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Presentation Transcript
Meekness
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Good afternoon, everybody. We're doing a series on *The Beatitudes*, and the third beatitude is *Meekness*. We're also here on Pentecost, and that is because we believe the holy day ties in with this beatitude.

So let's read – let's do a little review here – Matthew 5, verse 3.

Mt. 5:3 – *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

We learned that poverty of spirit is spiritual emptiness. That's where we acknowledge that, without God, we know *nothing* – about Him, His ways, how we should live our lives. So, once we get to that point, that's the first step in true spirituality. The first thing a person has to do, when he comes to God, is to admit that He's in charge and that we're weak and powerless. That's where it all begins.

Once we acknowledge that, without God, we're helpless, then we mourn. It's not an intellectual exercise. It's an emotional one. We mourn for our part in Christ's death, and for all the people we've hurt, and all the damage we've done, because we can't be like God and we make a lot of mistakes.

Then verse 4 says:

V-4 – *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

So, if we do that – if we mourn – then we're going to come into alignment with the mind of God, and things are going to go better for us – both now and later.

Then verse 5:

V-5 – *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

What is meekness? And why do they inherit the earth? We always start with what the words mean – *blessed are....* That just means that you'll be blessed if you *are* meek – as

promised. Now we come to the word *meek*. And we look in Louw & Nida and it says: *Gentleness of attitude and behavior in contrast with harshness in one's dealings with others. Gentleness, meekness, mildness.* The other thing that I wanted to add there is that poverty of spirit is toward God, but meekness is toward God and other people. So this is starting to move out away from self now – our conversion and our calling – and now the application of the benefits. Meekness is toward God and others.

And they inherit the earth. I believe there are two ways that happens. When we are judged, the meek will inherit the earth. That's one way. If we're meek, that's what we get. And I also believe that, in the present moment, those who send out meek vibes, receive back the same. They also receive gentle treatment from others and from God.

Okay, so the attitude. What's the attitude? Well, interestingly enough the most meek person who has ever lived is revealed in the Bible. And all we have to do to understand the trait is to understand the man. It's in Numbers 12:3. It's all about Moses. So what was Moses like?

Well we know that he killed an Egyptian when he saw him mistreating an Israelite. He had a terrible temper. We know that he broke the tablets of the Law when he saw the Israelites worshipping an idol. He had a temper fit there. That cost him big time! He'd just been up there for forty days and had fasted, and he got sent right back to do forties back-to-back – not a fun time. It also says that he got so upset with the Israelites that he had them grind the golden calf into powder, mix it in water and drink it. So, how big was that thing? Well, there were two to three million people, and they had spoiled the Egyptians, so they were rich. They probably contributed a lot of gold to make this giant, huge, golden calf that they could see. I don't know how big an area it takes to put two million people in, but it was probably pretty big. So it took a long time, I think, using hand tools to grind that thing to powder. So it seems like he stayed ticked for a long time over that one, doesn't it? We know that he struck the rock when Israel was faithless in demanding water. His temper got him in trouble there, too – big time! That lost him a trip into the promised land. He got to wander for forty years in the wilderness. And just as they got there, God let him die. So he didn't get to go in. And that was his reminder that he couldn't have a temper. So how does that fit in with meekness? He was the most meek man on the face of the earth! And yet he had all these episodes of temper. Let's look at that. Let's back up a little.

Poverty of spirit – what is it? It's the kind of teachability that goes toward God. Right? We know that He knows everything and we're willing to learn from Him. Meekness is teachability toward other people – like your mate, your parents and your children.

I have a few parents who come into my office all the time and tell me mean things their kids have said to them – mostly true – mostly describing their problems. Some of them are meek and some of them aren't. Some of them are willing to listen to their children and learn, and some of them aren't.

