

## The Glory of Humility

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Inheriting the earth doesn't sound all that appealing when you've got the world at your fingertips. A few swipes and we can have just about anything delivered to our door. But Jesus isn't talking about a consumer world; he's talking about a place described in Psalm 37, where this beatitude comes from. There, the earth is a place free of economic imbalance; there's plenty. Free from oppression; it's just. Free of bitter conflict; it's peaceful. A place where no one hurts. Now that's an earth worth inheriting. The catch is, only a certain *kind* of person belongs there. Meekness is required for entrance into new earth. Let's look at: opposite of meekness, essence of meekness, hope of meekness.

### Opposite of Meekness

*Humility is not being overly impressed with one's self. Pride is being overly impressed by one's self-importance.* It's preoccupation with ourselves. This self-focus need not be *strong*, towering over others in beauty, intelligence, or discipline. It can also be *weak*, how you *don't* measure up to other's features, smarts, accomplishments. Either way, strong or weak, pride is persistently self-aware. When I go to the gym, I try to preempt pride by not working out in front of a mirror. That way I don't look at myself. But, inevitably someone will start working out next to me with *more* weight. On weak pride day I'll think: Man, I'll never be that fit. On strong pride day, I'll think I can totally do that much weight, but I'm not going for bulk. What's stimulating pride? Comparison. Karen Swallow Prior makes some interesting observations about this comparative impulse in Flannery O' Conner's short story, "Revelation." In this story Mary Turpin is a pig farmer who frequently talks down to others. She enters a doctor's waiting room where she quickly surveys the patients noting the grubby child, the morose young girl, and the awfully small waiting room. She even sees some "white-trash." Conversing with another patient she comments, "Our pigs are clean and don't stink." After spewing judgmental statements, she is violently struck in the eye by a book, thrown by Mary Grace who says, "Go back to the hell you came from." What can we learn? Although Mary Turpin didn't have the highest station in life, she was still able to find a perch to look down from, on those dirtier and poorer. We tend to **compare** ourselves to a class outside of our own. Who do you compare yourself to? Is it to those who have more or

those who have less? Do you silently praise yourself for your modest choices, where you live, what you drive, your income or praise yourself for your generous giving, church engagement, life decisions? Pride compares; it also *protects*. It defends self against accusation. Did you notice how Mary's pride **deceived** her, "Our pigs are clean and don't stink." I'm not that fit because I don't want to bulk up. Deceit. Pride compares and deceives, which keeps us from the joys of the new earth. How is your pride deceiving you? Do you praise yourself for being more woke than others (and then tell yourself it's okay since so many aren't)? Are you keenly aware of how've persevered through the pandemic in City Group (and those who have not, failing to pray for them)? We lie to ourselves to prop up our ego, and the more we do, the further we get from the humble roots of virtue.

## Humility

*Humility is not being overly impressed with ourselves.* And that's not because we think poorly of ourselves; it's because we simply think of ourselves less. Humility is self-forgetful. The humble person is preoccupied with the needs of others. They anticipate needs (dishes, encouraging call), ask questions in conversation, celebrate others (look for opportunity to shine the light on other people), sympathize with them, and are free with compliments. All without keeping track. *Why? Because it's not about them; they've forgotten themselves.* Tim Keller points to the apostle Paul as an example of such a person. He notes that, while admitting he is chief among sinners, Paul isn't crushed by the thought. *Why? Because he doesn't connect his sins to himself, to his identity. His sins and identity aren't connected. This means when he fails, his self-worth doesn't plummet. And when he succeeds, his pride doesn't skyrocket. Neither his sins nor his accomplishments are connected to him. Sure he does them, but they aren't the measure of him. His accomplishments have worth, but they don't determine his worth.* His worth comes from looking outside himself. He has his eyes on "the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ" changing him from one degree to the next. **A humble person detaches their sense of worth from what they do and attaches it to something great.** This is true, even of Jesus. The same word for meek in this beatitude is used later to describe Jesus, "[Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'](#)" (Mt 21:5). Now the context is Jesus' triumphal entry into the city. He's been followed for years by

throng of people, and they're ready to install him as true king. They have palm branches and a cheering section. But they've missed some important details. This line from Zechariah told them the true king would come humble and mounted on a donkey, a beast of burden not like a Roman king who rode into the city on a steed in splendor. Jesus rode an animal reserved for carrying provisions not people. Yet, he made *every* person. How did he restrain himself from not blowing into the city in justified gallop? His eyes were on a greater glory. In shocking repetition Jesus says he seeks *the Father's glory*. Contemplating the horror of the cross he says, "[Father glorify your name](#)" (Jn 12:24). Seeking the fame of his Father, we see the meekness of the Son. What about the glory of the Son, "[If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me](#)" (Jn 8:54). He finds dignity, glory, in glorifying the Father! Jesus' worth doesn't come from his accomplishments. It comes from keeping his eyes on the glory of the Father. And so it is with the meek. They keep their eyes, not on themselves, but on the infinite greatness of God. It's true of the humble people in my life. My mentor Tom Steller is the epitome of meekness, and guess what, he has a massive view of the glory of God. My mother the picture of humble service has cultivated a rich prayer life for decades, being close to the glory of God. *The meek detach worth from what they do and attach it to the glory of God.* 1) Pray 2) Meditate on his glory 3) Look up glory in John.

### Hope of Meekness

The meek inherit the earth. Why want that? Remember description from Psalm 37? Just, peaceful, plenty, painless, joyful existence? Verse 9 says, [those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land](#). Waiting on the Lord is another way to say keep your eyes on God. It means to watch, long for, pine for the Lord. Like a high school prom date keeping an eye out for her date to pull up, we should keep our eyes on our Man, our God, on the one who is truly great. Then humility will follow, self-forgetful, and serve freely. Sure we get distracted; he knows that and says, Come back. We start looking at ourselves more and him less; he says Remember me. He knows we are often more impressed with ourselves than we are with him, which is why he rode the beast of burden, why he climbed on that cross: to offer forgiveness to all who repent of their pride. He thought of you when glorifying the Father. Remember Mary Turpin; hit in the face by Mary Grace? Turns out that violent act woke her from her proud stupor. Perplexed she asks God why someone like her should be hit by a



book in the face. Then she has a vision of all the people she looked down on marching to the promised land, and bringing up the rear are pig farmers. And it hits her. The first shall be last, but the last shall be first. Jesus the first became the last that we might walk into the new earth. Is there a more humbling thought? God was violently struck to deliver us from hubris, and he did it so we can revel in God's greatness. Wait on the Lord. Keep your eyes on him. Adore his glory and you'll be transformed one degree to the next until you see him and become as he is. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*