

The Amazing Jesus His Amazing Meekness

Intro: This year we're taking time once a month in a lesson to reflect upon the amazing character of Jesus. There are so many things about him that we need to admire and imitate. We've already talked about his amazing prayer life, his amazing compassion for people in their suffering, his amazing forbearance with his disciple's failings, his amazing patience with God's timing, and his amazing relationship with his family, and his amazing righteous indignation toward sin.

What is remarkable about Jesus is the perfect balance that He possessed. For on the one hand we can speak of His amazing righteous indignation, but at the same time speak of his amazing meekness in the face of provocation. For someone who is now remembered to be one of the greatest characters in all human history, during his earthly sojourn Jesus showed the most amazing humility, modesty, and self-restraint. Let's consider his amazing meekness.

Since it is a quality that is often associated with weakness, it may be helpful to simply define what we mean by meekness.

Defining Meekness

Meekness on the OT

In the OT the concept of meekness derives from the condition of poverty and affliction. People who suffered from these things were made by their circumstances to look to God and to depend upon him to provide their needs and give them relief. Thus the “meek” were those who were patiently submissive and humble by dint of the hardships of life.

The prophets encouraged the meek to recognize that though in this world they might be oppressed, God would intervene in their behalf: *But the humble will inherit the land, And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity. (Psalm 37:11)*

That quality of humble submission would influence how the meek responded to others who were antagonistic or unfair in their treatment.

Moses is an outstanding example of meekness.

(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.) (Numbers 12:3)

It was in the face of severe provocation that the Scriptures affirm that about Moses. Moses' own family attacked his leadership. But in meekness, Moses, while maintaining strength of leadership, was ready to accept personal injury without resentment or recrimination.

We see in Moses good evidence that meekness is not weakness but strength under control. There is no more heroic and forceful character in the OT than Moses. He is fearless in exercising leadership against unbearable intransigence among

his followers. He stands up to Pharaoh. He defends his right to lead when his authority is challenged. He is the most visible and powerful figure in the traveling nation of Israel. Yet he does all of this in the strength of God, and he himself makes no presumption to be self-reliant, nor does he use his position as leader for self-aggrandizement.

Meekness among the Greeks

Meekness was also celebrated among the Greeks.

The Greeks used the Greek word “prautes” (translated meekness) to describe a “gentle horse or a friendly watchdog.

Aristotle: "the ability to bear reproaches and slights with moderation, and not to embark on revenge quickly, and not to be easily provoked to anger, but to be free from bitterness and contentiousness, having tranquility and stability in the spirit." (On Virtues And Vices)

So meekness could be defined as:

Strength under control!

A meek person is “strong enough to be gentle”.

It is the ability to suffer wrong rather than do wrong!

Meekness then, is that virtuous quality by which... "we treat all men with perfect courtesy, that we can rebuke without rancor, that we can argue without intolerance, that we can face the truth without resentment, that we can be angry and sin not, that we can be gentle and yet not weak." (Barclay)

The Meekness of Jesus

If Moses could have been called the meekest man on earth, then that place has been taken by our Lord Jesus Christ, truly the meekest man who ever lived!

He encouraged his disciples to be meek by declaring God's blessings upon the meek.

Jesus could relate to the meek--to those who were downtrodden and oppressed. Even he had been born in poverty. He knew what it was like to grow up in small village with no reputation and be the son of parents with no wealth or power. He knew how to work hard with his hands, and apparently to have accumulated so little money that he possessed no house of his own. He could sympathize with those he sought to comfort when he said:

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)

One has to understand the counter-cultural nature of Jesus' teaching. He was calling upon people to demonstrate attitudes that were the exact opposite of how people of the world typically act and respond to others.

Most of the world's literature has exalted the conquering hero who refuses to submit and who exerts his or her interests against anyone who might challenge those interests. Most cultures have reserved their rewards for people who compete

successfully through strength of will and superior power. In such a context Jesus' portrait of the ideal disciple as someone who is meek, accompanied by the promised reward that such a person will inherit the earth (Mt 5:5; cf. Ps 37:11), is a flat contradiction of conventional wisdom.¹

But what Jesus taught others to be, he also claimed to be.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.” (Matthew 11:29)

When Jesus said, “I am meek and lowly in heart,” he was giving people incentive to come to him and take on his yoke.

