

2) THE MOURNERS AND THE MEEK

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are they meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Matthew 5: 4,5

To mourn is to suffer loss and to suffer inner pain because of it.

To be meek is to have little power, control or dominance, but to be patient and humble in the face of that.

Is it good to mourn? Yes if you care. But can people mourn too much or too long? Is there a point after which people should move on and find more positive ways to live than go on in a state of mourning?

Is it good to be meek? No if it means being submissive, subservient or passive. But what if you have little power or control or choice in a situation or relationship? Is meekness a kind of strategy for surviving, for getting through?

Is meekness a good thing if it's about humility and openness, gentleness and a sincere willingness to listen and learn from others?

Can we read these verses as a call to Christians to treat those who mourn and those who are meek differently than the world treats them? If God wants to comfort those who mourn and if God wants to give the meek the inheritance they don't currently have, maybe we Christians should be focussed in the same way toward them. Maybe these verses are a call to Christians to see people and treat them in a certain way different than they are often treated in the world.

God's kingdom has not come to earth as it is in heaven, except in glimpses and moments here and there in the actions and experiences of people. Jesus revealed the kingdom and brought it wherever he went in the way he treated people and welcomed them into the fellowship of God. He also called his followers to create kingdom of God spaces wherever they gathered. Do the meek and those who mourn find a home in our fellowship and our congregation? Do the meek inherit our love and friendship as well as a home among us? Do those who mourn find comfort among us?

Are we in touch with our own humanity and our own human experience as those who mourn and those who are meek? Should we be more open to mourning because we allow the pain in the world, the pain around us and the pain within us to be felt. Will this make us, perhaps, more empathetic and compassionate human beings?

Should we not develop greater meekness in ourselves so that we are more gentle, humble and open toward others, more patient when others say things or do things to upset us, more able to accept what we cannot change rather than always have to push against things?

Read the book of Ruth (4 short chapters). The story of Ruth is a story about loss, about the resurrection of life's meaning and purpose that love works between two women beyond their losses, and it is a story about how meekness in powerless situations can achieve amazing results.

Naomi and Ruth both mourn their multiple losses. But the love they have between them gives them a reason to go on and build a life together. Both Naomi and Ruth must use meekness as a strategy to gain an inheritance. Meekness is about shrewdness and smarts in a world where we don't often have the choices those with power, independence and means have. They are women in a man's world and in Ruth's case, she is a foreigner. Neither of them have money or a male to defend them and support them. Isn't it amazing how they succeed in such a world? What can we learn from their ways?

Read: Matthew 15: 21-28. The story of a Canaanite woman (a foreigner) who comes to Jesus asking for her daughter to be healed is a powerful story of persistence. The woman is a powerless foreigner with few rights, and yet, she has the audacity and courage to come to Jesus and demand healing. She uses the language of meekness: "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." She addresses Jesus as Lord, and she is only asking for crumbs knowing she is not a Jew but a foreigner without the rights of a citizen. But her meekness is a strategy that works with Jesus who sees her persistence as a sign of great faith. Her daughter is healed and she is praised as a model of faith.

How can the strategy of meekness serve you in your life? Has it served you already? What about your relationship with mourning and with those who mourn? Has it changed you for the better even though there is pain involved?

FOR NEXT WEEK: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy." Also read Genesis 32:3 – 33:11 and the verses around it. This is the story of Jacob and Esau and their reunion. Also read Matthew 18: 21-35, one of Jesus' most amazing parables.

