

1st Hymn by F Faber 1814-1863 (*T Cross of Jesus* J Stainer 1840-1901)

- 1) Souls of men why do ye scatter like a crowd of frightened sheep?
foolish hearts, why do ye wander from a love so true and deep?
- 2) There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea,
there's a kindness in His justice which is more than liberty.
- 3) There is plentiful redemption in the blood that has been shed:
there is joy for all the members in the sorrow of the Head.
- 4) For the love of God is broader than the measures of man's mind,
and the love of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
- 5) If our love were but more simple we should take Him at his word;
and our lives would be more sunshine in the sweetness our Lord.

Prayer:

Dear Father, we come in joyful expectancy of our worship time with you, knowing that you are pleased to greet us, and receive our worship. So lead us in our time together, and secure us as we meet, for we come in the name of our Saviour, Jesus the Christ, Amen.

2nd Hymn by J Newton, T St. Peter by A Renagle 1799-1877

- 1) How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear,
it soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear.
- 2) It makes the wounded spirit whole and soothes the troubled breast,
'tis manner to the hungry soul, and to the weary rest.
- 3) Dear Name the rock on which I build, my shield and hiding place,
a never-failing treasury filled with boundless stores of grace.
- 4) Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend, my Prophet, Priest, and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my end, accept the praise I bring.
- 5) Weak is the effort of my heart, and cold my warmest thought,
but when I see Thee as Thou art, I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Readings:

- Proverbs 3:1-10
- Matthew 5:1-11

Intercessions:

Dear Father,

You created this world to be beautiful, but human behaviour has produced so much dysfunction. So our prayer is that we would see change in people's activities. There is no shortage of ability, but our concern is for their intentions and behaviour. Thank you for all the good examples of sensible people in our communities. Thank you for past leaders whose effort and integrity have shown such wonderful deeds and shown us the potential of which we are capable. For those who struggle against difficulties, there are so many examples of ways to overcome.

The Meek

When we can't see the way ahead, we thank you for your Holy Spirit who helps us to see and do what we may think impossible. You have shown in the lives of many who have not allowed difficulties to stop them, how determination plus God produce an unstoppable force, finding a way to overcome many obstacles.

We pray for those living where governing powers are hostile to Christians, even penalising them at the cost of their lives. Send your Spirit to empower them. Remove fear and strengthen their witness that it may be strong and uncompromising regarding your revealed truth, honouring Christ. May they bring glory to your name. Let your Kingdom come and your will be done here on earth even as it is in heaven.

For we pray these prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ, Amen.

Message: The Meek

In our day many are seeking a means of being recognised as significant in this world. Christians on the whole are regarded as insignificant, too quiet, of no great consequence in the world! Many want to wield more power these days.

So we have:

- self-assertiveness courses
- other image-boosting and success-seeking courses
- the "feminist movement", which has its roots in justifiable reaction to male chauvinism and domination
- many minority groups having an increasing influence in governments.

This trend is quite old - in the 18th and 19th centuries it was those who were "landed gentry" and had wealth who got the vote. Women didn't!

The Church has a "great commission" and responsibility in the world

- to spread the Kingdom of God, and
- to preach the gospel of Christ. No-one else will do that!

The institutional church has often wielded great political power, deciding the fate of kings! There was pomp and ceremony, and with it corruption, as if humanity cannot be trusted with power. Wasn't it Lord Acton who said "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely"? I think this is a recognition of our inherent weakness!

But today we are considering the quality of meekness, misunderstood by many as "*weakness*" so much so that use of the word has largely ceased. But meekness is actually a foremost Christian characteristic. Jesus said "I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls!" (Matt 11:29 RSV)

And remember the "blesseds" in our Reading ...

"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..."

So let's look at the words *blessed* and *meek*.

The Meek

Blessed means content, favoured of God, and implies fellowship with God in right relationship with Him. (It can even mean *fulfilled*!)

In O.T. the word is used many times, especially in the Psalms. The NIV commentary suggests that "blessed" implies the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the Kingdom of God, referring to how these people are before God.