So let's think about when Moses was teachable. I think about the time his father-in-law, Jethro – the priest of Midian – a Gentile – I think a Cushite, an African man.... By the way, do you know who the Midianites are? The Midianites are the Gentiles that God said did the most to draw Israel away from Him toward other gods. Jethro is kind of a mixed bag, isn't he? He's Moses' father-in-law and he's a pagan priest, and he's a pagan priest over the people that were the most influential to pull Israel away from God. So, the situation was that Moses was burdened with judging the people. And Jethro suggested that he create a structure so that he only had to deal with the most difficult cases – captains of ten, captains of fifty, captains of hundred, captains of thousand. Right? So they had a system where all the difficult filtered to the top and all the simple ones got taken care of, so that Moses didn't have to spend from morning till night doing all that work. A good system. Of course, the source was problematic. Right? It wasn't from an Israelite and it wasn't from God. It was from a Gentile – a pagan – and his father-in-law, to boot – somebody who's religion was abhorrent to God. But just because he was a pagan, didn't mean that he wasn't a good organizer. And Moses was meek enough to listen to him – to heed and to learn from what he heard.

Some of us are so arrogant that we don't listen if it doesn't come from our limited sphere of approved sources. Some of us even ridicule or look down on others and, thereby, miss out on some of God's wisdom. It's interesting, too, that Midian – we're told in the Prophets – is going to be a respected nation in the Millennium. Isn't that interesting? I mean, they did some bad stuff in the past, but they're going to change their tune. They've just been misdirected for a long time. But when Christ comes to deal with them, they're going to repent, and they're going to go God's way. They're going to be part of the process.

Do you remember, in the story, what Moses' father-in-law said to him, when he saw Moses laboring so hard? He made a very blunt statement. He said, "What you're doing is not good." That's a rather blunt thing to say to the leader of two to three million people. Of course, he was older and he was his father-in-law. Maybe that gave him some credibility there – some currency. It didn't seem to bother Moses. He just listened. Even if it was offensive, he just listened.

I want you to notice, too, that all of Moses' temper episodes were about other people being hurt, or God being disrespected. It wasn't about people attacking Moses. There's not really any indication in the Bible that he got upset when that happened – or, at least, didn't have a temper fit. He'd go and pray to God and complain, but he wouldn't go ballistic on people because of that. He got upset when people were hurting others or God was being mistreated. He stood up for God's name. It was not about him being attacked. So he was not self-defensive. That's another characteristic of meekness – quick to jump to the defense of others, but not quick to defend himself; quick to hallow the name of God among the people, but he put other people ahead of himself.

I want you to read with me a story out of the book of Numbers. And, of course, I forgot to write down the book, so we're going to have to do some shuffling here. It's the story where Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his wife – his Cushite wife. You know, some things just never change.

Num. 12: 2 - *They said, "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Hasn't He also spoken through us?"* So they were sort of downgrading him a little bit and lifting themselves up. It says: *And the LORD heard this.*

And it says, in verse 3 – there's a parenthetical statement:

V-3 – *(Now Moses was a very meek man – more meek than anyone else on the face of the earth.)*

So we started in verse 1, we just read verse 3, and now in verse 4 it says:

V-4 – *At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam – so He caught them all three together, I guess, and said – "I want you people to come out to the tent of meeting – all three of you."* Not a good thing, right? *So the three of them came out. And then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud. That's better than the fire. He stood at the entrance of the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward, He said, "Listen to My words. When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal Myself to Him in vision. I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant, Moses. He is faithful in all My house. With him, I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles. He sees the form of the LORD. Why, then, were you not afraid to speak against my servant, Moses?"* Isn't that interesting? Here, God is standing up for Moses, even though Moses didn't stand up for himself. Isn't that interesting how that works? Of course, there is no such thing as a law of attraction. We don't draw to ourselves what we are. There is God treating Moses very gently and He's treating very harshly the people that were giving Him a bad time.

