

The Meekness of Christ

Selected Scriptures

February 4, 2024

From time to time in our study of Luke's Gospel, I like to pause and reflect on a theme, a theme that's coming up in our, in our study. And since I was invited recently to a conference, and since that conference theme was, "Remember Jesus Christ," I thought this would be a fitting time to reflect on a theme in Luke's Gospel. And I knew that I could practice out there, make all my mistakes, and then come back here and give you the good stuff. So I hope that this time of pausing and reflecting on a theme in Luke's Gospel will be beneficial and encouraging to you, and strengthen us all as we think about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our subject for this morning is the gentleness of Christ. Gentleness, meekness, that's a virtue that I think is very much misunderstood. I think it's always been misunderstood and,

frankly, maligned, but especially in the harsh times we're living through right now in our world today. It's a very harsh world, with acrimonious speech and people getting into fights all over the place; our political leaders fighting against one another and setting a really bad example for the entire nation. So people from top to bottom, left and right are fighting, and not characterized by gentleness or meekness. So this is a virtue that, if we live this out as Christians, we will be bringing to the world what they never see. This is a virtue that's very much needed for us to understand and to learn about and see in our Lord, and then follow his example.

The noun for gentleness is *praus*. If you want to write it down, it's p-r-a-u-s, *praus*, or *prautes* (you just, *praus*, you know, take the "s" off, put a "tes" on there.) *Praus*, *prautes*, noun is gentleness, *prautes* the quality of meekness, and then *prautes* is the adjective. It describes a person who's characterized by the quality of meekness. And this is the word that our Lord used to describe a defining virtue in himself in that passage that we all know and love in Matthew 11:29. And he, he used this virtue, characterized in his life, of gentleness or

meekness, to encourage a positive response to the invitation that he made.

He says in Matthew 11 (and you know this text), "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden," and think about laboring for righteousness, heavy laden with burden and guilt of sin. And that's the way that the Lord, Lord is using that language. "Come to me, all who are labor and are heavy laden." Another way of putting that is "those who are poor in spirit and who mourn over their sin. Come to me if you're feeling that weight, and" he says, "I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for" (here's the reason), "for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

He says, "Come and put your necks under my yoke. Submit to my authority without reservation, without hesitation, without holding anything back." That's what it is to have your neck sealed in a yoke, like an animal. "Put your necks under my yoke and learn from me." In other words, "Be disciples of mine." That's what it is to live under His authority, to be obedient, to go where He directs you. "Because" (encouraging you to do

this, because of this quality), "because I am gentle and lowly in heart."

You've been around here for any length of time, you understand the "heart" as the control, mission control center of the human being, the human life. It's the locus of the inter, inner life of the soul. The heart consists of the mind and the emotion or affection, and then the will. So, three parts, three aspects to the heart: the mind, the affection, and the will or the volition. And at our Lord's heart, in the center of his inner life, his mission control center is governed by meekness and humility. Gentleness and humility. Humility before God, and then meekness with people: qualities that befit and allow him to execute on his incarnational mission. For he came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The most common view of the meekness of Christ, when we think about the meekness of Christ, many think in terms of weakness. "Meekness is weakness," and it's not in a sense, you know, there are people who kind-of malign the idea of "meekness

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as weakness," and, and reject it and, out of hand and say that, "I don't want to have anything to do with meekness because it's weakness." But there are others who are taught by Scripture, and they understand that when we say, "meekness is weakness," we're not talking about the sense that Christ is weak, or that meek people are weak, but rather that Christ is tender to the weak. To the weak he appears weak. To the weak he appears soft. He's, another word we could use for that is, "kind." He's kind.

First point, if you want to take some notes, I got three points for you this morning. But the first point would be, number one, Meekness is kindness. Meekness is kindness. I think it's a better word for weakness, because weakness gives a wrong impression. But kindness does really grab the concept. This word *Praus*, *Prautes* in classical Greek meant, originally, "friendly." That was the idea. Friendly, a friendship, mild, gentle. And it referred to someone with a calm and soothing disposition. And you might think of it as the polar opposite of unbridled anger, total impatient self centeredness, flying off the handle, rough and harsh. This is the exact opposite of that.

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Praus is the chief virtue of friendship. It's, it's benevolent, and forbearing, and mild-mannered. Gentleness or meekness is leniency. It's moderation. It's toleration. It extends kindness to those who are needy. It helps those who cannot help themselves, particularly those who are undeserving of any help or kindness. Meekness is the kindness of mercy, the kindness of compassion. And when we understand it this way, we see that it is a quality of God himself.

Isaiah 40 verse 10 says, "The Lord our God comes with strength, and his power establishes his rule." And then when you keep on reading, it ss shows that his power is used to care for the weak. He "protects his flock like a shepherd." That's the picture. "He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them in the fold of his garment, and," (here's the word), "'gently' leads those that are nursing." The Hebrew language there is tender. It is intimate. It's in his, literally, it's in his bosom, in his chest. He carries the nursing. That is a picture of him carrying them as close as he can to his heart. So meekness is kindness. It's the kind condescension of God who comes in perfect compassion, and it's the compassion and mercy that we find in Christ.

We see this kindness very early on in Jesus' life as Jesus honors his mother; as he speaks respectfully to his mother, as he treats his mother with tenderness and kindness. Ever since the first glimpse of him as a young guy, even before his earthly ministry, we see him as a young boy at the Temple in Luke 2. I won't go through and rehearse all that, but you understand how he was gentle, respectful in the way he spoke to her. And young people (I just want to say, if you are still in your parents' home, that makes you a young person, so, whatever the age is, but listen), honoring your father and your mother, that sets a pattern for your life. Honoring your father and mother, as we see in Ephesians 6, Paul points this out, he says, "It is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Watch how you speak to your mother and your father. Watch how you think about your mother and your father in your heart. Follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though being God, he became babe enfleshed in Mary's womb, born in a normal human way, and then grew up in his mother's home; respecting her, honoring her, listening to her, obeying her. He honored

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Mary throughout her life and throughout his own life, from the wedding at Cana in Galilee in John 2, all the way to the Cross in John 19. He used his dying breath on the Cross to put his mother under the care of the Apostle John. He's thinking about his mother's care as she grows older.

