

THE BEATITUDES: Our King — His Kingdom — His Citizens

4. Blessed Are the Meek

Matthew 5:5

The descendants of Abraham had been longing for and looking for the arrival of the Messiah — God's anointed King — who would deliver Israel from the rule of the pagan Roman empire — take His seat on the throne of David in Jerusalem — and under His rule they would flourish in the Land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants forever.

We read in the Gospel of Luke (3:1) that around 28 AD the people of Israel were *looking for / anticipating / expecting* the Messiah to come. So much so that many believed that a man named John, who was preaching and baptizing people in the Judean wilderness, was the Messiah. They even asked John if he was the Messiah. John told them plainly that he was not. They were so disappointed that they said, *"If you're not the Messiah, who are you?"*

John 1:23; 26-27 (ESV) ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁶.... "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie

John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and he was the greatest of the prophets because he was the prophet who got to see and identify the King that all the other prophets had pointed to and promised. Check this out!

John 1:29 (ESV) ²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

WOW! The King is the Lamb of God! What kind of king is called a lamb? Not just **a** lamb, but **the** Lamb of God?

The One the nation of Israel was looking for, longing for, had finally come but He was not going to be the King they expected. He was not going to Jerusalem to receive honor and power, live in a palace and rule from a throne. He was going to Jerusalem to **die** on a cross.

Jesus is King unlike any other.

QUOTE: Augustine (4th century) — *“The Lord has established his sovereignty from a (cross).”*

QUOTE: Dietrich Bonhoeffer — *“A king who dies on the cross must be the king of a rather strange kingdom.”*

Here in the Beatitudes (and in the whole of the Sermon on the Mount) Jesus paints a magnificent portrait of the cross-shaped character of those who live under His rule on earth. The ethos of Heaven invades the earth through the transformed lives of redeemed rebels!

Last week we noted that there is a **perfect progression** in the **formation** of the *attitudes* — the *character* — the *way of being* that marks His Kingdom and His citizens.

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

Entrance into His Kingdom and into the life that flourishes begins with *a way of being* that Jesus called *poor in spirit*. This *way of being* is the outcome of discovering who I am and what I am in light of who God is — spiritually bankrupt before the Holy God of the universe.

This is where life in the Kingdom begins because without coming to the realization that I am a sinner who is hopelessly guilty before Him, I will NEVER see my NEED for a SAVIOR!



Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted

I mourn over my own sin and my own brokenness. The way of being that grieves over my own sin leads to flourishing because it is there that I discover His glorious grace and mercy!

I don't just mourn over my own sin and brokenness; I mourn over the sin and brokenness of world around me. Our King models for His citizens grief and mourning for the world that desperately needs Him. He invites us to join in his grief and his sorrow, and in His tears over our broken world.

In **Matthew 5:5** the progression in the **formation** of the *attitudes* — the *character* — the *way of being* that marks His Kingdom and His citizens character continues.

Matthew 5:5 (ESV) Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

First of all — Jesus was actually quoting scripture. He quoted Psalm 37:11

***Psalm 37:11 (NIV)** ¹¹But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.*

Jesus wanted them to know something about His nature — and how those in His Kingdom can flourish (peace and prosperity) in a world that is adversarial and even hostile towards them.

Jesus quoted **Psalm 37** to give them a clue. By the way, that's how rabbis would teach. They would quote a verse expecting their students to know the rest of the passage. So, here when he references Psalm 37:11, He does it so they will reference the rest of the passage. So, let's read Psalm 37:1-11.

Psalm 37:1–11 (NIV)** ¹Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; ²for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. ³Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. ⁴Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵Commit your way to the Lord; **trust in him and he will do this:** ⁶He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. ⁷Be still before the Lord and **wait patiently for him;** do not fret **when** people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. ⁸Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. ⁹**For** those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. ¹⁰A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. ¹¹**But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.

The question of **Psalm 37** is **who** is going to receive and flourish in the land? The answer is, the meek. In the psalm, the “meek” are those who wait patiently for the LORD — who trust in the LORD — to win the day for them.

