5th Sunday after Trinity
SERIES ON DISCIPLESHIP - THE THIRD BEATITUDE
West Henrietta - 1961
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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 5: 5 Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

Today we want to consider our Lord's third recipe for real happiness -- THE BLESSING OF BEING MEEK. Immediately this strikes us as being completely contrary to everything we have ever learned about living in this world. We would like to change the Beatitude to read: Blessed are the colorful, for they shall make the world their oyster. We admire the aggressive man. He knows what he wants and goes after it with vogour and determination. The meek fellow, on the other hand - we would hardly call him a man - we are apt to despise him. Everybody pities him; many make fun of him; and some take advantage of him.

We often compare the meek man to a lamb. A lamb is a helpless creature, weak and unable to take care of itself. A lamb might make a lovable pet, but who wants to be a lamb? We can appreciate the outburst of the little boy whose mother insisted on callimg him her little lamb. I don't want to be your little lamb, he cried, I want to be your little tiger.

Our concept of meekness is not what Christ had in mind, when He said: Blessed are the meek. He was not talking about weakness or softness. Christ never encouraged unmanliness, a cringing attitude toward the unpleasant demands of life, cowardly surrender at the first threat of conflict.

A thousand years before the time of Christ David wrote in the 37th Psalm: The meek shall inherit the earth. The Hebrew word he used for meekness means to be moulded. When David speaks of meekness he is referring to a willingness to be moulded by God. The man who wants what he wants when he wants it, is self-willed and essentially weak. The man who commits his way unto the Lord is God-moulded and essentially strong.

Christ took this phrase from David's Psalm and said: Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Christ used a Greek work of meekness which means to be controlled. It suggests the taming of wild animals. There may be something of a tiger then in God's meek man after all. It is weakness to yield to our own selfish appetites and desires; it is meekness to control them with God's help and to use them for God's purposes.

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Meekness is clearly evident in Christ's own life. It was the consuming passion of His Christ's life always to do the will of His heavenly Father. In describing Christ's triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, Matthew puts special emphasis on His our Lord's meekness: Thy King cometh unto thee meek. Paul speaks of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. It was the will of God the Father that Christ, His Son, should go to Jerusalem to die on the cross for the sins of all men. It was to Jerusalem that Christ went, in full knowledge of all the agony that awaited Him there. It was on the eve of the Crucifixion, in the Garden of Gethsemane, that the full horror of the Passion swept over Him. Yet the closing words of His Christ's prayer to His Father were, Not My will, but Thine be done, In complete submission ot His Father's will, Christ calmly and uncomplainingly faced the scorn and ridicule of His enemies, the sting of the scourge and the torture of the Cross. That was meekness.

Sometimes however the meekness of Christ showed itself in an altogether different way. Meekness may be seen in patience and quietness, if that is what God wants. But meekness is not lying down before injustice because a man is afraid to do anything about it. To tolerate evil, without opposition and resistance, may be cowardice and moral indifference. Sometimes God's will calls for energetic action and even righteous anger. God is inflexibly opposed to everything that is evil. It is therefore the will of God that everyone should thus be opposed to evil. Christ was - and that was meekness too. Any inhumanity or deliberate misrepresentation of God and His Will, distressed and angered Christ and moved Him to denunciation and violent opposition. When His disciples tried to keep mothers and their children away from Him, we are told that He was indignant. When His enemies hoped to condemn Him because He would dare to heal a man on the Sabbath day, Mark tells us He looked around at them with anger. And He healed the man. When Peter tried to dissuade Him from going to the Cross - which certainly was the will of God - Christ severely scolded him by saying, Get thee behind me, Satan. On two

occasions Christ drove out of the Temple those who were desecrating His Father's House with their foul transactions. In fierce anger He made a whip, He overturned their tables, and poured out their money all over the Temple floor. All that was meekness too, displayed in determination that God's will should prevail. To those who would follow Him, the disciples Christ says, Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.

