

The Heavenly Citizens Charter 3 Blessed are the Meek...

Psalm 37:1-11

Matthew 5:1-12

Iraq invades Kuwait and America retaliates to rescue its oil. America is attacked and decides to finish the job: Afghanistan & Iraq are not much different and maybe worse, ten years on. Arabs slog it out with Jews to control Gaza/Palestine. In the former Yugoslavia, Muslims, Serbs & Croats slaughtered each other to grab a larger slice of territory. Syria disintegrates as the country kills its own to keep control: the chemical weapons issue now ticked, the west backs off, children continue to die and God weeps. Britain fought Argentina to regain two small South Atlantic islands. Every day it seems battles rage as nations try to establish their supremacy over part of the earth.

The largest, best-equipped and most highly trained armies usually win. Iraq smashed Kuwait, but was outgunned by American so-called smart technology. British professionals sunk the Argentinean conscripts: Jews and Arabs are more evenly matched so the conflict lasts longer as Syria demonstrates.

Most people believe that might will triumph over right in the end, but Jesus suggests something different. The third attitude in the list of eight basic attitudes, which true Christians, always possess states: "Blessed are the Meek for they will inherit the Earth". World control, universal authority, possession of the planet, all of these will be given not to the strong or the powerful, nor to the wealthy or well-organised but to the meek.

It seems absurd, for it is the reversal of human experience and is opposed to current thinking. Once again Jesus' attitudes show that authentic Christianity is fundamentally different from the ideals of western society.

Our media proclaims that the more you assert yourself, the more likely you are to succeed and get on in your life. Most sections of the Church seem to agree. They'd like to be large and powerful. They want to dominate their part of the earth. They long to be heard on the media. So they ape society and update their organisation and strategy; they polish their presentation and improve their advertising; they enlarge their buildings and trust in their abilities; they become more assertive and pray for more power. And the one to whom they pray replies: "Blessed are the Meek, for they - and only they - will inherit the Earth."

Jesus' eight attitudes follow a logical order. The poor in Spirit begin to mourn when they become aware of the extent of their failings and shortcomings, and this leads on to meekness.

Unfortunately, each attitude is harder than the one before!

The first one asks us to admit our weakness and lack of ability.

We become poor in spirit by gazing at God and recognising the difference between what He wants us to be and what we

actually are. The second one asks us not only to recognise the poverty of our spirit but also to mourn for it, to weep for our flawed humanity and to cry for the corruption of everything in society. The third attitude - Meekness - takes us further into

God, towards the point where we stop being concerned about

ourselves and start being concerned for others. When I'm

honest with myself I know that I'm nothing, know that I'm

flawed, know that I'm rude and unpleasant occasionally - and I

weep for that. But I don't much like it when other people point

out to me that I'm rude and unpleasant; I much prefer to

condemn myself than to be condemned by others. The first two

attitudes help Jesus' citizens to examine themselves honestly.

Meek Citizens go one step further and allow others to examine them as well.

The Meek don't react when someone pushes in front at a

supermarket checkout. They're patient when stuck in a traffic

jam. They agreed when they hear someone criticising them.

They don't mind when they are overlooked for promotion. They allow others to be served first; to choose the best slice, to have the best seats.

Meek people give in to others without a murmur or complaint. They never make demands for themselves, instead they let younger or less-gifted people assert themselves. Jesus had the right to equality with God, but He choose not to assert it and to follow the way of a slave instead. That's exactly the attitude of meekness His followers are meant to possess. Meek people are not weak people: they're strong people who live gently. They're not idiots who don't know when they are being duped: they're wise people who act humbly. They're not timid people who are too frightened to speak up; they're articulate people who speak discreetly. They're not pacifists who try to smooth over disagreements; they're obstinate truth-lovers who stand up for what it right - with hesitancy. They're not normal people who demand their own way; they're Jesus people who always go God's way; His 'like a sheep before it shearers is dumb' way, His 'take up a towel and wash feet' way, His 'I send you as lambs among wolves' way, His 'take up your cross and follow me' way - His holy, lowly, meek way.

Meek people never give up, but they never assert themselves. They don't allow bad treatment to paralyse their actions but they don't defend themselves or try to fight back. They're not deaf to lies and unfair criticism - they feel it deeply - but they know the worst about themselves, and they know that the worst is always much worse than the lies and criticisms.