Poor in spirit is not about possessions. It is the opposite of "self-sufficient", having the humility to recognise one's spiritual *bankruptcy* apart from God! It is looking for and depending upon God and His grace. *Those who mourn* are probably predominantly those who mourn for their sins! Again they are humble, and wide open to the truth about God and to receive the comfort of having their sins forgiven. Their godly sorrow is deeply conscious of the grace and goodness of God and ready to receive it. Like Paul, they see the cure ... "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But my main subject is "the meek", and great blessing will be theirs. *Meek* is not a word we use much. Some newer translations replace it with *gentle* which is part of its meaning, but I believe that doesn't quite mean the same.

Christ took that word to describe himself. He said "Come unto me all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matt 11:28-30) Do you think Jesus was weak?

St. Paul reminds us of this when he says "I entreat you by the meekness and gentle-ness of Christ that I will not have to be bold with you who are criticizing us of acting in a worldly way". (1 Cor 10:1)

Moses is described as the meekest man on the face of the earth! (Numbers 12:3) But at what point was he called meek? It was after God had dealt with him! He was "prince of Egypt" set to be a man of power in the greatest nation on earth! But he was relegated by God to "the backside of the desert for 40 years" where he became a keeper of sheep!

Where did Jesus get his quote about the "meek inheriting the earth"? From King David, who said "But the meek shall possess the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity" (Ps 37:11). That was after he had been fretting because the wicked appeared to be doing so well. We are never to envy them!)

In the O.T. meekness signified helplessness, such as of a servant in society. It came to indicate patient submission and humility before God in particular. In the N.T. the Greek word includes the idea of pleasant and gentle, related to our word "friend".

Meekness understands that we are dependent creatures made by God, and aware that we have not lived up to the standard! Paul said "In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing!" He agrees with God who says "There is none that does good, no not one." (Ps 14:53)

Meekness includes the response of joy and gratefulness at God's grace and mercy. It leads us to be child-like in our acceptance of the gospel.

The Meek

Meekness is expressed as servanthood and obedience. Remember Jesus said "I am among you as one who serves."

A truly serving heart is very hard to offend! To them, "put-downs" and humiliations don't seem to be felt - "there is no high horse to fall from!"

The meek know they are justified before God, therefore do not need to justify themselves. That is the mark of a Christian, indwelt by the Spirit of God. It is really a fruit of the Spirit - it includes longsuffering and gentleness.

I originally wrote this message a week after I buried my father. He was a man of simple faith, and a sound intellect. He won scholarships that took him to College, and later to overseas travel where he became an expert in high voltage transmission of electricity. He helped invent an automatic circuit-breaker in ETSA which was used for years to counter trees falling on to power lines. But his faith was simple but deep. He never wavered. He was a big strong man. But he was gentle! And in reflection about him, I never saw him do a violent act. I never saw him lose his temper, 'tho I had seen him angry. (What does the good book say "...be angry but sin not"! Ps 4:4) And I never once heard him swear! In 87 years. The worst he could say in frustration was "*beast!*". He was a justified man. He had written out the statements about love in 1 Cor 13 in script, and it stood on his bedside table for years. He lived by it! He was a meek man. And that is the highest praise I can speak of him.

What are the weapons of *our* warfare? I think you know them. They are spiritual weapons for a spiritual battle - righteousness, truth, the gospel of peace, faith, the "sword of the Spirit" (our only offensive weapon), plus praying in the Spirit! They can sound rather weak weapons can't they? But in God's good time they will win His approval and His victory. And eventually only the Kingdom of God will stand! There will be nothing else except a new heaven and earth wherein only righteousness dwells. And who will inherit that?.....the meek! Amen.

3rd Hymn *by J Newton (T Amazing grace American folk melody 1851)*

- 1) Amazing grace (how sweet the sound) that saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.
- 2) 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
- 3) Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come;
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
- 4) The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

Benediction:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

This service was prepared by Neil McIntosh (M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.S.) for HopeNet SA