There's a tenderness there, a kindness there in his soul that is exemplary. How Jesus treated his mother became a paradigm for how he treated all women. Luke especially points this out in his gospel. I love his attention to, to the fairer sex, as he cares to show Christ's treatment of women, which is very countercultural, probably in any age, but really even in the first century, a highly patriarchal culture. And, and yet there's an emphasis on Jesus' care and treatment of women, his respect. We're to treat older women as mothers, younger women as sisters. We know this from the teaching of the New Testament.

We see him at the well with the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4. We see his conversation with her, his regard for her, respecting her as a, as an image bearer of God, but also understanding she's a sinner in need of salvation. And she was a

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sinner. And Jesus, you can see, dealt so gently with her sins. He was direct but also gentle. In meekness, he gave her to drink of living water. He wanted her to know he had something she really needed. He's so gentle in delivering it.

In Luke chapter 7 (and this is review for you), Luke chapter 7, Jesus treated the poor win, widow of Nain so kindly. Her one and only son, you remember, had died. And at the funeral procession as it's going by, as they go to bury this young man, they're carrying him (the men are, of the village, are carrying him) on their shoulders, on the funeral bier. And Jesus went up and stopped the procession and touched the young man, and raised him from the dead. And then Luke adds this really important note, "Jesus gave him to his mother." It'd be enough just to draw our attention to the miracle of resuscitation of a dead man to life, but "he gave him to his mother," a gift from the one who is gentle and lowly of heart to the one who is suffering and in need.

In Mark Chapter 7, Jesus cast out a demon out of the daughter of the Syrophoenician mother, but not before drawing

out of her a profession of faith that would save their souls. He didn't just deliver the daughter suffering from the demons, he didn't just deliver the mother from her heartbrokenness over her daughter's condition. He drew out from her the profession of faith that would point them to a greater need: a need of salvation. Taught his, his whole crew of disciples there, listening to that.

Luke chapter 10. Remember the, at the end of Luke chapter 10, when Mary and Martha, they're in the, the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany, and listening to Jesus teach. And remember how Martha, you know, Mary's sitting at Jesus' feet listening to the Lord teach. Martha was there too, but she got up and started to serve, and she lost perspective. She was distracted with, it says, "much serving." You understand how that could go. And eh, she lost such perspective that first she accused the Lord: "Lord, don't you care?" And then she started bossing him around. After calling him "Lord," then she turns into the lord. "Lord, tell her to help me." No stern rebuke came as a retort from the Lord, but rather the gentle response, "Martha, Martha." It's a correction of kindness to this believer. This she does understand. She just lost perspective in the moment.

So many more examples of the kindness of meekness, especially with the fairer sex. But he's also kind in compassion toward the weak and the sick; kind toward the lepers, kind with the blind and the lame, kind with the deaf and the mute, kind with the demon-possessed. And, and we think about this, as he is the incarnation of God, and he, has within him the holiness of God in his divine nature, and the same holiness that descended on Mount Sinai and shook the earth with an earthquake, and burned the mountain with fire, and terrified all creation with the sound of rumbling, and thunder, and a trumpet blast. In Christ, that same holiness of Sinai is in him. And that holiness, that power healed the weak and the sick, cleansed the lepers, gave sight to the blind, provided mobility to the lame, hearing to the deaf, opened the lips of the mute, delivered the possessed from the cruelty of demons.

Holiness did not destroy in Christ's ministry. It was kind. The meekness of Christ, the kind condescension of God, is really what draws us near to him. It draws us near to God when his terrifying holiness might drive us away. It compels the sinner

to come, to come near, to come underneath his yoke, to learn from him.

Meekness, though, is more than kindness. We know that. It's not less than kindness, but it is more than kindness. We don't want to make the mistake of reducing it to mere kindness, something that we, we ourselves might show to someone in a pitiable state, someone who evokes our sympathy, someone who arouses our compassion because their, their condition is so pitiful and, and lamentable. And that's why we need to move on and fully understand the term "meekness" and "gentleness." Because the meekness of Christ is even better understood in the face of those who deserve such censure and judgment.

And so here's a second point. We could say, number two, meekness is restraint. Meekness is restraint. Or, if you want to make it rhyme with the first point, meekness is harness. It is a harness. Meekness is kindness. Meekness is a harness. But I like "meekness is restraint." The word *praus* was used to speak of restraint, like of taming a wild animal. Think about a powerful horse, a stallion running wild in the field, strength rippling

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through its, its muscles as it runs, and you rejoice to see that. But it is untamed and wild and, and therefore not useful for anybody's work or anybody's needs. Once that horse's power is brought under the restraint, it's made useful. And that is a picture of meekness. The power of the Colorado River restrained by the Hoover Dam, or the power of nuclear fission restrained by a nuclear reactor. These potentially destructive forces are harnessed for our good.

Those examples just help: of a horse, of the river, of the nuclear reactor, all those things are, just help illustrate how the mighty power of Christ, the pow, the omnipotence of God himself in Christ, if it's not under the restraint of perfect submission to the will of God, if it's not under the restraint of meekness, Christ's power would tear us apart with the ferocity of a wild animal; would overwhelm us with the force of a flood; would incinerate us like a nuclear blast. All those fates would be the just reward of stubborn, unrepentant sinners. But that's not what he shows us, at least not at this point.

