

Do Not Fret.

Stanton Reformed Church

October 13, 2019

Focus: The meek, those who are tempered and gentle, will inherit the earth and therefore the stewardship thereof.

Function: Those who restrain themselves, leave room for others, have the gifts and resources of the whole earth.

Do/Think: Do not fret. Let meekness take the lead.

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

Meekness.

A meek person has a mild temperament, with plenty of gentleness and patience.

They are not the ones who steal the show. They do not have a large personality that walks into the room ahead of them.

Instead when we are with a meek person, there is plenty of room for us.

A meek person leaves room for others, particularly - and get this - particularly for people who seem less capable, less experienced or less educated - people who may not hold important positions and who are often overlooked.

Do you know a person who always makes friends with the people who clean the office building at work? Or someone who considers

the woman who does her nails a friend, an equal?

That's meekness. Making room for others.

Meekness is often compared to humility. And it's true, they are similar.

Humility is an attitude we have about ourselves. An honest understanding of how we fit into the world.

Meekness is that same attitude toward others. How others fit into the same world with us.

I think often in our culture, we associate meekness with weakness.

And it's no wonder because the classical Greek word used to translate meekness was that for a horse that had been tamed and bridled.

A meek person is tame. A meek person has a bridled tongue or bridled actions and reactions.

We assume if a person has been bridled then they have been beaten down, humbled or forced into.

I'm not a horse trainer but it seems to break a horse is to erode its will until it submits.

But it turns out, Breaking might be the fastest way to train a horse but it is not the most powerful, says a horse trainer named Helm.

This horse trainer works at an Arizona correctional facility where he teaches a program called "Wild Horse Inmate Program."

WHIP - The first WHIP was launched in Colorado, in 1986 as a collaboration between the Bureau of Land Management and Colorado's Department of Corrections.

It was conceived as a way to give prisoners something to do and also create income while making use of wild horses.

Inmates work with wild mustangs to tame them... and it creates a lower rate in repeat offenders.

Helm teaches the inmates to "gentle" the horses, not break them.

The truth is, Helm says it is impossible to ignore that "breaking" a horse is very similar to what happens in our prison system with humans.

In his program, the inmates learn a new way of finding peace, not one that is from a broken spirit but from a gentle spirit. A meek spirit.

Instead of relying on negative reinforcement, brutality, like leaving a horse tied up to thrash around until it tires itself out, the inmates learn to project firmness and authority to the horse - training the horse's mind not body.

Instead of punishment with a crack of the whip or a yank of the reins, the inmate learns to tend to the horse - brushing her, massaging her legs, talking to the horse.

A gentled horse obeys out of trust, not fear.

When there is trust, there is no fretting.

Where there is no fretting, there is peace.

Listen to this story from one of the inmates - He says, "You know, when I got locked up I was mad. I believe in God and I asked God 'Just give me the silver lining in why I'm locked up, why I got to do this.'

And this, these horses are my silver lining. "I've got this horse, I'm in here training it, but it's more like God is training me here in this round pen.

“I take the horse out and between moving and resting and moving and resting, the horse [calms down], finds peace... and so do I.”

A calm person does not fret.

A trusting person does not fret.

A meek person does not fret.

The psalm we read says “do not fret” three times.

It also says,
Trust in the Lord,
Take delight in the Lord,
Commit your ways to the Lord.
Be still.
Refrain from anger.
Wait.

The meek will inherit the earth.

The psalmist says it and so did Jesus.

And so what then does it mean for a person like this, a meek person, to “inherit the earth?”

Well, when you get an inheritance, it is yours to do with as you wish.

What would happen if the meek took charge of the earth, their inheritance?

My friend said she once had a boss who had a sign in his office that said, “the meek don’t want it.”

Let that settle in for a second.

That’s our perspective I think. In our culture, let’s be honest now, we have a very high stakes culture.

The business and economic dealings of America are fairly driven.

We play a zero sum game believing that there is only a certain amount of toys and the ones with the most toys wins.

But the meek are bridled and tame. They are self-controlled, temperent.

The meek instead are trusting.

Their delight is in the Lord - not in the contents of their garage or the items in their amazon cart.

They commit their ways to the Lord - all of their ways, even the way they spend money or use natural resources.

The meek are calm, still, not anxious, not wishing and wanting for more, not jealous of everything everyone else has.

I'll be honest. I'm convicted by this call to meekness. I don't particularly like self-control or boundaries.

Like the sign in my friend's boss' office - if the meek don't want it, then what keeps the rest of us for going for it all?

But I think what I'm convicted by is that the meek don't want it because they have a different perspective of the world.

The meek aren't driven to obtain it, to control it, to seize it.

Why? The meek leave room for others; the meek realize it - the earth - doesn't belong to them.

The earth first belongs to God and we get to enjoy it, care for it.

In this way, the meek are bridled; they are tamed. The meek tread lightly.

The meek have a different disposition toward the earth and its resources, its riches.

I think a lot of us struggle to have that kind of patience and trust about our stuff, our lives, our way of treading the earth.

I think a lot of us, including me, struggle with jealousy and our jealousy makes us cling instead of share.

I think a lot of us, again, me included, struggle with wanting more and more... and if we are honest, I think a lot of us want more because we fear we aren't worth much without our things, our homes, even our families, our way of life.

And when we think of letting go of our desires, or finding contentment in what we already have and are, it can feel limiting.

And who likes to be confined?

We assume that taking on an attitude of meekness may feel like we are being broken rather than gentled.

But as the horse trainer Helm said, breaking a horse, or a person for that matter, may be the fastest way to tame something but it is not the best.

The best way is to gentle someone or something, to approach with tenderness, with stillness and peace.

The truth is - God loves us. Values us deeply... not what we have or what we have accumulated, just us.

God has made us enough. All of us - those with power, those without, those with things, those without.

God is steady, calm, firm, peaceable and gentle.

Can we trust this kind of God?
Can we commit our ways to God's ways?
Can we practice stillness?
Can we adopt a meek disposition?

Might we be those in our world who are gentle and patient, of mild temperament.

Might we stop fretting and in so doing find ourselves as those who have inherited the earth. Amen.