I remember a long time ago – a long time ago – I was talking to one of the girls in my congregation. I think she was probably about 14 or 15. And she was telling me that she had a teacher that had a chip on her shoulder toward her. That's the term she used. The teacher seemed to have it in for her. I spent a little bit of time asking her exactly what the situation was like. From her perspective, it certainly did seem to her like that was what was happening. I can't say, for sure, it was, because I wasn't there, but if she was reporting anything near accurate, then I would say it was a true situation. So we talked about it. I asked her how it made her feel and all of that. It made her angry and it hurt her feelings and all this. I said, "So, have you decided what to do about it?" She said, "You know, I've thought about it a lot and I think what I should do is just try to be as nice to her as I possibly can." Do you know what I told her? I said, "There are a lot of adults in our congregation that wouldn't be able to do that. But you, if you can pull that off, I want you to know that you will be functioning at a very high level of spirituality, and that you *you* will be not far from the kingdom of God, if you do that." I checked in with her a few months later and it was an ancient history problem. Everything was good. It makes you feel really good when you meet kids that do that, especially when you just get overwhelmed with adults that can't.

Okay, so that's what meekness is. It's gentleness toward other people, even when provoked. It's the ability to learn from people, even if they don't teach you things in the

most polite way. It's being able to listen to people criticize us and get something out of it. It's being non-defensive.

I have a marriage program that I work with people that are having problems. And it's all about teaching people how to talk to others so they're not defensive. It's actually a lesson in meekness. How does this attitude of meekness – of gentleness toward other people, and just taking the soft approach, and not being defensive, and just cutting people slack – how does that fit in with mourning? We did say that we believe that these are stairsteps in spiritual function – right? – and that you cannot be meek unless you first mourn, and you can't mourn unless you first become poor in spirit. So how does this one find its foundation in mourning?

Well, we said that mourning was about feeling deeply our own weaknesses, failings and need for God – about feeling *deeply* those things. Somebody who knows that knows that he shouldn't be on his high horse with other people. He doesn't feel like he deserves to be. So the latter is the outgrowth of the former.

Let's go to Ephesians 4, and verse 32.

Eph. 4:32 – *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* See how that works?

We know that God forgave us our sins by the death of Christ. And we feel an emotional sense of responsibility for that, so it's a lot easier to be compassionate and kind and forgiving to other people, isn't it? If we forget, and we start thinking that we know best, and that we have all the answers, and people should listen to us, that's when people get steamrollered and trampled, isn't it? That's when gentleness goes out the window.

By the way, that word for *kind* there in verse 32, that's the same word that Jesus used and was translated *meek* in Matthew 5. It's talking about the very same thing.

So why do we kindly forgive offenses and stay out of defensive mode and treat others gently? Because God did that for *us* in the death of His Son. When we come into relationship with God, we learn that we're nothing, that we're helpless, that we're temporal, that we're ignorant of all the things of God, that there's no way that we can do it. That's poverty of spirit. And we feel deeply sorry for the trouble we've caused and the trouble we *are*. And that mourning and that regret causes us to walk softly. We need to walk softly when we get rid of the delusion of strength and power, and to be gentle with people, and to be non-judgmental and forgiving, and letting go of hurts and offenses.

I had a young client sometime ago – a teenage girl – a *young* teenager – and she mentioned that after only two sessions she was feeling less anxious. And I'd just got through telling her on the first session that this wasn't going to go quickly. So I asked her if she could pinpoint the reason. She said, "I think it's because when I try to explain my feelings about my father to him or my grandparents, they all defend them to me. And you don't. You don't take sides. You just listen." And she said, "It feels comforting to be

heard and understood.” For a thirteen-year-old to be able to perceive that in herself is so awesome. I said, “And also to give voice to your feelings.” And she said, “Yes, I notice they’re not so strong afterwards.” I was thinking about her father and her grandfather. Both of them are good guys, but they’re engineers! It’s kind of like get in, fix it, get out. Interrogate, judge, fix. That’s how they do things. They don’t realize that this girl that they love so much can’t be fixed. She can fix herself, but they need to be meek with her, and gentle, and easy, and slow and patient. And they need to listen.