I believe this is so relevant to Christians in the current political and moral climate. At the time of Matthew 5 Israel looked a lot like Psalm 37. They were living as a conquered people in the land that had been promised to them by God. The land promised to them was conquered by Rome. The land promised to Abraham and

his descendants was occupied and governed by the Romans. Rome was prospering, while the descendants of Abraham — God’s chosen people — were being overtaxed and killed for treason; and all along Rome flaunted its idols before the fiercely monotheistic Jews.

AGAIN — by way of the Beatitudes (and the Sermon on the Mount) Jesus is making it clear that the heart of the King and the ways of the King are radically dissonant to *the way of being* that fallen culture values and works from.

The world (the collection of men and women organizing their lives without God) has an operating system (if-you-would). That operating system has been corrupted by sin. Ever since Genesis 3 individuals and societies have operated on the premise that the strong, those who impose their will to have their way, will inherit the earth; if you want to have your place in this world, have the life you want and the things you want, you have to put yourself before others, assert yourself and impose your own will on others. The ethos of fallen culture is “survival of the fittest.”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones — *The world thinks in terms of strength and power, of ability, self-assurance and aggressiveness. That is the world's idea of conquest and possession. The more you assert yourself and express yourself, the more you organize and manifest your powers and ability, the more likely you are to succeed and get on.*¹

In the Beatitudes (and in the whole of the Sermon on the Mount) Jesus declares that those who embrace Him as savior and King belong to an entirely different kingdom that has a totally different ethos! The ethos of the King and His Kingdom is “survival of the meekest”!

Leon Morris — *Self-assertion is never a Christian virtue*²

What IS meekness?

¹ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*

² Morris, L. (1992). [*The Gospel according to Matthew*](#) (p. 98). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Let's start with what meekness is not. Meekness is not a naturally passive temperament. Meekness is not indecision. Meekness is not laziness. Meekness is not fragility. Meekness is not apathy or indifference. Meekness is not the kind of personality that just wants to remain neutral.

Meekness is most emphatically **not weakness**. Do you remember who was the meekest man in the Old Testament?

Numbers 12:3 (ESV) ³Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.

When we look at Moses in the Scriptures he is in no way some weak, passive, indifferent, fragile, “*whatever!!*” kind of a guy. While Moses was living as the son of Pharaoh's daughter he saw and killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew. Moses smashed the tablets of stone on which were inscribed the 10 commandments. He ground the golden calf to a powder, scattered it on water and made the Israelites drink it. Not a hint of weakness in that man!

Let's start with how the listeners of Jesus understood the word “meek.”

FIRST — The Greek word for meek — ‘*praus*’ (prah-oose) — means gentle or mild. But in the vocabulary of the ancient Greek language, the **meek** person was not passive or easily pushed around.

Dave Guzik — *The main idea behind the word “meek” was strength under control, like a strong stallion that was trained to do the job instead of running wild.*³

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones called it the “*taming of the Lion*.” This is so amazing:

Revelation 5:5 (NLT) ⁵But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, “Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

³ Guzik, D. (2013). [Matthew](#) (Mt 5:5).

How did the Messiah — the Lion of the tribe of Judah win the victory? As the Lamb of God! More on that in a bit.

BUT HERE’S THE DEAL — Jesus announces the Kingdom of God — and describes the nature of His Kingdom and those who are in it by pointing them back to [Psalm 37](#). Those who are in the Kingdom are poor in spirit; they weep of the reality of sin and brokenness in their own lives and in the world around them — AND they are meek.

As with each of these Beatitudes, the best way to understand **this character** trait — **this way of being** — is to observe Jesus, because He is the perfect example of *this way of being*!

***Matthew 11:29 (ESV)** ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

We could say that Jesus is the incarnation of meekness. The Lord Jesus (who is *the Lion of Judah*) came and conquered as *the Lamb of God*.

Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time on the Sunday before Passover. We call it Palm Sunday. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem on that Sunday was the fulfillment of the Messianic promise made by the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 9:9).

