

## **Blessed are the Meek**

I want to start off today talking about a little word called success. It seems to be a powerful world and one that many people seem to want to use to define their life. I, often wonder how we should define **success**. The definition of success in our world is dictated by the circumstances we find ourselves in. Americans would probably all say that success can be defined by hard work and creativity, popularity and demand, commitment and longevity, the amount of money we collect and by maximizing our ability to live out the “American dream.” However, for someone from a different culture, time, or place success might look much different from that. To some success might be finding enough potable water to sustain them another day or making enough money to purchase rice for their entire family to have a meal that night.

How do we define success? I think this is a question that many of us will spend our entire lives pondering. We will all question if we worked hard enough, made enough money, should have chosen a different career, been a better parent, better spouse, etc. This is a natural process of reflection and many of us in this room have and will continue to reflect on our life and try to answer these questions as we progress on this great journey through life. In some way we are all looking to write a success story that will tell of our great legacy long after we are gone. Vince Lombardi, the great American football coach, had a quote about success. “The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.” I think for many of us this creates a great picture of success because it allows for the makings of how our culture has come to define success: Having a great story. “Does my journey make for a great story? After I am finished completing this task or stage in life am I going to be able to tell this story to my friends and family, around the dinner table, in a book, on my blog, or on my social media?” We live in a culture that values **success stories** and many of us are willing to take **extreme action** to achieve them.

On this surface, extreme circumstances do not seem like such a bad thing. Hard work, sacrifice, dedication, confidence, vision, and purpose are all things that contribute to success and they are all values we should seek bring into an organization. Where the line of extreme action seems to become blurry is when it begins to compromise our core values in our pursuit of success. Thus, we must ask ourselves the question: When did **core values** become secondary to **success**? When did it become ok for us to realign or core values to serve our own selfishness in our pursuit of success? The short answer, as we are going to learn today, is simple: it hasn't.

### **God's Success Story**

Over the last two weeks we have talked about how Christians should value a different **life and happiness** than the rest of the world and it is because of that that we have to recognize the way our **core values** help us define success. Today we are going to be looking at God's success story and how God was able to define success in his own way without compromising his core values or identity. Some of you are now thinking, “What the heck? I thought we were supposed to be talking about the

beatitudes. . .” Well, we are, but it is important that we have this idea of a success story in our head because its crucial to our understanding of today’s beatitude. Matthew 5:5 states,

***“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”***

This seems pretty straight forward. As long as we understand what the word “Meek” means that we will be on track for the promise of inheriting the earth and all that God has planned. The Greek word for Meek is **πραεῖς** meaning “mildness of disposition or gentleness of spirit.” The phrase shall inherit the earth literally means to “inherit the abode of men and animals, the inhabited earth. Thus we can read the passage as saying, “Blessed are the Gentle of Spirit for they shall inherit the inhabited earth.” The challenge here is determining exactly what it means to be “Gentle in Spirit.”

Last week we discussed how people often misinterpret the beatitudes because we read and apply them as standalone statements of philosophy or morality when they were actually intended to be understood together. We followed that up by studying our passage in context, which meant reading the verse before it and the verse after it. I want to read you the whole section of the first four beatitudes this week because it is going to be essential to our understanding of this passage. Matthew 5:3-6 states,

***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

***Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.***

***Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.***

***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”***

- **Matthew 5:3-6 (ESV)**

If you weren’t here, two weeks ago Pastor Richard established the idea that being Poor in Spirit means recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy before God. Last week we discussed how “those who mourn” when read in context is actually referring to those people who mourn their sin before God shall be comforted by his grace and unconditional love for them if they come to have a relationship with Jesus. Therefore it only makes sense that we view our passage for today in light of those ideas.

When read these passages together they continue to enlighten us to the reality of God’s upside down kingdom. Once we recognize our spiritual bankruptcy before God we mourn the sin in our life, we inherit God’s Kingdom and find comfort in a relationship with Jesus. If we embrace the kingdom and recognize the impact of our sin, This should lead to a posture of humility or “gentleness” before God. When we walk in **gentleness and humility**, we are blessed because we walk in God’s **success story**. What is God’s success story? The answer to that question lies in the second half of our passage today. God’s success story is all about us inheriting a restored earth, an earth as flawless as the one that existed in the creation account. Isaiah 65:17 states,

***“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.”***

When we submit ourselves before God and embrace his kingdom mission we become an active participant in his restoration and that leads to a place where we value what he values and we reject

those things that lead us away from him. What is the impact of all this? As we will discuss next week our pursuit of true righteousness can only happen from a posture of humility, not a posture of pride. Humility before God will lead us to righteousness and life while pride will lead us to legalism and ultimately death. We have to recognize our posture before God and humbly submit ourselves to his restorative plan as we seek the satisfaction that only he can provide. This satisfaction can only come from humbly embracing God's success story and his core values of love, forgiveness, and restoration.

## Walking in Gentleness

I'm curious; do we have any turkey hunters in the room today? Well, either way I'd like you to indulge me by answering a question: "What is the best way for a turkey to survive turkey season? How can a turkey be successful?" A simplified answer to these questions is this: Stay Humble, Avoid Pride. In a lot of ways spring Turkey season is really rigged in favor the hunter. It takes place during the "mating season" and one of the most common tactics is to use decoys and a turkey hen call to appeal to the male turkeys need to procreate. There is a series of tactics you can use from a simple hen yelp, to a cluck, to a fighting purr. No matter what tactic you choose, you are appeal to the turkey's pride. You're trying to lure him in to mate or lure him into a fight to defend or seize territory with the hope of finding a mate. Either way, a turkeys pride is his worst enemy and the hunter's best friend.

The question that we have to answer today is, "What kind of turkey are you?" Folks there is a world out there that seems dark, scary, and dangerous. Around every corner there is a trap that is trying to lure you in, the perfect situation to try to take advantage of your pride. What is your response going to be? Are you going to let pride win and allow sin to contaminate your life or are you going to recognize the restorative process that God is engaging in throughout our world? Are you going to embrace God's success story? Everyday we have the opportunity to move the needle of on God's process just a little bit. Every time you embrace humility and your role in God kingdom you inch closer to his plan, you inch closer to his intended end. Every time you humbly submit yourself to Lord and to leading of the Holy Spirit you have the opportunity to see the deepest needs of our world satisfied. What type of **success story** are you chasing? Are you **walking** in humility or **strutting** in pride? How can you walk in **humility and gentleness**? How can you approach others in your work place and share your faith with humility? How can you listen to a struggling friend who just cannot seem hear to any of the good advice you've been giving them for years? You want to know why Humility and gentleness is so important? Take a look at Matthew this verse from Matthew 11,

***"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am GENTLE and LOWLY in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."***

Walking in **gentleness** puts us in a unique position to help people connect with Jesus, because we become a **living example** of Christ's character. It gives a unique perspective to share with the world, a unique way to share that Jesus, the embodiment of humility and gentleness has already won. Sin has lost its power, death has lost its sting, sin no longer has control over our world.

## **The Power of Gentleness and Humility**

How might our neighborhood be changed if we presented a story of **humility and gentleness** instead of **pride and groughness**? What if we approached imperfect people with humility and gentleness rather than pride and judgement? What if we shared God's success story instead of always pursuing our own? How might our church be different if we became active role players in Gods success story through our commitment to Christ centered **humility, gentleness, and the transforming power** of the gospel? How might lives be impacted if we from a place of humility and gentlness declare that Jesus has already won?

**Pray**