

## HOMILY AT ST. MATTHEW ORTHODOX CHURCH

JULY 17, 2022

### “THE BEATITUDES, PART 3: BLESSED ARE THE MEEK--- MATTHEW 5:5”

This summer, for several weeks, instead of preaching like usual on the assigned epistle or gospel readings, I am doing a series of sermons on the Beatitudes taught by our Lord Jesus Christ. I am using the version of the Beatitudes recorded in the gospel of St. Matthew in chapter 5.

In the Beatitudes, the Lord tells how to be blessed; how to live in the Kingdom of Heaven while still in this world.

Today, we look at the third Beatitude as given in Matthew 5:5---“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” Christ tells us here that one day this world will belong to the meek. “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”

In the Beatitudes, the Lord turns our usual thinking upside down. Our normal thinking is that the powerful and arrogant already have the earth! And they aren't about to turn it over to the meek! But Jesus says just the opposite: the *meek* will inherit the earth.

We generally assume that the powerful will always come out on top. But reality says that's not true. Think back to such powerful men as Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Hitler..... Where are they and their empires today? Their power was quite temporary.

The powerful and arrogant do not inherit the earth. One writer, Robert Horton, says the only earth they end up inheriting is enough dirt to be buried in! (Robert Horton, A Devotional Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Revell, 1909, p. 38)

An example of short-lived power is Adolf Hitler. He took over Germany in 1933 and, for a little while, took over many countries. He promised a 1000-year Reich, but he was a miserable failure. His Reich only lasted 12 years! By March, 1945, he had lost almost everything he had conquered, and had lost much of Germany. And the German people, for the most part, weren't so excited about him any more. One of his last speeches was given in a small town in that month of March, 1945, just two months before his final defeat and suicide. The crowd showed up but did not get excited about his speech

like in the old days. They were tired of Hitler by then and knew his days were numbered. As was usual, at the end of the speech, an assistant of Hitler yelled out to the crowd, “Heil Hitler!”, expecting the crowd to roar those words out as well, as was always done in Germany. Instead, there was almost total silence. Hitler’s brief time was up. (Hitler, 1936-45, Nemesis, Ian Kershaw, Norton, p. 766)

The powerful, the arrogant----they think they have inherited the earth. They are wrong. Jesus, as always, is right---it is the *meek* who will inherit the earth! For one day the Lord will come back, as we will state together in the Creed in just a few minutes. On that Day, He will change this old world into the New Heaven and New Earth. A far better place than now! And He will hand it over to the meek to rule with Him forever.

So Christ says it is blessed to be meek. But what does meek mean? Commonly, people think being meek means being weak and wimpy. But that’s not what the word means in the Bible. The actual Biblical meaning of “meek” is someone who is very strong because of great self-control. A truly meek person is strong, not weak.

A great example is St. Moses. Have you read about him in the Old Testament? Or even seen him portrayed by Charlton Heston in the famous movie, “The Ten Commandments”? A mighty and strong fellow who led the ancient Hebrews out of slavery. He stood up to the Pharaoh. He led the people for 40 years, right to the edge of the Promised Land. Moses was tough, tough, tough! One of the toughest men who have ever lived.

How does the Bible describe Moses? Numbers 12:3---“The man Moses was very meek, more than all men on earth.” Moses---the meekest man in the world! A man of inner strength and self-control. A man who was truly meek because of his inner strength, self-control, and having God in control of his words and actions.

So how can we be meek like Moses? We have to get strong to get meek.

Now Moses wasn’t always meek. When young he lost his temper one time and killed an Egyptian. Then he had to leave Egypt and go hide out for years in the wilderness as a shepherd. And while in the desert tending the sheep he had many hours to think and to pray and to draw closer and closer to God. He became meek and strong. And then when the time was right, God sent him to Egypt to change the world.

To get meeker and stronger, we have to, like Moses, draw closer to God. We should make that the central thing in our lives—to draw closer to the Lord. Then we will become meeker. You can’t get very meek on your own---

it only happens by drawing closer and closer to Christ.

Before I close, another World War II story.....In 1940 the Germans brutally bombed England in the Blitz. There was great concern for the children of London----both for their physical safety and also concern that they would be greatly traumatized by having to live through it all. So many children were sent out to small towns where no bombs would ever fall. They would be cut off from their parents for long months but taken in by volunteers to live in their homes. (If you have read the book or seen the film, “The Lion, the Witch, and The Wardrobe” the children in that story by C. S. Lewis were part of this situation.)

Psychologists and sociologists did studies comparing the level of traumatization between children who were safe in the country and those who remained in the horrors of being bombed in London. To their surprise, they found out that the children who were safe in the country were more traumatized than the children that stayed in London. The trauma of long separation was very hard for them. The children back in London often went through terrible things----but they were home with their parents and were not so badly traumatized! That close relationship with their parents was more beneficial than safety from German bombs. (B. W. Woods, Understanding Suffering, Baker House, 1974)

For us to become meek and strong, a close relationship with the Lord is the most important factor.

How are you doing at being meek? You can test yourself-----  
----Can you take an insult without lashing back?  
----Can you forgive those who hurt you?  
----Can you be kind to someone who is unkind to you?  
----Can you control your behavior so as to avoid sinning?

If we can't do those things then we still have a ways to go to become meek. And the solution, as it was for Moses, is to deepen our relationship with God.

One day, our Lord Jesus Christ will come back. He will make our world perfect---all in one day (what the Bible calls “The Day”). And then He will turn the new and better world over to the meek for their inheritance.

So to be meek, follow St. Moses' example---draw closer to God. You will become stronger and meeker. And one day, you will inherit the earth!