

## WELCOME AND BANNINGS OF MARRIAGE

### CALL TO WORSHIP

'I will purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him shoulder to shoulder. <sup>10</sup> From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshippers, my scattered people, will bring me offerings. <sup>11</sup> On that day you, Jerusalem, will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from you your arrogant boasters. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. <sup>12</sup> But I will leave within you the meek and humble. The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the Lord.' (Zephaniah 3:9-12)

We have come to worship God and call on the name of the Lord in meekness, humility and trust.

### SONG: THE KING OF LOVE

<https://youtu.be/AhPVFm9hUrQ>

The King of love is my delight,  
His eyes are fire, His face is light,  
The First and Last, the Living One,  
His name is Jesus.

And from His mouth there comes a sound  
That shakes the earth and splits the ground,  
And yet this voice is life to me,  
The voice of Jesus.

*And I will sing my songs of love,  
Calling out across the earth;  
The King has come,  
The King of love has come.  
And troubled minds can know His peace,  
captive hearts can be released;  
The King has come,  
The King of love has come.*

My Lover's breath is sweetest wine,  
I am His prize, and He is mine;  
How can a sinner know such joy?  
Because of Jesus.  
The wounds of love are in His hands,  
The price is paid for sinful man;  
Accepted child, forgiven son,  
Because of Jesus.

*And I will sing...*

And my desire is to have You near;  
Lord, You know that You are welcome here.  
Before such love, before such grace  
I will let the walls come down.

*And I will sing...*

### OPENING PRAYER

God our source and guide and goal: you have made us in your image and set us in a world full of beauty; you dwell in unapproachable light, yet you have come among us, full of grace and truth. You have revealed yourself in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Help us by your Spirit to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### CONFESSION

The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3.23). If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins (1 John 1.8-9). Let us confess our sins and seek God's forgiveness.

**Almighty God, we confess before you our own sin, the sin of the Church and the sin of the world, in which we share. We have not loved you with our whole being; we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves. In your mercy, forgive us when we turn to you; release us from the burdens of the past, and remake us in your image and likeness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation (2 Cor. 5.17). Through him your sins are forgiven. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

### OFFERTORY

**Almighty God, out of the fulness of your gifts we bring before you this bread and wine, our gifts and our lives. Blessed be your holy name forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

### TIME OF SHARING

#### READING: Matthew 5:1-5

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them. He said:

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### REFLECTION: A BETTER LIFE (3) The Mighty Meek (Mike Gibbs)

#### THE MIGHTY MEEK

"A writer lives in awe of words, for they can change their meanings right in front of you. They pick up flavours and odours like butter in a refrigerator" — John Steinbeck.

Winner of the 1962 Nobel Prize in Literature, and one of my all-time favourite authors, Steinbeck understood the mysterious ways in which words change their meanings. And when he wrote those words he might well have had in mind a quote by another great American, the curiously-named judge and philosopher Learned Hand, who described words as chameleons which, he said, "reflect the colour of their environment."

Take the word 'meek', for instance. See how modern dictionaries define the word: 'overly-submissive', 'deficient in spirit and courage', 'compliant', 'docile', 'tame', 'easily imposed upon', 'cowed', 'timid', 'biddable', 'spineless', to name a few.

Then take a look at the definitions that these same dictionaries categorise as archaic or obsolete: in other words, the way 'meek' has been defined in the past -- 'gentle', 'kind', 'courteous', 'merciful', 'compassionate', 'tolerant', 'mild of temper'. Can this really be the same word? What has changed? The answer, of course, as Judge Learned Hand pointed out, is the environment in which we live, or perhaps more accurately, the culture that the modern world has adopted.

This is so true that the words of Jesus, "Blessed are the meek," are themselves an offence to many people. It insults their dignity and is contrary to what they feel are the facts of life. It is the aggressor who gets what he is after, they say. The meek are crushed and trampled under the feet of the strong, and rather than inheriting the earth, they are fortunate if they can hold on to what little they have. The only happiness you can get out of this beatitude, say the critics, is the happiness of a good laugh. The cartoonist Kim Hubbard considers it a joke and writes, "It's going to be fun to watch and see how long the meek can keep the earth after they inherit it."

In an article entitled 'The meaning of meekness', the online blogger Steve Reed suggests that the word 'meek' starts at a disadvantage, at least in English. He reminds us that 'meek' rhymes with 'weak' while 'eek' sounds like a little mouse trying to find somewhere to hide. Indeed, meekness has come to be so closely associated with weakness that it loses all attraction. Even children want no part of it. A little boy said to his mother, "Mummy, please don't call me your little lamb; call me you're little tiger." Power is what appeals in the modern world and words that speak of strength.