By the way, how do you talk to your kids? Are you demanding, curt, judgmental, critical, disrespectful? Or are you meek? You should ask them sometime. Don’t go with *your* opinion about it. Go ask *them*.

I noticed that this girl.... The first contact was from her grandmother. She told me about this child that was really suffering some anxiety. Then I talked to her grandfather a couple days later and he and the father came in to talk to me before I ever met her – at my request. It was very obvious that this child is very well loved and they’re worried about her. So I told her – when I finally did meet her in her first session that sometimes.... She was kind of perched on the edge of the couch and sat ramrod straight, and she looked like she was ready to run at any moment – *very* ill at ease about it. So I told her, in the first session, that ninety percent of our mind is unconscious process. And sometimes when people come to therapy, that really powerful unconscious part of them knows that they can get help, so it will start sending up coded messages in the form of dreams, or daydreams, or things will happen while you’re watching TV that just don’t fit – stuff like that. So I asked her to kind of be alert for that. So the second session she comes in with this dream.

She dreamt that she was at school doing sports, which she does. In the dream, her assistant coach was helping her with a very challenging activity. She said, “It felt good because he has a really strong grip and you know that he’s not going to let you fall and get hurt. And he tells me stuff like, ‘Keep your legs straight.’” While she was working with him, another coach called her over in an angry voice and she immediately did as she was told and went to this other woman – Tracy, I think her name was in the dream. When she got there, she noticed that Tracy’s hair was all messed up and that she was angry with her, even though she did just as she was told to do instantly. And she noticed that Tracy was also angry with her own daughter, who was also there in the gym. Then she went over to see another coach, who was the coach that dealt with the higher level athletes – the one that worked with, maybe, the older kids – and there were a bunch of them sitting around him, and they were either angry or crying, and he was really pitching some big fit. He was really upset about something, but she did not know, in the dream, what it was. So I said, “Do you have any idea what that’s about?” No clue. So I helped her figure out what those symbols were – what they meant. Here’s what she came up with: We started with the end of the dream, and we thought that the main coach there was actually the big problem – all the upset. The people sitting around him were the people that were upset – angry or crying – about *her* situation – they were worried about her. That’s what she came up with – not me. It’s interesting that I had noticed how supported she was in doing this therapy. I said, “Who do you think Tracy is?” She said, “That’s got to be my dad. I

mean, he's always mad at me and I can never figure out why. I'm always doing the wrong thing, no matter what. And his head is all messed up" – you know, his hair. I said, "Okay, so we now know that 1) you've got a lot of support, and 2) that the real problem is your relationship with your dad" – which is *not* how it was explained to me when it all started out. So there's the information starting to roll in. So I know where to go now, right? And it came from her.

So I said, "Who is the coach who helped you?" She said, "I'm not sure." I said, "Well, I think that's your symbol for me." She said, "I was going to say that, but I wasn't sure I should." So I said, "Well, you know, in here we can always talk about us, because that *is* the therapy. That's how you're going to get better." She said, "Okay. So you make me feel safe, like my coach, and you're helping me do something that's really hard." I said, "You told me that your coach told you to keep your legs straight. Is that like pushing you?" She said, "Oh yeah!" I said, "I think your dream is also telling *me* that you feel safe enough in here that I can push you a bit, too." She looked at me and kind of nodded her head. I said, "I think we have a beginning of a really good therapeutic relationship. So when I tell you to keep your legs straight, you'll know what I'm talking about, right?" She grinned and nodded. It's just amazing, isn't it, how that works and how, if we just go gently with people, and let them take it at their own pace, the information comes and we know what to do, and everything is good.