***Matthew 21:4–5 (CSB)** ⁴This took place so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled: ⁵Tell Daughter Zion, “See, **your King** is coming to you, **gentle (meek)**, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

BY CONTRAST — Just a few days earlier the Roman governor by the name of Pontius Pilate entered Jerusalem. He would have entered the city with banners of the Roman Empire over head — trumpets heralding his approach. He would have entered the city of Jerusalem with a huge military army and huge war horses to remind the Jews of the crushing military power of Caesar and his Empire.

But Jesus — who is the creator — the King above all kings didn’t enter our broken world in a display of power so that the world will shudder and collapse before

Him in abject terror. He was meek and lowly in the way He entered our world. He was meek and lowly in the way He lived. He was meek and lowly in the way He died.

It is absolutely amazing to see when and where Jesus exercised His power. Jesus is the Creator and King of the universe. He took on human flesh to serve and save the very world that rejected Him. He exercised His absolute power not to crush, but to heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, restore hearing to the deaf, enable the mute to speak, make the lame to walk, cleanse lepers, deliver men and women from demonic power, and even raise the dead back to life. The true and forever King exercised His power not to crush, but to make lives whole.

It is absolutely amazing to see when and where Jesus *didn't* exercise His power. Throughout human history how have rulers conquered? They send their people into battle. They established their kingdoms by the blood of their citizens. But not Jesus. He would establish His rule — His Kingdom on earth by shedding His own blood.

*Isaiah 53:7 he was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open his mouth. He was led like a **lamb** to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shearers as silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

Back to the scene in **Revelation 5**

*Revelation 5:2-5 (ESV) ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has **conquered**, so **that** he can open the scroll and its seven seals."*

Jesus had the right to open the scroll (the title deed to the earth) — not because He unleashed His omnipotence on the planet that had rebelled against His rule.

*Revelation 5:6 (ESV) ⁶And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a **Lamb** standing, as though it had been slain....*

The promised Messiah of Israel — the Lion of Judah — was the ultimate picture of **power restrained**. Every step leading to the cross was taken in meekness; taken in absolute trust and absolute submission to the will of the Father.

In the Garden of Gethsemene Jesus said

***Luke 22:42 (ESV)** ⁴².... “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”*

When they came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemene they came in a display of force.

***Matthew 26:47; 50 (ESV)** ⁴⁷.... Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people..... ⁵⁰.... Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.*

Really? The creator of the universe overpowered by a mob with clubs?!!

When He was betrayed by Judas and arrested, Peter tried to defend Jesus with a sword. Jesus said

***Matthew 26:53 (ESV)** ⁵³Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?*

When Jesus was mocked and beaten and subjected to the greatest miscarriage of justice in the history of Israel in the house of the high priest, He refused to retaliate.

When He stood before Pilate

***John 19:10–11 (ESV)** ¹⁰ Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?”
¹¹Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above....*

Rome forced the condemned to carry their own cross through the heart of the city — that was the way Caesar told the world **that** his empire had absolute authority over your life — that Rome was right and you were wrong — Rome would even make you carry your own electric chair (if you would) to the exact place they were going to execute you.

But the death of Jesus on a Roman cross was not about the power of Rome. It was in reality about the One who *possessed all power in heaven and earth* **restraining** His power — not exercising His infinite power to save Himself — so that He could save the world that had taken up arms against Him (you and me) — so that He could save you and me from the penalty of sin that we deserve because we exerted our wills against Him — save us from the power of sin that we are powerless against.

JESUS IS A KING LIKE NO OTHER

CHECK THIS OUT —

Psalm 2:1–8 (ESV) ¹Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, ³“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” ⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” ⁷I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

Jesus is the Righteous King who gives us righteousness. And He is the Meek King who receives the kingdom — and then distributes it to us. He’s the inheritor and he’s the one that then shares his inheritance.

