I. **WHO ARE THE “GENTLE”?**

Context – Jews had been under foreign powers for over 700 years – Babylonians – Persians – Greeks – brief freedom brought on by the Maccabean revolt, which ended in 63 B.C., when Pompeii annexed Palestine to Roman Empire – they read Old Testament passages like Daniel 7:14 and expected a military Messiah to come in a blaze of glory and set them free and restore a theocratic kingdom like before.

We would do the same – fight back, scratch and claw – take care of #1 – Jesus’ message completely contradicted that – “Blessed are the poor in spirit – [those who mourn]” – now – Matthew 5:5 – “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”

A. **Power under control**

“Gentle” in NASB – “meek” in K.J.V. – praus – “gentle, humble, or meek” – this is NOT weakness – it is not patience, resignation, non-retaliation, bearing afflictions quietly or in humility – it is not even being nice, or easy-going – all of these miss the idea of strength – it describes:

- A soothing medicine – given to relieve high fever – medicine out of control is dangerous
- Training of wild animals – described a colt that had been broken – a horse out of control is dangerous
- Gentle refreshing, gentle breeze – out of control – Hurricane Katrina!
- All of these describe power under control

Jesus’ ministry on earth is characterized by power under control – Zechariah 9:9 speaks prophetically – “…Behold, your King is coming to you, He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble and mounted on a donkey...” – a conquering ruler would come into a town at the head of procession on a horse.

Examples:

- Genesis 12 – Abrahamic Covenant – everlasting covenant – great nation, people, land – Genesis 13 – conflict arose with nephew Lot over grazing land for their flocks – Abraham could have said – “Who got the covenant Sonny?” – he had the power – didn’t use it – instead he said, “Pick your land – I’ll go the opposite way
- Genesis 42 – Joseph – beaten by brothers, left for dead, then sold into slavery – famine – brothers come to Egypt – Joseph now “ruled the land” – Second to Pharoah – imagine the sweet revenge he could have had – didn’t – he had the power – instead, he went away and wept, treated his brothers kindly, re-united with his father!
- Matthew 11:29 – Jesus – “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” – How can this be? – isn’t power and assertiveness and aggression the way to get ahead? – yes, by the world’s standards – but by God’s standards – Jesus never organized a fight against the Pharisees – completely trusted God – did not resist Judas and the Roman cohort in Gethsemane – didn’t send word to organize an army when unjustly accused.

[John Bunyan – “He who is already down cannot fall.” – the meek are already “poor in spirit” – they have already “mourned over their sin – they have nothing and they expect nothing – totally trusting in God’s sovereign hand]

B. **Attitudes of the gentle towards:** (show power under control)

1. **Self**

   Psalm 37:1-11

   - Psalm 37:1 “Do not fret (be provoked to jealousy) because of evil doers...”
   - Verse 3 – “Trust in the Lord and do good...” – take care of your own response – don’t emulate the actions of the wicked
   - Verse 3 – “…Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness” – go on about your business – feed on God’s faithfulness
• Verse 4 – “Delight yourself in the Lord And He will give you the desires of your heart.” – no one can take this away from you! – your desires will become His desires!
• Verse 5 – “Commit your way to the Lord; Trust also in Him. He will do it.” – He will do it His way.
• Verse 7 – “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” – relax, don’t react!
• Verse 8 – “Cease from anger and forsake wrath....” – don’t have a short fuse or plan long-term revenge
• Verse 11 – “But the humble (gentle) will inherit the land...

2. God’s Word
James is the earliest book written in the New Testament – A.D. 44-49 – before Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 – written to Jews scattered because of Roman persecution – indicates possibilities for anger and bitterness over how they were being treated – James 1:21 – “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” - the solution for anger, resentment, bitterness over being kicked out of their homes? – gently receive the Word of God in your hearts.

3. A brother in sin
Galatians 6:1 – “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” – “restore” = “set a broken bone” – gentleness doesn’t ignore sin – the power to judge and exile the sinner isn’t exercised – in meekness their broken bones are set.