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Meekness is the restraint, according to the language (and if you do the word study), you see meekness is a restraint shown to an enemy, someone who deserves stern, harsh treatment, but is instead shown leniency. One who is granted clemency, mercy when judgment is called for. This is the quality, this is a quality of a great king, who treats the people that he conquered, the rebels who came against him, who invaded his land, and yet he treats these rebels, these conquered people, gently rather than roughly. He shows patience rather than vengeance, and this is the true nobility of his soul.

This is Moses. Remember Moses in, throughout the first five books of the Bible. We remember Moses in Numbers chapter 12, verse 3 that says, "Now, the man Moses was very meek, more than all the people who were on the face of the earth." And you remember that it's Moses who wrote that. So either he was the most arrogant man on the earth, or it is as he said: He was submitting to the will of God and his pen was controlled by the Spirit, who made him write what was true. "The man Moses was very meek, more than all the people who are on the face of the earth," and that is a, a sentence that is backed up by the narratives. Several times Israel wanted to stone Moses and go

back to Egypt. You remember that? And you remember how Moses responded? My natural sinful inclination would be to call down fire from heaven. Start over.

Remember the golden calf incident. Exodus 32:10, "God said to Moses, 'Now leave me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation out of you, Moses.'" And I'd be like, "Go for it." But not Moses. The text says Moses interceded with the Lord his God. Moses interceded for them often. They deserved the fire to fall from heaven, to be consumed in the wrath of God. And yet Moses fell on his face before God to mediate for sinners, to plead with God for this rebellious and stubborn people, that God would let mercy triumph over judgment in this case.

And the hand of God's judgment weighed down upon this people because of their sins. When God sent them wandering through the barren wilderness, Moses accepted it. He, he wandered with them. He didn't say, "Now let me get on the shuttle that takes me to the Promised Land. Let these people wander." He joined them. They sinned, not he. And yet he joined

them. He shared in the consequences of his people's sins. That is the mark of meekness in leadership. To pray for sinful people, to join them even in judgment, especially when they rebel, when they treat you with spite and contempt, when they question your motives, when they spurn your love, when they willfully misunderstand you and misrepresent you. That's where meekness is either demonstrated or it is not.

How did Moses accept the consequences of his people's complaining without adding his own complaining? How did he do that? How could he pray for such a rebellious people who caused him so much grief, cost him comfort, even cost him his share in the Promised Land? Because Moses identified with his people. Yes, he was faithful to rebuke and correct, but he sympathized with his people. He understood their weakness because he shared in their sins. But in meekness he embraced his role that God had chosen for him as a mediator.

And this is what we see in our Lord, who is the better Moses. This is what we see in Jesus, who is the perfect mediator between God and man, the one who identified with us in our sin,

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the one who sympathizes with our weaknesses and yet was without sin. He identifies with sinners and he takes the consequences of our sin upon himself. Jesus accepts the sentence due to sinners, and he does it without complaining. He dies the death that they deserve, absorbs the wrath of God against them, never once complaining about it at all. That is meekness. It was for the joy that was set before him that he endured the Cross, and despised the shame, and is now seating at, seated at the right hand of God.

Oh, how far this quality of meekness is from our hearts, often. Isn't that true? And yet we're so thankful that it abounds in our Lord Jesus Christ. Without this quality of meekness, you could say there is no salvation from our sins. So meekness is not only kindness, it's also restraint. It's a harness put on the power, that it may be made useful for good. It's the power of God that would destroy guilty sinners, but under the restraint of meekness that Christ extends to us, He extends God's offer of mercy, and he uses divine power to give us grace instead.

I want to show you this if you would (I know this is review for many of you), but if you would go back to Luke chapter 14, Luke chapter 14 in your Bibles, and we'll take a look at a text that illustrates this "restraint" aspect of meekness. The occasion is the Sabbath. It's after a synagogue service at the home of a ruler of the Pharisees, possibly a member of the Sanhedrin. This man was a powerful ruler of the Jews, and the man invited Jesus to the afternoon meal. It was under the pretense of friendliness, and Jesus accepts the invitation.

Look at Luke 14:1-2. "It happened that when he went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching him closely. And behold, in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy." We'll stop there. The Pharisees (we also understand from verse 3), the, the lawyers or the scribes are there, but the Pharisees are scrutinizing every move of Jesus. They're watching him closely. The verb there means to, to lurk, to lie in wait. One, one commentator says, "To look sideways, out of the corner of one's eyes." You parents know what this is like. You're looking at one thing, but you're watching that kid over there, aren't you? You're watching out of the, sideways out of the corner of your

eyes, and that's what they're doing to Jesus. To way, watch him to see if he will violate the Sabbath by healing this man with, who has dropsy.

The condition "Dropsy," we know today as, "edema." The body swells up with water. That fluid retention is symptomatic of a serious internal issue. It could be congestive heart failure, a kidney disease, or serious liver problems. Something going on internally is causing the retention of fluid, and the patient feels the weight of extra fluid, tightened skin stretched over, like an overfilled water balloon. It is uncomfortable and even painful. The limbs feel heavy. It's hard to move, hard to get up, and sit down, and move from place to place. This, even a chronic cough can develop due to fluid buildup that comes in the lungs. And then added to the physical suffering in this context, in the first century (and especially among Pharisees) was a religious judgment against them. The rabbis said this disease resulted from vice, or fornication, or perhaps even demon possession. That's what was the cause of this fluid retention. So this guy is condemned in their eyes. He's viewed with utter contempt. Total disgust. He's repulsive to them.