That's opposed to a child I met once, who had transferred from a developmental psychologist to me. I forget why. I said, "How was it over at Dr. So-and-so?" He said, "All right." I said, "So what happened over there?" He said, "Oh, he tried to make me talk about stuff I didn't want to talk about." I said, "Did you?" He said, "No!" I guess what I'm saying is that, if you're meek as a therapist, it works better, too. It took me a long time to figure that out.

We now know that meekness is built on a foundation of mourning about what's wrong with us. And that causes us not to want to be hard on others, because we know that we're just like they are. We're all in the same situation. Does that makes sense? It does to me. Big time.

So how does this relate to the salvation plan? How does it relate to Pentecost? The holy days in the Bible – the biblical holy days – are all about God's plan of salvation. They are the steps. So how does meekness relate to Pentecost? Well, what *is* Pentecost? Pentecost is the holy day that marks the beginning of the New Testament church, doesn't it? And also the coming of the Holy Spirit. Right? Acts 2 – it's right there. So what was Jesus telling his disciples on the Mount of Olives when He gave the beatitudes? Well, He was telling them how to be successful with God and preparing them to take their role in the church, wasn't He? So this is all about church. But I think this is especially so – that way.

So what skills do we need to function successfully in the church, with other members, and with other people that we're going to be working to reach? What are the skills that we need?

Col. 3:11 - *Here, Paul said, there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised, or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free. No divisions. No humanly divided divisions. Greeks and Jews are really different. And Scythians were different also. And slaves were different from free people. So he's talking about huge diversity here. It reminds me of that movie I saw, with Mel Gibson, where he was that seventh calvary commander that went into Vietnam – *We Were Soldiers* – and he gave that speech to his men before they left. Back in those times, the racial situation in the US was heating up. He told them, "You come from a country where people hate each other just because of the color of their skin, or their religion." He said, "When we get over there, all that will go away. You will depend on the men next to you for your life, and it won't matter what color he is or which God he worships." So that's kind of what Paul's saying to these people, isn't he? He's talking about church unity – unity in Christ.*

V-12 – *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Oh, that word gentleness. Guess which one it is. Yes, it's meekness. It's the same word Jesus used.*

V-13 – *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since, as members of one body, you are called to peace. See that's the kingdom skill that we need to be a unified church. We need to be meek. That's one of the things – probably the primary thing. But to me, if you're kind, compassionate, humble and patient, that all comes from that core thing of being meek. Right? Of course, it says that it's all bound by the love of God, which, of course, is true. We're supposed to *clothe* ourselves with it.*

I don't have that kind of clothing. Do you? Not naturally. Where does it come from?
Romans 5:5.

Rom. 5:5 – *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given. It comes from the Holy Spirit, doesn't it?*

Why is this girl's father so rough on her? She can't ever do anything right. You know, he's not doing it purposefully. He's a good guy. He's being triggered by his own past. He's had a hard life. I've seen many Christians go down that same route. Their kids trigger their anger, or their anxiety, or whatever – especially men. And because they're males, and because they're in a church that teaches numbing through tradition, instead of letting the love of God creep into every corner of our lives, the healing work doesn't get done.

I can't help but contrast that with a man I talked to, in the past, who said he was angry with all his children, but that he was sick of being that kind of person and was looking for change. That's what we need to do. That's how the Holy Spirit works. When we have that kind of attitude, it can cause us to change. Finally, some honesty. He was becoming meek. He was asking for help.

There's only one way such a diverse group can get along. And that's by cutting each other a lot of slack. It's a kingdom skill. Using it now is a high functioning spirituality and the aim of the law of God, we're told. The aim is to become loving like God is, and to be meek, and to mourn. Those are the things that are the aim of the law.

So, if we really want to keep Pentecost, we will realize that it is a day that pictures our spiritual development, and then go home and work to let the Holy Spirit into our lives, so that it can do the inner work, so that we can use it now and later to help others, ourselves and God. You might ask, "How do I do that?" Well, that's a story for another day, but suffice it to say, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."