4. Division in the church
Ephesians 4:1-3 – “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” – “humility” not found in Greek vocabulary of Paul’s day – probably coined it himself – combination word meaning “lowliness of mind” coupled with “power under control” – quite a combination – the key to unity in the church is lowliness of mind and not demanding power – [Pastor of a So. Calif. church for 20 years – resigned rather than fight the power block – another pastor took the church for 14 years – also resigned because of same people]

5. Those who disagree
2 Timothy 2:24-25 – “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth...” – [Poet Oliver Goldsmith said of Samuel Johnson, great English writer – “There is no arguing with Johnson, for if his pistol misfires, he knocks you down with the butt end of it.”] – we need to learn to put our pistols back in their holsters! – otherwise it’s like shooting a mosquito with a cannon.

6. The unsaved
1 Peter 3:15 – “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is within you, yet with gentleness and reverence...” – you can’t witness if you aren’t meek – we are defense attorneys for Christ – not prosecuting attorneys against the world – argumentative, high-powered techniques are power out of control – it’s the difference between shooting the unsaved with shotgun or drawing them with a magnet – no one was ever won to Christ with a shotgun.

Proverbs 16:32 – “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.”

II. THEY WILL INHERIT THE EARTH

A. A present reality
If I’m going to inherit the earth – I’d like a little piece of the earth around Tahoe or Newport Beach! – but Jesus is not talking about a land baron who uses his crushing power to acquire more real estate.
Jesus was quoting Psalm 37:11 – “But the humble will inherit the land And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.” – “abundant prosperity” – sounds like money and things – K.J.V. translates it “abundance of peace” – Hebrew is “abundance of shalom” – “May you have a contented mind – it denotes one who is not worried over the possession of real estate!

The present reality of “shalom”:

- We are secure – As Christians, we encounter physical pain, political upheaval, wars, broken hearts – but that’s not all there is – John 6:39 – “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.” – John 10:29 – “My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”
- The kingdom is here and now – Luke 17:21 – “...the kingdom of God is in your midst.” – lit. “within you” – in your hearts – we think of the kingdom of God as being future, but it is also a present reality – we have His name – we read His Word – we are His bride – His Spirit seals us – our lives exhibit His kingdom.
- We have His peace – John 14:27 – “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you...” – Philippians. 4:7 – “And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” – His peace guards us from doubt, depression, fear, anxiety – do you know any piece of real estate that can do that?

B. A future possession

“inherit” – future tense – “to receive an allotted portion” – there is more to living than this world – and in the middle of the 24+ terrorists who want to blow up planes traveling from England to the U.S. – and in the middle of Hezbollah and all of radical Islam trying to eliminate Israel as a people and a nation and claim their land – God is still in control – He is holding our inheritance.

When Jesus says “you will inherit the earth” – He means:

- The Jews will fully posses their land – 15 times in Old Testament God says, “you will inherit and possess the land forever” – covenant land of Israel– you think the fight over southern Lebanon is severe – Old Testament says the boundaries of Israel will extend to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18; Exodus 23:31; etc.) – modern day Jordan and Iraq – what will that battle be like?
- All believers will “inherit the earth” in every literal sense – Daniel 7:18 – “But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.” – Matthew 25:34 – “…Come, you who are blessed of My Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” – Revelation 2:26 says we will be given authority to rule over the nations of the earth – Revelation 5:10 indicates we will be as priests to God and rule upon the earth

The gentle will inherit the earth – so we seek to be meek – Proverbs 25:28 – “Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.”

How do you know if you’re meek?

- Do you use power to intimidate or get your way?
- Are you critical and judgmental of others?
- Do you come out shooting when you are wronged – or do you hold a grudge and plan revenge?
- Do you receive criticism well – or do you become defensive and angry?
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. What do you think of when you think of the words “meek” or gentle”?

2. Read Psalm 37:1-11. In what ways do you see a gentle spirit there?

3. How is the attitude of gentleness to be seen in the local church, according to Ephesians 4:1-3?

4. What guidance does 2 Timothy 2:24-25 give us on having a gentle response when we disagree with someone?

5. In what sense do the gentle “…inherit the earth…” in Matthew 5:5?

6. In what ways might you need to manifest biblical gentleness in your life?