Once more Christ's parable of the Prodigal Son desdribes the meaning of this Beatitude beautifully. The Prodigal Son proudly leaves home in defiance of his father's will and determined to find happiness by living according to his own selfish desires. But he never really finds it. Instead he sinks to the pitiful level of taking care of hogs, sharing their company and their food. In desperation the Prodigal admits his hopeless plight. I perish with hunger. That is the First Beatitude, Blessed are the poor in spirit. Next the Prodigal recognizes that the cause of his pitiful condition lies in his own actions and he is ready to confess, I have sinned. That is the Second Beatitude, Blessed are they that mourn, especially over sin. Gone are pride and self-will. Once more the Prodigal is ready to submit to the control of his father and pleads, Make me one of your hired servants. That is the Third Beatitude, Blessed are the meek.

In days gone by there have been many who have learned this truth. I am thinking of Moses. At the age of forty he killed a man and had to flee for his life. After forty years of quiet exile God put His finger on Moses and appointed him to lead the Children of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt. It was an overpowering assignment and Moses was most reluctant. But it was the will of God and Moses accepted. For forty more years he courageously led his people through untold hardships, patiently enduring their weakness and rebellion, confidently assuring them of eventual victory, because he knew that is what God wanted him to do. No wonder he is remembered as one of the greatest men of all time and one of the meekest. Then there was St. Paul. Proud of the righteousness of his life as a Pharisee and determined to destroy all those who would be followers of the meek and lowly Christ, Paul met Christ at the gates of Damascus and saw the disastrous folly

of his convictions. He completely surrendered himself to Christ and meekly asked, Lord, what do you want me to do? The tiger was tamed. With little concern for his own physical welfare and with a great zeal that puts the average Christian to shame, Paul became one of the most fiery missionaries that ever lived - and one of the meekest.

Blessed are the meek, says Christ, for they shall inherit the earth. The world of our day seems to contradict the promise of Christ, but history actually confirms it. Who has the greater heritage, meek Moses or proud Pharaoh? This is an age of power. (We are particularly reminded of this fact as once again Independence Day draws near.) We put tremendous emphasis on it. We feel that the nation that controls the most power is most likely to control the earth. We are led to believe that the individual who wields the most power is likely to be the most influential. But tell me, who has more influence and control of the hearts of men today, a power-mad Herod, an arrogant Pilate, a conceited Caiaphas, or the meek and lowly Christ? Look back over the centuries and tell me, who in the fullest sense of the word have possessed the earth, the powerful and often proud and defiant rulers of the world and their nations, or the meek children of God? Where are the great empires of the past? The power of military force has always spent its might and passed into nothingness. The invincile might of meekness, as Milton calls it, is still the most significant, the most enduring, and the most enobling influence in the world. Of this I am absolutely sure - the power of anti-God forces in the world today, bent on possessing the entire earth, will some day be reduced to a little ink on the pages of history. And when that day comes the invincible might of meekness will still be felt in the lives of countless men and women who say with Paul, Lord, what do you want me to do?

Christ did not promise that the meek would ever be title owners of much or even any of this earth, or of earthly goods. Christ did promise them an inheritance as a gift, and they can be sure of it. God's meek child may own nothing, but with God's inheritance he is infinitely more blessed than he who has great

possessions but nothing of God's inheritance. For the guilt of past transgressions that plagues so many modern lives, there is the joy of complete forgiveness in Christ. For the perplexities of our day, that distress so many ~~today~~, there is the certain knowledge and confidence that God's way of living is the right way. For the fears and worries about tomorrow, that becloud with anxiety the lives of almost everyone, there is the certain conviction that the trials of earth will end and the glories of heaven will endure forever. That leaves God's meek man free, if not to own, then certainly to enjoy the glories of the earth! One day it will all be his. ~~on which God has placed us~~. God's reign embraces and will transfigure all creation. Man and man's world shall be redeemed together, by a meek Lord who came to earth and walked and worked in the world, who was born as a little baby in a stable and was crucified, dead, and buried. But the grave could not keep Him. He lives and He reigns - as Lord. And this is what He says, Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. He said it, and you can count on it.

Amen.