So what is he doing there? Why is he invited to dinner? How'd he get on the guest list, especially in the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, a man who was fastidious about ceremonial cleanness and ritual purity? How'd he get there? Answer: He's been planted there. He's a plant. These cynical religious hypocrites are using this poor guy as bait for their trap to ensnare Jesus, to get him to violate the Sabbath. Jesus sees the setup, he spots the ambush ahead, and as per usual, he's ten steps ahead of them. Notice though, he doesn't navigate around. He doesn't avoid the ambush. He doesn't decline the invitation. He walks straight into it, aims right at them, and exposes their wicked intent.

Look at verse 3. "Jesus answered and spoke to the scholars of the Law" (that's the scribes, the lawyers) "and the Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?' But they were silent. And he took hold of him, and healed him, and sent him away."

"He took hold of him." The verb pictures Jesus grabbing a hold of the guy, taking him in hand. It was probably a long time

since any, anybody had touched this guy, being an unclean man, but Jesus touched him. It was by the holiness of Christ, and by the kindness of meekness that overpowered any uncleanness in this man's condition, and cured the man completely. Luke, the physician, uses a verb to describe the healing as a full cure. And it's not just the symptoms. Jesus cured the internal cause. That means that whatever that cause was, he made it new. So he gave him a new heart, or a new kidney, or a new liver, or whatever it was. Jesus totally, completely restored this man back to full health. Must have been incredible to be there and watch this man, swollen with fluid, all of a sudden shrink in size immediately in front of their eyes. All the excess fluid evaporated in a moment, gone without a trace.

Jesus heals this man and then sends him away. What's that about? Well, he's protecting that man from further exposure to the cruelty of these hypocrites. Again, that's a kindness. But the restraint of meekness, it's in what we see next. First, in the fact that Jesus stays there at all, doesn't walk out with the man. But second, that in staying, he doesn't just turn to, resort to giving them a beating, which is what they deserve. I know what I would have done if I had the same power. My natural

(and albeit sinful) inclination would be to say, "You are vaporized. And you are vaporized. And 'poof,' there you go." Turn each of these hypocrites, one at a time, into pink clouds of mist. And I would do it one at a time, because I'd want the next guy in line to know what's coming to him. Jesus, though, is nothing like me. Aren't you thankful that he does not vaporize his enemies? He not only demonstrates leniency, not only shows mercy, but he goes even further to give them the grace of teaching them.

Look at verses 5-6. "He said to them, 'Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?'" And once again, verse six says, "They could make no reply to this." He intended before healing the guy to teach them, because it says there, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" They don't answer him a word, but he is intending to give them the lesson. He's intending them to tell them what they refuse to answer. The appeal that he makes is through his teaching them.

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Listen, teaching is always a kindness. Teaching is always a kindness. Understand, it is not a right. Some people will walk into a church and say, "It's my right to be here." And we say, "No, no, it's your right to be a part of the local church if you are a Christian." They don't like that answer. They want to dictate terms. Sinners always want to dictate terms, but they don't realize that teaching isn't something you deserve, something that's owed to you. The teaching we receive from Scripture, from our Lord, from gifted men in the past, is a gift. We don't always think about it that way, do we? We're kind-of an entitled people, aren't we? Teaching is always a kindness. It's always a gift. It's always a grace. It's always something we should, we should never take it for granted. We should always give thanks to the Lord for teaching us, for informing our minds, for instructing our souls. Listen, teaching, when judgment is deserved, that is an illustration of the restraint of meekness.

Jesus' power is under such control that instead of destroying them as they deserve, he gives grace to the undeserving. They don't realize it. They don't appreciate it. They don't love him for it. They don't fall on their knees and

bow down and worship him because he's shown this meekness to them. But he continues on. It doesn't stop in verse 6. It goes on. Verses 7-14 teaches them to associate with the lowly. He says "Don't, don't" (he's watched them come into the, to the banquet), he says, "Listen, I, I've watched how you've chosen your seats. You're trying to get near to the best people and the most important people, and you're trying to project your status, and try to, you know, posture and all that stuff." He says, "Don't maneuver yourself into seats of honor. Take the lower position. In fact, when you do a banquet, invite the lowly, not the wealthy. Bless those who can never afford ever to pay you back." That's meekness, teaching them that.

In verse 15, after he teaches them this glorious truth, one of those who reclined at the table with him heard these things and he said to them (or, he said to Jesus in response), "Well, blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Like, talk about totally missing the point. He's, he's neutering Jesus' point by, by lightening the mood; by saying, "Well, we're all in the Kingdom, we'll all be there, we'll all enjoy the bread together." And Jesus is saying, "You're not getting it,

are you?" He's like, trying to avoid the correction, trying to s, take the sting out of the stinger.

Again, Jesus doesn't lose his patience. Instead of issuing a stern rebuke and silencing the man, Jesus just continues to teach. He corrects them mildly, and it's in the gentleness now of a parable. They, they don't take the straightforward teaching, and so he now teaches them in the form of a parable. He tells a story, which is a way of veiling the truth from those who are not serious about the truth, but drawing those who really are meant to be drawn.

So in verses 16-24, he tells them a parable encouraging them toward meekness; that those who seem important now (wealthy, powerful, influential, those who are on everyone's guest list), well, they're all gonna miss out on the banquet of the Kingdom. And so if that's you, you're not gonna be eating bread in the Kingdom with everybody else. So go associate with the lowly. Go invite those who are never invited: The poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. People like that are the ones who are sitting at the King's table in places of great honor.