CHRISTIANS — We cannot, we must not miss this: The **ways** of Jesus, the **values** of Jesus, the **agenda** of Jesus are enigmatic to fallen man — they are baffling to the world outside of Christ. That fact has massive implications for our lives individually and for the Church corporately. In a series of studies in the Sermon on the Mount preached in the mid 1950s, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it like this:

*Once more, then, we are reminded at the very beginning that the Christian is altogether different from the world. It is a difference in quality, an essential difference. He is a new man, a new creation; he belongs to an entirely different kingdom. And not only is the world unlike him; it cannot possibly understand him. He is an enigma to the world. **And if you and I are not**, in this primary sense.... **enigmas** to the non-Christians around us, then this tells us a great deal about our profession of the Christian faith. ⁴*

Let's apply that to the way we live and respond when the world treats us the way it treated our King. Can we say that meekness is our *way of being* when the wicked prosper — because we're not looking at the wicked; we're looking at our King; we're putting our hope in our King?

David Turner and Darrell Bock — *True meekness is an unassuming humility that rests in God (Ps 37:7) and renounces self-effort to relieve oneself from oppression....⁵*

*Psalm 37:7-8 (NIV) ⁷Be still before the Lord and **wait patiently for him**; do not fret **when** people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. ⁸Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.*

Can we say that meekness is our way of being because we are secure in what the Father says about us and what He has promised to do?

Craig Blomberg — *Christian hope does not look forward to inhabiting a particular country but to ruling with Christ over all the globe and ultimately to enjoying an entirely re-created earth and heavens (Rev 20–22).⁶*

Everything is moving towards THAT.

⁴ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*

⁵ Turner, D., & Bock, D. L. (2005). [*Cornerstone biblical commentary, Vol 11: Matthew and Mark*](#) (p. 76). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁶ Blomberg, C. (1992). [*Matthew*](#) (Vol. 22, p. 99). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

BACK TO LLOYD-JONES

And if you and I are not, in this primary sense.... enigmas to the non-Christians around us, then this tells us a great deal about our profession of the Christian faith

Let's apply that to the way we deal with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Again, we need to remember that meekness is not a matter of natural temperament. Listen — I have known Christians who by most everyone's standard seem shy or are super soft spoken — but meek they are not! Disagree with them and it is their way or the highway. On the other hand, there are those who are intense, driven, strong — but they consciously make it a point to not impose their will or their opinion and instead trust God to work out His perfect will — not their own will.

Meekness is the result of having a true view of myself (poor in spirit) which changes my attitude and conduct in dealing with others. I no longer see myself as above others. I now see myself beneath them and from that position I seek to help those above me to their destination in their relationship with Jesus — to help them reach God's calling on their lives. In differences or even conflict I trust in God rather than insisting on my way, my will.

AGAIN — David Turner and Darrell Bock — *True meekness is an unassuming humility that rests in God (Ps 37:7) and renounces self-effort to achieve one's wants and needs.*⁷

Meekness is living from and resting in the truth of the goodness and sovereignty of God. This means that the meek person does not have to have everything done their way — doesn't need to demand their rights. Like Jesus, they are willing to deny self in order to submit to the final authority and rule of the Father.

If you are bent on imposing your will — **especially if** you do so **knowing** how your action will result in hurting others — you are assuredly not meek!

⁷ Turner, D., & Bock, D. L. (2005). [*Cornerstone biblical commentary, Vol 11: Matthew and Mark*](#) (p. 76). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

How about when someone rebukes you - calls you out on something?

John Stott — *“I believe Dr Lloyd-Jones is right to emphasize... that it is comparatively easy to be honest with ourselves before God and acknowledge ourselves to be sinners in his sight. He goes on: ‘But how much more difficult it is to allow other people to say things like that about me! I instinctively resent it. We all of us prefer to condemn ourselves than to allow somebody else to condemn us.’”⁸*

Meekness always implies a teachable spirit. We constantly need to be learning from our King. He actually invites us to learn from Him. *He said, LEARN from Me for I am gentle (meek).*

Here’s what He teaches us —

1 Peter 2:21–23 (ESV) ²¹*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* ²²*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.* ²³*When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

QUOTE — *We are to leave everything — ourselves, our rights, our cause, our whole future in the hands of God, and especially so if we feel we are suffering unjustly.... We leave ourselves and our cause, and our rights and everything with God, with a quietness in spirit and in mind and heart.*

⁸ John Stott. “The Message of the Sermon on the Mount.”