

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 1)

The Good Life – A Fresh look at the Beatitudes

Study 3 - The Great Reversal

Introduction

We live in a world in which power and strength are seen as virtues. Those who know what they want and who set out to take it are admired. The self-made man or woman, the assertive person who always speaks his or her mind and gets their way, the bold and the beautiful – these are the people who are admired and to whose way of life many aspire. In a world like this weakness is a vice and weak people are despised, ignored or used by the strong to get what the strong want. In a world like this, the strong get it all and the *meek* (whoever they are) get nothing! In a world like this, Jesus promise to the meek that they will inherit the earth, seems like utter nonsense.

It is certainly true that Jesus' description of the citizens of God's kingdom as meek and His promise that they will inherit the earth stands in stark contrast to the people think. But, as we have already seen and will see throughout the Beatitudes, the standards of the kingdom of heaven are very different from the standards of the world. It is natural for people to assume that God's kingdom works exactly like our kingdoms – only better perhaps (if we remember to be humble!). But Jesus' words in the Beatitudes remind us of the great reversal that must take place in our thinking if we are to start seeing things Jesus' way. And nowhere is this seen more clearly in the promise that Jesus makes to the people he describes as 'meek'.



Investigate and Think



Read Matthew 5:5

- How do you think the word 'meekness' is understood today? What words can you think of as synonyms for 'meekness'?

- What do you think Jesus meant by the word 'meekness'?
- In Matthew 11:29 Jesus describes Himself as 'meek' (NIV *gentle*). How does this affect your definition of 'meekness'?
- What do you think Jesus' hearers would have understood by the promise 'inherit the earth'? (hint: the word translated *earth* can also be translated *land*)
- Given that Jesus is speaking to Jewish disciples, why would this promise have been so important to them?
- What do you think this promise of inheriting the earth means for disciples today? Why?

Read Psalm 37:1-11

- What two groups are being described in these verses? (take some time to list the descriptions of each group)

- How does each of these groups act?

- What does the future hold for each group? What determines this?

- Compare vs 9 and vs 11. What is another definition of the 'meek' in the light of this comparison?

- What should the 'meek' not do / do as they live in a fallen world?

- In the light of Psalm 37:1-11 how would you define 'meekness'?

- Re-read Matthew 5:5. Given that Jesus is quoting Psalm 37:11, what do you think Jesus means by this Beatitude?

- How do you think this Beatitude applies to believers today?



Apply

- In what way has Jesus' promise to the meek surprised you?

- Would you consider yourself to be 'meek'?

- What needs to change in your attitude and actions for this Beatitude to be true of you?

- Why do you think this change is worth it?