Jesus is teaching meekness while demonstrating meekness. He shows kindness to some of the most unsympathetic characters in the Gospels: the proud Pharisees, and the conniving scribes, the scheming lawyers, the religious hypocrites. It's just, every time I read passages like this, I'm astounded. I'm floored. I'm humbled. I'm repentant because I don't see this in myself a lot. I want to, and I know it's probably true for you too.

As we come to our final point, we see our Lord really shines in the composure that He shows. He shines during conflict, and this is where we take the fullest measure of meekness. This is where we see the full nobility of our Lord's soul. Meekness is the kindnesses of kind condescension, the, the restraint of divine power, and also the composure in, in provocation. Composure in provocation.

Or maybe put simply, we could just say, number three (this is point three if you're taking notes): Meekness is calmness. Meekness is calmness. According to one source, meekness is more than a matter of self mastery or reining in anger. It is, it is,

further, a heart disposition and comportment characterized by restraint and modesty. So calmness and serenity, especially when provoked, is well summarized by the word "composure." We see meekness on display, not in times of ease and comfort, when all is well. We see meekness on display when it's tested. Whether it's tested by difficult people or tested through difficult circumstances, it's whatever Providence has planned, a meek soul lives in submission, humble before God and meek with people.

One writer said meekness, quote, "is the distinctive mark of the souls that belong to God and fear him." It's true. "Meekness is the distinctive mark of souls that belong to God and fear him." It is total submission to God, and it's due to total confidence in God, trust in God, reliance in God which then translates in the moment, in the provocation, in the difficult, with the difficult people, and in the difficult circumstances, it translates into patience and mildness (or we could say "composure," "calmness.")

Prautes person (sounds like I'm saying proud. I'm not. I'm saying *prautes*, which is the word "meekness" or "gentleness"),

that person is one who walks calmly before God because he or she is always aware, always aware, that God is sovereign and in control, not just of the big picture, not just of the wide sweep of history, but every detail in between; and so, walking calmly before God because God is in control, because whatever Providence reveals is (whatever difficulty it is, whatever disappointment it is, whatever failed expectation, whatever broken dream, whether positive, but especially in the negative), we understand that whatever Providence reveals is best. It is good. It is wise. It is perfect.

It's in this submission to God that the meek person shows the greatest nobility of soul and the highest form of dignity. And we see this on display in difficult moments in Jesus' life, such as when he cleansed the Temple. There's a first Temple cleansing at the beginning of his ministry, and a second Temple cleansing at the end of his ministry. But I want to show you the first one.

Go to John chapter 2, John chapter 2 in your Bibles. And you can skip past the wedding in Cana at Galilee, and go right

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to John 2:13, which is where we see the first Temple cleansing. It says there, "The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the Temple those who were selling oxen, and sheep, and doves; and the money changers seated at their tables. And he made a scourge or a whip of cords, and drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen. And he poured out the, all the coins of the money changers, and overturned their tables. And to those who were selling the doves, he said, 'Take these things away. Stop making my father's house a place of business.' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'"

We've been through this more recently in our teaching through Luke's Gospel. But vendors in the Temple complex were in a contractual arrangement with the Temple priests. And they were, because of the contracts that they had formed with the priests, were allowed to sell oxen, sheep, pigeons, doves, animals raised within the vicinity of Jerusalem, animals that were approved by the priests to be acceptable sacrifice for all the pilgrims coming in from other parts of the empire. So lots and lots of money is involved in this business enterprise. The money changers were there because they provided a service for

pilgrims who were coming to Jerusalem from other parts of the empire, so they could pay that half-shekel Temple tax in that approved currency. They didn't take any form of coin; they took the approved currency, which of course involved a little currency exchange fee, to make money off of it.

So during the annual feasts, when the population at Jerusalem swelled to hundreds of thousands of people, there were hundreds of thousands of sacrificial animals that were bought and sold. Lots of money in markups, lots of money in currency exchange fees; all that is going on in the Temple. We've seen this recently. The scale of this Temple business is hard to understand fully. It's just hard to imagine the size of the contracts, the complex webs of relationships and loyalties, the vast amounts of money that were involved, and the greed that drove all these enterprises in the Temple. Think about that, and then the contrast: You've got one man who drove them all out of the Temple. One man. That is power, that is exercising presence, control in the middle of that situation. He's stern there, he's forceful, he's powerful, he's authoritative. And yet he's meek. He's meek.

I realize there are some who would have you believe that Jesus went all “John Rambo” in the Temple: His eyes flashing with fire, spit flying from his lips, his physique toned in the gym, shredded muscles as he cracks the whip. But if we look more closely, we really don't see any of that caricature. We see the evidence instead of self-control and, yes, of gentleness, even in this.

In my early adult life, I was exposed to those who were experts in moving through structures with bad guys in them. With violence of action, they move through buildings, and houses, and all that to engage threats and targets. But as they move, they move purposefully, going room to room, communicating clearly and calmly, controlling the environment in order to clear and secure the target and make it safe. The men did not go into the structure going “full auto,” spraying the room with bullets. They discerned between hostiles and innocents. They also discerned who the victims were, or who the potential victims were.

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They were taking careful aim to make each shot count, neutralize threats; and in a moment could switch from engaging a target, stopping the threat, to being very gentle with an innocent, with a child, with a mother, with a victim; to corral them, shepherd them out of harm's way, even bringing the corpsman in to care for wounded victims. These men learned the muscle memory, and habit, and the mental discipline to be meek on target, to be calm and composed in the face of violence. They show restraint in following the rules of engagement. They're kind to treat victims of war with tender compassion.

