

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.

Somehow, when I hear this line from the beatitudes, I always hear in my head a snippet from Monty Python's brilliant satire: *The Life of Brian*.

There's a long shot of Jesus giving the beatitudes on the mountain, but there's such a crush of people there that we see him from the eyes of some of the people who are waaay in the back. And the same thing happens to them as happens to us when we are in the back, straining to hear: we don't always catch the words correctly. So--there's a lot of muttering: "What was that? What's he saying? Blessed are the Greek? Why—what have they ever done that's so special?" Someone with better hearing corrects them gently, "No—he said blessed are the MEEK."

'Oh, that's nice,' the old lady says, "they never get anything."

Meekness gets a bad rap. No one is praised in school or at work for being meek. We think of people who are meek as the opposite of the people who stand up for themselves and others. Meek people just take whatever is dished out, right? When we think "Meek" – we think "weak". SO-- who wants to be meek? We want to OWN our lives, we want to outlast, outthink and overcome our competition—both in school and at work. We want to kick a little butt, take no prisoners. Meekness? It's for sissies.

The dictionary doesn't help. It says "meek" means being submissive, and the sentence they use to convey that is: "All his best friends made fun of him for his meekness."

I suspect that doesn't make any of us wish for this dubious trait. If we want the earth, we'll take it!

- If we look at the Old Testament—the Israelites believed they deserved the promised land, so they took it by force.
- When the Romans wanted control of the world—they conquered it-- only to have Britain do the same thing centuries later.
- When our ancestors arrived in this new world, they continued the pattern of conquering the indigenous population and claimed this part of the earth as their own.
- The only population in the world that didn't subscribe to capturing ownership of the earth were the Native American nations. To them, land could never be owned or claimed. It was God's by right, and only God's to give.

And if we are hearing Jesus correctly this morning—God chooses to give the earth to the meek. Now why would that be?

I guess we'll have to go back and try and understand what Jesus meant by meek, because it clearly didn't mean then what it does today.

Chromatius, an ancient biblical scholar, defines "the meek" as persons who "are gentle, humble, unassuming, simple in faith, and patient in the face of affronts. "

In other words, the meek are people who don't feel a need to come across as "tough", they are satisfied with who they are and don't need to be telling people about how great they are, they don't need to put on a persona

that impresses people, they are certain of their faith without needing to make a show of it, or convince people that their way of believing is the only way of believing, and when people get all up in their grill—they don't slap back, they don't feel the need to take someone else down. They are confident of who they are in the face of other people's views.

Wow. That's quite a different way of thinking about the meek. It looks more like—well, Jesus.

Perhaps these types of people will finally inherit the planet because they are the only ones who won't think they "own" it.

When Pilate entered Jerusalem for the festivals he was surrounded by military might. He put forth an impression of a man of power.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, was one of the throngs of humanity that came out to see him. He was an ordinary person behaving in an incredibly mature, kind and selfless way.

So-- meekness is not a lack of *power*—it merely focusses power in the right direction, without feeling the need to control all circumstances, or the people, or their feelings.

Meekness is NOT about is bullying people, taking away their voice or controlling others. When the world thinks of strong people, it knows that they sometimes take their power at the expense of others.

The meek—on the other hand-- never take their power at the expense of another. Some people might find that weak. I guess those people don't follow Jesus.

Meekness means caring about others with gentleness and ease. Being meek means people live as who they authentically are, and they fearlessly speak the truth – but without the need to sway others.

“Meek” people allow others around them to find their own authenticity, their own voices, while encouraging the strength that is in them.

Really, isn't this the type of person we WANT to emulate? And really, when you think of the alternative-- aren't these the type of people we WANT to inherit the earth?

Blessed are the meek. Amen.