Every time I read that text I imagine Jesus giving that invitation near a living demonstration of the non-meek. I imagine a cruel master who has loaded up his animal to the breaking point and is driving him through the city. Under the load of the weight the animal finally collapses; and this makes his master even angrier. He harshly shouts at the animal to get up and move forward. He pulls out his rod and begins to strike the animal to force it under the threat of pain to get up and push forward.

What kind of master would Jesus be? What kind of attitude would he have for those who came under his yoke? Would he burden them beyond their strength? Would he angrily punish them when they fell? No, this is his assurance to those who would come to Him. “I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.”

Paul exhorted the critical Corinthians:

“NOW I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!” (2 Corinthians 10:1)

How Jesus demonstrated meekness

In his submissive response to God's commandments

In Jesus we can see a perfect submissive to the commands of God.

There was no resistance or push-back. Instead he would say:

And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. (John 8:29)

Jesus did what we are commanded to do--to listen to God and obey with meekness.

“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” (James 1:21)

In the quietness of his work

¹ Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000). In *Dictionary of biblical imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

A person set on self-aggrandizement would not miss the opportunity to exploit the excitement of the masses or even seek to create it for his own self-serving purposes. It would be his ticket to fame and position. We see politicians do this all the time; but Jesus was no politician. The Scriptures reveal that He was entirely reluctant to use such techniques to gain followers.

Matthew records a remarkable example of this meekness. Jesus had healed a leper of his dreaded disease; and there were hosts of them in Israel. However Matthew reports after this healing:

“and warned them not to make Him known, in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, might be fulfilled, saying, “BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL -PLEASED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES. “HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS. “A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY. “AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE.” (Matthew 12:16–21)

What Jesus could have said to those who he healed, “Go tell everyone what just happened to you. Bring them into this movement. Before long there’ll be so many of us, we’ll be able to take over the empire!”

Instead Jesus continued to do his work quietly, avoiding publicity and acclaim. He did not rely upon artificial excitement or angry debate that would arouse emotion in others.

Hagner points out: “Matthew has deliberately portrayed Jesus as powerful in both word and deed. And yet this is not the essence of Jesus’ ministry, which is to be found not in power, but in servanthood expressed through humility, meekness, and gentleness.

“Despite the significance of Jesus and the importance of his person and mission (cf. v 6; 11:27), he does not come in such a way as to overwhelm or crush those to whom he is sent—not even his enemies. During his earthly ministry, neither Jesus nor his disciples nor those whom he healed acclaim him publicly as Messiah.

Jesus would identify with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah and consequently would reach out to the needy, the rejected, and the sinner.

In his unpretentious demeanor

Jesus shows no preoccupation with image, especially an image designed to impress the wealthy and the powerful. One of the most impressive things about Jesus is how he refused to glory in opulence or fame.

Zechariah wrote of him:

““SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, ‘BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.’”” (Matthew 21:5)

Ironically we call it the "triumphal entry;" yet it shared little of the features of the Roman triumph in which the returning king made sure everyone saw every possible demonstration of His power and wealth.

In his silence in the face of unfair provocation and accusation

Jesus demonstrated meekness in superlative degree when he stood before his unjust accusers without a word of retort or self-justification.

“But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”” (Matthew 26:63)

*“And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He made no answer. Then Pilate *said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so that the governor was quite amazed.” (Matthew 27:12–14)*

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7)

His meekness at the trial was evidence of strength, not weakness! He was submissive, never resisting or disputing the will of God. His absolute trust in the Father enabled Him to show compassion, courage, and self-sacrifice even in the most hostile situation.

“and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;” (1 Peter 2:23)

Conclusion: What an example Jesus has left us! All throughout Scripture we are urged to imitate His character; and to show meekness toward God and others. We show that meekness like Jesus by submitting humble to God's instructions, by patiently enduring those who wrong us and even forgiving them for it, for leaving room for the wrath of God instead of taking our own vengeance. In going about our lives doing good without self-glorification or the need for accolades. To give people a real taste of spiritual life lived before them without resorting to marketing hype.

May God save us from harshness, from a grasping spirit, from vengefulness, from self-aggrandizement and from the lack of self-control that plagues this world.²

Let's be meek like Jesus!

² Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000). In *Dictionary of biblical imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.