We see this in our law enforcement all the time. I realize our law enforcement, they're usually only recognized in the media when, when there's something that has gone wrong (or they're portrayed to have gone wrong). What goes unreported in the news and in the media is how our law enforcement, they are the very picture, most of the time, of restraint and composure, especially under fire. I don't know how they do it. When they walk into a domestic situation, and they come to protect people, all of a sudden the two who are fighting against each other now turn and attack the law enforcement officer. The best law enforcement officers use their mind and their words to control

the situation. If they have to, they'll go to physical restraint, have to use violence of action to deal with the threat. These men in our military, in our law enforcement, they may be for many of us an example, the very best of men.

We see here how Jesus is the best of the best. He's the best of the best. John tells us in verse 15, look, John chapter 2, that after Jesus found the sellers and the money changers, I mean, zeal for his Father's house consumes him. And yet, when he comes and sees the sellers and the money changers, he does not go Rambo on them. He stops and he weaves together a whip of cords. I don't know how long that took. I've never woven a whip together (one that's effective anyway). Most of the time it's just picking up a towel and whipping my brother with it. That didn't take much time at all. But he weaves together a whip of cords. He took the time, in the moment, to make the right tool for the right job. His voice would be enough to command the humans, but he uses a whip to drive away at the larger animals who're not used to his voice, as their master's voice. Drives them away.

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For those who are there in the Temple complex, who are held fast by the inertia of greed, unmoved by the fear of God and the authority of his command; by turning over their money tables, tables and spilling their little idols, their coins all over the ground, well, that got them moving. Right tool for the right job. Instead of cracking a whip or overturning the bird cages, he used a whip and turned over the cages, if he used a whip and turned over the cages with the birds in it, he would damage those more delicate creatures. So Jesus went back to using voice commands, not to the birds, but to their, to the merchants. He commanded them to take those birds, carry them away.

This is the very picture of restraint, and composure, and calmness, and thoughtfulness. Even as he moves through thousands of people with such chaos, such noise, such hostility to his intentions, he's showing meekness. And as they say, as this scene fades to black, as the credits roll down the screen, we read, "No animals were hurt in this Temple cleansing."

Far from fry, flying off the handle, Jesus is calm and composed. He's in perfect control of himself, perfect control of

the whole situation. Yes, zeal for his Father's house consumed him, and yet in his anger he did not sin. His indignation was always righteous and always under perfect control. As Proverbs 12:10 says, "Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast." He was even gentle with the little birds, the birds that were soon to be consumed in sacrifice. We see in him quiet composure, perfect calmness in the meekness of Christ before, during, and after the Temple cleansing.

We see that before, during and after the second Temple cleansing in particular, if you want to turn over to Matthew 21. I realize we went through the, the account that's written in Luke, but for variety, I'm gonna take you who have been through Luke's Gospel, I'm gonna take ya to Matthew 21 to see this scene that we've been through just recently. Matthew 21, starting in verse 1. "And when they had approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them." Immediately He will send them.'" And this took place in order

that what was spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled, saying, 'Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your king is coming to you, lowly and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a packed animal."'"

That quote is from Zechariah 9:9, And the word used to translate "humble" is *praus*. Again, that's our word, "meekness." This is the King in his coronation procession, entering into his city where he is to rule and to reign. Now, throughout history, we can see this in different ways in our own day, but especially when you can see this in history, that a king in procession would come on a horse, a war horse, to project power. That's how emperors entered into cities that they had conquered, those cities that they were taking control over. That's how Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Caligula, Hadrian, all of these came into conquered cities; riding on war horses, projecting power.

For the incoming King Jesus, the image of the Conqueror astride his war stallion, that is not the appropriate image. Not yet. We'll see in Revelation that he does come astride a horse. Here, he's not coming into Jerusalem in this particular

procession, into Jerusalem, on a horse. This is his first Advent. And the offer in his first Advent is an offer of peace. He is the king of peace.

Remember when Solomon became king? You do your yearly reading through the Bible. You remember when Solomon became king. His name, by the way, Solomon's name means peace. It's formed from *Shalom*, "peace." He ruled during, during an age of peace over a Kingdom that his father David, a man of war, secured for him by war. Solomon, though, rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. He took the same route that Jesus took down the Mount of Olives and up to the side of Jerusalem, into the city, on a donkey, which is the appropriate animal for his coronation procession, to symbolize his future reign of peace and prosperity and blessing.

Now as David's greater son, Jesus, enters into the city of Jerusalem, also coming on a mission of peace. And again, the most fitting animal for his coronation procession is the colt, the foal of a donkey. He comes in meekness. And the next stop, in his meekness, is to cleanse the Temple a second time. He

comes in what looks like weakness, but it is meekness, and he comes to cleanse the Temple a second time. Look at verses 12 and 13. "And Jesus entered the Temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the Temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And he said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a robber's den."'"

At the second Temple cleansing, we see the same level of restraint, the same control of himself, the same control of the situation that, that he showed at his first Temple cleansing. And yet here they are again. They didn't stay away the first time. Several years later, they're there doing it again. They're profaning his Father's house yet again. And this, the first time it was turning the, the Father's house into a marketplace (John 2:16). Now they turn the sacred house into a den of robbers. Not just a place for commerce; now it's a place for robbery.

Religious leaders here (the chief priests, Sadducees, Pharisees, all backed by the scribes who provided scholarly

cover for them), they'd turned the Temple of God, the place where justice and mercy meet in the temple, into a den of injustice and cruelty. They used their titles, they used their positions of authority and power, they used their wealth, they used their religious rules, they used the scholarship of the scribes to erect barriers against any scrutiny from anybody else. They walled themselves off from the people. They built themselves a religious stronghold to avoid any accountability at all. The Temple had become their very den: the place where they ruled, the place where they intimidated, they bullied, and shake down worshipers to rob them.

