

Blessed Are the Meek

Matthew 5:5

Dr. Michael Helms

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Last October when Tina and I stayed on an Amish farm, I spoke with Amish farmer Enos Smith about his horses.

He farms with Percheron horses and he has two teams which he uses to pull his plows, wagons, and other farm equipment.

Over the course of two days I watched as the horses carried loads of corn across a clover pasture down the barn where the corn was ground up and put into a silo for the winter. It was like going back in time and watching a scene from 75 years ago.

The last thing I watched Enos do was back up his team of horses and attach his wagon to a gas-powered square hay baler which he needed to return to a friend.

I'd never seen anyone put a team of horses in reverse before. I never thought about a team of horses having a reverse.

The strength of those horses was harnessed and Enos had them under his command and control. If you can picture such an image in your mind, then you have a good metaphor for meekness. Meekness is strength under control.

It's like sitting on top of a Harley CVO Pro Street Breakout that has a Screamin' Eagle Twin Cam 110. That's a powerful motorcycle. It's meek as long as its power is under control.

If you are like me, that's not how you tend to think about meekness.

Many people equate meekness with weakness. There was nothing weak about those Percheron horses or a Harley Davidson motorcycle.

Percherons are strong animals. But as that farmer backed those horses up, their power had to be focused and controlled. Anything less and they would have backed up too fast and too far and crushed his wagon and his friend's hay baler.

Harleys are easily ridden out from under you. You can lay one down in a curve if you don't back off on the gas. Those who learn to control their power can ride into the sunset.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

The temptation when we have strength is to say, "I'll claim my earth now! I'm strong enough, I'll just take it. You can't stop me."

Why do the rich get richer? Because we can. Notice I said we because we are all rich in something.

Powerful people often have issues with meekness. When people discover power, it's very difficult to control it.

When David committed sexual sin by taking advantage of Bathsheba and then sent her husband Uriah to the front lines of battle, God sent the prophet Nathan to confront the king.

Nathan told King David a story about two men who lived in a city. One man was rich and the other was poor. The rich man had a lot of sheep but the poor man had one female lamb which he had raised with his children. It was a pet. He let it drink out of his cup and he shared his food with it and it went to sleep in his lap.

One day a traveler came through and the rich man needed to prepare some food for the guest but instead of taking a lamb from his own flock, he killed the poor man's lamb and served it to him. That story angered the king so much that he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:5b-7a)

Without meekness, power and strength can easily lead us to sin because we have an appetite for the earth and all therein.

Why do you think Satan took Jesus up on a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and said, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me"? (Matthew 4:9)

The reason is that Satan is often successful in getting us to sacrifice our integrity for power. If we can get a little bit of earth with the power we have, most of the time that is a temptation grab we cannot refuse.

Many times we don't care if we hurt or wound others in the process.

We lie, cheat, gossip, disparage, wound, embarrass, belittle, abuse, undermine, backstab, put down, use passive aggressive behavior, bully, hold grudges, or shun, whatever we find that is within our power to dominate and control another person and promote our agenda.

David was overcome by the temptation of the flesh and then by the illusion that because of his power he could cover up his sin.

He had the power to do all of this. There was no one to stop him; no one to tell him he couldn't do it; and no one to hold him accountable – except God.

David had not always lived this way. Let me use the same man to show you something about meekness.

King Saul, the first king of Israel, was jealous of David. David enjoyed immense popularity because he had defeated the Giant Goliath and saved his country when he was just a teenager,

bringing him down with a sling and a rock, and then he used Goliath's own sword to sever his head. He became more popular than the king.

King Saul made David one of his generals and when they returned from their military campaigns "the women sang to one another as they made merry, 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands.'

Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?'

So Saul eyed David from that day on." 1 Samuel 18:7-9

Saul could not stand for anyone to be more loved or more liked than he was and that made him very angry and jealous of David to the point that he began to plot how he could get rid of him. It became so personal with King Saul that he began hunting David as if David were a criminal or a wild animal.

Some people with strength don't like people with opposing views and will not tolerate them. They seek to claim as much of the earth as possible and see nothing wrong with it. They like to eliminate their enemies, too.

David had to run for his life. Saul got word that David was in the wilderness of En Gedi so he took three companies of the best men and set out in search of him.

Saul came to a cave and he went in to relieve himself. Of all the places in En Gedi to stop, both men chose to stop at the same cave. Caves must have been the bathrooms of antiquity.

David and his men were huddled far back in the same cave.

Now David respected Saul because Samuel the prophet had anointed him as king. David considered this God's anointing, so even though Saul was his enemy, he didn't want to kill him or harm him.

While Saul had his back to David in the cave, David crept up behind him and cut off a piece of his royal robe. Then he waited until Saul got outside the cave and he called out to him.

David fell to his knees and bowed in reverence but then he showed him the piece of robe he cut off and told the king he could have killed him, but didn't. He told the king he wasn't against him and that his hand wouldn't touch him. This is meekness—strength under control.

The king didn't understand this kind of mercy.

King Saul replied, "You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. Today you have explained how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands. For who has ever found an enemy, and sent the

enemy safely away? So may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. (2 Samuel 24:17-19 NRSV).

This is meekness.

Jesus said that he will give us a blessing if we treat others this way. He said that we will inherit the earth.

The earth is a good thing. The Lord made the earth. Yet we don't have to use any of our power to make grabs for the earth or anything earthy. If we are disciples of Jesus and we live out this beatitude, Jesus said that we will inherit the earth.

Before the resurrection, Jesus' disciple Peter did not understand this uncommon sense.

In a display of strength, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the Roman soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane when they came to arrest Jesus.

But "Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?'" (Matthew 26:52-54 NRSV)

From there Jesus went to the cross where he displayed his strength through meekness, as his power remained focused on God of heaven, his mother and the beloved disciple, the thief who asked to be remembered, and the forgiveness of those who had executed him.

Jesus did not come to claim the earth because the earth already belonged to him. It was made through him.

Jesus came to reclaim us and he did by living his life as an example and by giving his life – taking our sins upon himself.

However, his kingdom on this earth is unorthodox. It's uncommon. To live out the beatitudes is to live a different kind of life.

Only a few are willing to follow his methodology. It caused King Saul to ask David, "When a man meets his enemy, does he send him down the road with a blessing?"

If we live with meekness, it will cause others to ask questions like that of us, too.

Why? Because meekness is a gift. It is an uncommon gift. It is a gift of those who have the strength and love of Christ within them.

We bless others, even our enemies, not because they deserve it, but because we have been empowered to give it. It causes people to wonder, "Why would that person do such a thing?" It is because Christ lives. It is because Christ lives with us.

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