Nobody is naturally meek, but all Christians - whatever their natural dispositions - are meant to be meek. Nobody can make themselves meek; we might be able to grit our teeth and act meekly now and then, but it will only be an act and never an attitude.

Meekness is often confused with laziness or with niceness or with an easygoing placid nature. However these are natural traits, which can often be seen in animals. One dog is nicer

than another. One Rabbit is friendlier than its siblings. One Hen is less aggressive than its sisters. Instead meek men and women are people of passion and action. They're ready to stand up for the truth with tenacity and clarity, to serve the homeless and terminally ill with love and devotion, and to lay down their lives for their friends and their enemies.

Meek people don't worry about themselves or what people say about them, for they know that there's nothing worth defending. Meek people never feel sorry for themselves or wish that someone would give them a chance to show what they could do. Meek people don't waste a second in self-pity because they've finished with themselves and know they've no rights at all.

Instead, being poor in spirit, they know that nobody can say or do anything to them that is too bad - they know they deserve it, and more. The person who is truly meek is the one who's permanently amazed that God and other people can think of he/her as well as they do and treat he/her as well as they do. These 'meek' people, Jesus added 'shall inherit the earth'. One would have expected the opposite. One would think that 'Meek' people get nowhere because everybody ignores them or else rides roughshod over them and tramples them underfoot. It is the tough, the overbearing who succeed in the struggle for existence; weaklings go to the wall. Even the children of Israel had to fight for their inheritance, although the Lord their God gave them the Promised Land. But the condition on which we enter our spiritual inheritance in Christ is not might but meekness.

Such was the confidence of holy and humble men of God in OT days when the wicked seemed to triumph. It was never expressed more aptly than in Psalm 37, which Jesus seems to have been quoting in the Beatitudes: "do not fret because of evil men (v1)...the meek will inherit the earth (v11)...those the Lord blesses will inherit the land (v22)...wait for the Lord and keep His way. He will exalt you to possess the land; when the

wicked are cut off you will see it (v34) (also see Isaiah 57:13 60:21). The same principle operates today. The godless may boast and throw their weight around, yet real possession eludes their grasp (Isaiah 26:3, 48:22). The Meek, on the other hand, although they may be deprived and disenfranchised by men, yet because they know what it is to live and reign with Christ, can enjoy and even 'possess the earth, which belongs to Christ. And then on the day, when all things will be made new (Matthew 19:28) there will be a "new heaven and a new earth" for them to inherit. Thus the way of Jesus is different from the way of the world and every Christian even if she or he is like Paul in 'having nothing' can yet describe themselves as 'possessing everything' (2 Cor. 6:10). So Jesus promises/ unconditionally guarantees, that the Meek will inherit the Earth. It's already true in part because meek people are always satisfied and contented. They can walk in the country without wanting to own it. They can enjoy a meal without wishing they'd cooked it. They can admire a dress without needing to buy it. They can congratulate a friend without feeling envy. They can visit a big glamorous Church without wishing they were a member. They can be squashed in a small house and be delighted with their colleague's new mansion. They can enjoy a week in a tent without resenting their neighbour's month in a hotel. In one sense the meek have already inherited the earth, for they're the only people truly free to enjoy it!

But there is an obvious promise for the future too. Jesus doesn't only offer us a huge slice of pie before we die; he also promises us all of His pie when we die. Once again it's the reversal of the Reginald Perrin principle. The fallen will rise. The Last will be first. The crucified will be resurrected. The Meek will inherit the Earth. This must be either the most gigantic and sadistic con trick in history - or the most wonderful and revolutionary truth in the universe. It has to be

one or the other. We either reject the lie or embrace the truth. There can't be another option.

How can you make yourself meek? You Can't! Only God's meek Holy Spirit makes people meek. Those who spend time gazing at God become poor in spirit and receive His Kingdom. Those who mourn with God are comforted by him. And those who are consoled by God's all comforting Holy Spirit start to become Meek, like Him.

So if we want to be as Meek as Jesus we must gaze at Him in the Gospels and gaze at Him in creation; we must compare ourselves with Him and confess with shame our complete imperfection and selfishness; and then we must quietly ask him to send God's Holy Spirit utterly to possess us. He will reproduce His meekness in us. And then, on one glorious day in the future, we will inherit the earth - every beautiful last inch of it.

Pastor David

October 6th 2013.