So for the second time, Jesus moves through the Temple again, with controlled force, once again like a soldier conducting a house clearing or a building clearing, driving out the enemy. And again, he's calm, he's cool, he's collected, he's never in a hurry, he's under perfect composure. And once he clears the target, once order is restored, he returns the Temple to its original design: A house of prayer for the nations, to show mercy (verse 14) "to the blind and the lame who came to him in the Temple, and he healed them there."

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Imagine it for a moment, that that sentence wasn't... imagine that Jesus had gone "Full auto." Imagine that he did come, he's off the chain and he's inflicting damage. He's causing bodily injury to persons, and to animals, and hurting animals, and destroying property. Can you imagine what that would do to his credibility? Can you imagine how they would make use of that to discredit him? They're always looking for a chance to discredit him. Imagine if he hurt people.

That's what we see on the news, isn't it? When any law enforcement, and they want to draw attention, make him look really bad, they try to show how, you know, he just hurt this innocent person. What collateral damage would it cause if he was off the hoo, off the chain here? What distractions would he create if he went "Full auto?" Would the blind and the lame ever feel comfortable coming to him? Would those who are weak and suffering feel comfortable drawing near? What opportunity would he have given his enemies to discredit him and slander his ministry? He gives them none of that. He gives them no occasion.

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Luke adds in chapter 19, verse 47 of Luke, it says "He was teaching daily in the Temple," even while "the chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people" there, were there, "seeking to destroy him." No matter, doesn't matter to him. His soul is totally at rest, composed. He's clothed in calmness. He's covered with the impenetrable armor of meekness. He's undistracted. He's unconcerned by their murderous intentions and plans. He's got a job to do, and he goes and gets it done.

What happens next? As we've seen in the study of Luke 20, he addressed several challenges to his authority: First from the Temple authorities, a delegation of the Sanhedrin; then from the scribes and the chief priests with the Herodians, and then from the Sadducees, and finally from scribes and Pharisees (again, together). And with every challenge that they bring to him, with every rebuke that they try to offer, with every attempt to try to entrap him, and trick him, and fool him, and make him look foolish, Jesus maintains a perfect composure. He's calm, cool, collected. He answers every challenge. He escapes every ambush. He turns the tables on his attackers. And rather than absolutely destroying 'em in a moment in his anger (which is what they

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deserve), again, Jesus teaches them; again, and again, and again, revealing himself to them; again, and again, and again, revealing the truth to them, showing the Father to them, showing them their need for forgiveness, healing, cleansing. He offers them chance after chance after chance.

Though he walks through a den of thieves, he takes every step in meekness, in serenity of soul, in peace of mind. Why? How can he do that? He's in perfect composure because he knows God is on the throne. "I'm un, I'm unfazed. I have a job to do, a mission to do, and I know that my God will bring me to the very end. This is not the end; therefore, I will continue." He's unafraid, even when attacked. Can you say that? Can I say that? Yea, though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death, we're mindful, aren't we, that his crucifixion will take place within the week. He's face to face with the people who are going to murder him on a cross. But Jesus fears no evil, though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death, for God is with him. In meekness, he is totally composed. He is completely calm. He is dignified and noble.

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As we bring our time to a close (try to land the plane here), I don't know if you've been watching the news, but things are just, always seem to be coming apart, do, aren't they? So really, why turn on the news? You turn it on, "Huh, things are coming apart." A week later, turn it on, "Huh, news, everything's coming apart. Nothing's changed." As we head into another election year, things are gonna get interesting. We've talked about that. And it's not a spectacle in our country, or in a nation, in our land, that we watch dispassionately. We don't. We don't watch it with mild concern, as if we're just in a pastime of watching sports or something like that.

We as Christians, of all people, we know that souls are at stake. We know that lives are at stake. I mean literally. I'm not talking figurative, figuratively, metaphorically. I'm not trying to, to amp up the concern. I, I really mean it. Rising suicide rates. We're all watching this. The drug epidemic is either killing people or turning them into absolute zombies. Political tensions are high. And in the media, we're reduced to two options in media: Artificial intelligence writing the articles, or no intelligence at all writing the articles, right?

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But all this tension that exists in our time, we can kinda cut it with a knife. All this social anxiety as it presses down on the people of our land, as we're watching wave after wave after wave of stress response, and fight or flight. People who would, people who as a nation would kill God, and push him to the margins, and blaspheme his name, and deny him, they are suffering the consequences of that idolatry, aren't they? It's no wonder the meek are blessed. It's no wonder that they, and they alone, the meek, shall inherit the earth. They're, they gonna be the only ones left.

What our world needs, now more than ever, is this Savior, gentle and lowly. They need him to send his Spirit to regenerate, and then to soothe, and to comfort, and to teach, and to save. It's what you need. It's what I need. It's what they all need. We need his kindness. We need him to exercise the restraint of his power that should deservedly crush us. We need his calmness and his composure to show mercy and grace when we don't deserve it.

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As Christians, we, well, we're kinda like Moses. We know what our people deserve, and let's call them "our people." We know what the world suffers. We know the anxiety. We know the fight and flight. We know that we've not shown kindness when we should, even, even to those who're in a piti, pitiful condition, we haven't always shown kindness. We've sometimes exercised little to no restraint in dealing with people. We've failed to maintain a calm composure because we're confident in God. We're the champions of divine sovereignty, aren't we? Why do we so seldom act like it? That's what this world needs to see in us. Lives transformed by the grace of God, and by the redemption of Christ, and by the power of the Spirit.

