to wait for the Kingdom (2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12). Right now, you might just get persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12; cf. Prov. 3:25; Matt. 5:11-12; Jn. 15:19; 1 Pet. 4:4), but you will have an "eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15; cf. 1 Pet. 1:4) as you "reign" with Christ "forever" (Rev. 22:5).

So take these first three Beatitudes, and you can summarize them: Number 1—You might say it's kind of like: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The second one—Hate your sin, and turn from it (Ps. 97:10; Prov. 28:13; Is. 55:7; 59:20). The third one—live knowing that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:10-11), that He is the Master and you are the slave (Eph. 6:6; cf. Matt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46; 1 Pet. 3:15).

And that's only three! There's more to come. Lord willing: next Lord's Day, next Beatitude.

Let's pray:

Father, thank You for these words of Your Son. Thank You for how they are preserved in Your Word, and thank You for how we can mine the depths of them. And we know that no matter how many times we visit this mine, there is always more. You know each of our hearts here. Oh, Father, it comes so naturally to us—it's so easy for us to say, "Here are my plans; please bless them. Here are my convictions; thank You that I'm right." And really, we just need to bow our hearts before You. Have Your way with us to that end, we pray. Please don't let a heart go away from here trusting in anything other than our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.