All the so-called mental health experts are not gonna solve this crisis. There's no hope in politics, no power of man, no power of the, the psychol, the psychologist's couch, or the psychiatrist's pills. There's no hope in any of that. There's no power of man that can effect the radical salvation that people need. So let us "receive with meekness," as James 1:21 says, "the implanted word which is able to save our souls." Let the Holy Spirit grow the fruit of the Spirit within us, one of which is meekness, gentleness. That's evidence of a new nature, isn't

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it? Fruit that only the Spirit can grow. Let that nature show forth, James 3:13 says, in wisdom and understanding, the "good works conducted in the meekness of wisdom." We're to walk, Ephesians 4:2 says, in "humility and gentleness." Colossians 3:12 says we're to wear meekness like a garment. Says, "Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience."

That's what's we're to be wearing on the outside. It is, meekness is the best armor: Impenetrable, strong, sturdy, never wears out. It protects us from vicious and violent attack. But wearing it, it's soft to the touch. It is the most comfortable fabric to wear, especially on the inside, especially in the heart. Paul said "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness." He said that to young Timothy. Gentleness. This is how Christian soldiers (1 Timothy 6:12), this is how Christian soldiers fight the good fight for the faith: With meekness. It's how we take hold of eternal life. This is how we deal with enemies. Second Timothy, 2:24, "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents

with gentleness." There it is again, kindness, restraint, calmness.

You say, "I don't know if I can do that. In fact, I, I, I fail in one or all of those ways, pretty much all the time. Sometimes I fail on all three at once. What's to be done about that? What, what, what hope do I have to grow and change?"

First, beloved (we should think about this with every single one of our sins, but this one in particular): Let your failures drive you back to the Gospel. Any sin in you, let it drive you to the Gospel so that you can see what our sins cost that meek man. So we can see the meekness of Christ that saves. So we can reflect on the glory of God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, and see the salvation that he provides because of our sin. Let the nobility of his soul, whenever you see sin in yourself, let the nobility of his soul evoke worship from you, so that you bow on your knees and give thanks to God, and praise his name because of Christ.

Second thing (the first: let it drive you to worship, let it drive you back to the Gospel). The second thing: Just know

that you can't generate meekness in the power of the flesh. This is a fruit of the Spirit, and we grow in meekness in the same way that we grow in other virtues, by looking to Christ, by meditating on the Word of God day and night, letting the Word of God be our continual delight. Let that be your input, not the world, but the input from the Word of God. And then prayerfulness, as you're constantly in prayer in gratitude for your salvation, but also a longing to be like your Savior because you love your Savior, and you worship him. It's a fruit of the Spirit. He's got to do it in you. You can't do it on your own. You can't do it of yourself. Even loving others, you can't generate that on your own.

A number of times I've, I've been kind-of horrified by, sometimes, the thoughts that can be in my, in my mind about certain provocations, or people, or difficult things I'm doing. I'm like, "Why? Why do I have those thoughts?" And then I'm like, "Oh yeah, Oh yeah, sin. I'm a sinner. Sin nature. I realize that's, that's my, me in my natural, fallen state." I must go to God and his Spirit to seek the love of God by which this meekness is demonstrated; seek the love of God to work out through the Spirit in me, to other people. That's the only way

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it's gonna happen. We have to look to Christ to grow in the virtues of the Spirit. After all, isn't that what he bid us to do, is to come and to learn?

Whether we feel weighed down with burden, anxious, overcome by failing to walk in meekness, not kind with others, not restrained, not calm, and composed because we trust in God; well, let us draw near to the one who said this: "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you." (In other words, "Submit to my absolute authority, without any exceptions, without any qualifications, without any asterisks. Submit to my authority.") "Take my yoke upon you. Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will" (promise), "you will find rest for your souls."

The gentle and lowly Christ, He's exercised the meekness that we have not exercised, that we cannot exercise and generate on our own. He's exercised it. And in his meekness, he's saved us. He's made us children of God, and he's given us this promise to teach us, to lead us, to guide us under his yoke. Let's believe His promise, beloved. Shall we, together, come to him

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and learn, obey His authority, and we will find rest for our souls. It's guaranteed by His Word. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we just want to stop for a moment and worship you, and express in our heart of hearts what our lips fail to express. It's how we are astounded at your meekness, astounded at your gentleness, your restraint, your composure, your kindness, your tenderness. And we know that that's not just a perfect human being with no sin. That is the very character of our God, whom you came to reveal and teach to us. And so knowing that that is the heart of God the Father, we now eagerly (as your brothers and sisters because of God's grace), we eagerly now come and bow before your throne, Father, call you "Father." We're so grateful that we can come to you, because you have this gentle heart toward your children.

We pray for those who are among us who do not know you this way yet, those who may see you as a stern judge. You are a judge of all the earth. You are the one who executes perfect justice and righteousness. And there will come a time by your perfect sovereign will, your perfect timing, when you will call for

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judgment. And by that time it'll be too late. There are those who take your patience with sin for granted, and continue to dawdle, and continue to trifle with your holiness, and continue to reject and spurn your, your authority, and continue to treat themselves as the authority in their lives, and continue to play with all the sins of the world.

A number of those that're not with us anymore, and they have stood before you, and they've taken their places in Sheol, awaiting final judgment, cast into the Lake of Fire. There are those who are among us now who don't know you. We pray that before it's too late, that you would awaken their souls to salvation, that you would grant them the gift of new birth, to give them a new nature, that they may see the glorious, meek Lord Jesus Christ, and find rest for their souls too.

And for all of us who are numbered in your family, citizens of your Kingdom, we pray that you would form this meekness in us, fully form it in all of its aspects and all of its glory that we see in Christ; that we might be very different ambassadors in this lost, dying, stressed-out world, especially

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in the days and months, years ahead, as things are liable to get dicey around here. We pray that you would help us to walk through, with perfect composure, the meekness of Christ for your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, and by the power of the Spirit we beg. Amen.