This beatitude, 'Blessed are the meek', brings us into conflict with the value systems of the world and the sinful pride of our own nature. Only if we are poor in spirit, and recognise our own deficiency and dependence upon God, and only if we acknowledge and mourn over our sin, and submit ourselves to God, can we find the happiness that comes through meekness.

Moses provides us with a wonderful example. In Numbers chapter 12 we learn how Moses' own sister and brother try to bring him down by accusing him of the sin of pride when actually what they want is to take over his role as leader of the people and intercessor with God. Moses says nothing, meekly leaving God to respond, because (to quote verse three) "Moses was very

humble—more humble than any other person on earth.” For ‘humble’ read ‘meek.’

Jesus is always our greatest example of every virtue, and when we see what meekness is in Him, we discover it is not weakness, but power and strength. All those descriptions of meekness that the dictionaries define as archaic or obsolete apply to Jesus. He was the mighty meek, and His meekness of being the Lamb of God was not incompatible with His mightiness of being the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. His lowliness of being the Lily of the Valley is not incompatible with His loftiness of being the Bright Morning Star.

Meekness, when rightly understood, is not only compatible with strength, it is the way to strength, and, as Jesus says, it is the means whereby Christians will accomplish what all the power of aggression has failed to do; they will inherit the earth. Let’s examine three of the attitudes that characterise the meek. Firstly there is the attitude of reasonableness. The great Bible commentator Matthew Henry wrote, "The office of meekness is to keep reason upon the throne in the soul as it ought to be; to preserve the understanding clear and unclouded, the judgment untainted and unbiased in the midst of the greatest provocation." The opposite of being meek is to be a victim of passion. In a drunken fit of rage, Alexander the Great threw a spear at one of his best friends, who had previously saved his life in battle ... and killed him. Every day we hear or read about people -- mostly men -- who succumb to fits of anger, lose control and commit murder or inflict serious injuries.

These are illustrations of the power of the non-meek and those who are ruled by unreasonable passion. As tragic as passion and brute force can be, the world still holds that this is the way to be victorious in the dog-eat-dog life. The Saga of King Olaf by Longfellow gives us the world's philosophy in a nut-shell:

Force rules the world still,  
Has ruled it, shall rule it;  
Meekness is weakness,

Strength is triumphant,  
Over the whole earth  
Still is it Thor’s-Day!

Thor, of course, being the Nordic God of War. Jesus says this is blind unreasonable deception and that meekness is the true power that will conquer. Those who allow emotion and unreasonable force to determine their response to life's blows eventually blow up and destroy the happiness of others as well as their own. Jesus rejects such nonsense and says in Matthew 11:29 "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."

Paul was wise enough to take this advice, as he showed in his second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 1: " Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." All through the Bible the appeal is to be meek and gentle, for this is the only reasonable way to face life. In His meekness, Jesus faced scoffing, pushing, whipping, spitting, and every indignity men could inflict upon Him. Even at his crucifixion "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). This was not weakness, but incomparable strength. Jesus had the power to retaliate to the injustice of it all with a just wrath, but instead, he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Secondly, there is the attitude of restraint. Jesus not only kept cool when being provoked to a point that would make most of us overflow with rage, he responded in love. Reasonableness leads to restraint, so that our energy and temper are brought under the control. Meekness, therefore, leads to strength; the meek person is not weak, but one who uses their strength to exercise restraint and accomplish a reasonable purpose. Reasonable people – meek people -- do not strike back and fight, and go about defending their egos, because they have better things to do with their energy. Paul says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). This is the reasonable response of the person of meekness. This takes far greater power

than letting your nature respond to its natural desire for revenge when it is insulted or injured. Hugh Martin, the 19th century Scottish minister and theologian, said, "Weakness is yielding to our nature; meekness is mastery over it." Those who master their nature, and control it by reason, are the mighty meek. Proverbs 16:32 confirms this: "Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city." The reasonableness and restraint of meekness is demonstrated in many ways. It is a great preserver of life. The meekness of Christ spared all of us, and the meekness of the wise through the ages has prevented much bloodshed.

Sir Walter Raleigh was once insulted by an ill-tempered young man who challenged him to a duel. Raleigh refused to take him seriously. The friends of both men were looking on, and the youth spat upon Raleigh's clothes and said, "Now then will you do it?" Sir Walter took out his handkerchief and said, "Young man, if I could as easily wipe your blood from my conscience as I can this insult from my person, I would draw my sword at this instant."

That was not weakness, for weakness would have run the young man through. That was the strength of meekness; the strength of reason and restraint over the passions. You and I will never save anyone's life by refraining from a duel by the power of meekness, but the principle is just as relevant to us; lack of meekness leads to trouble and unhappiness. Blessed and happy are the meek for their attitude of reasonableness and restraint will stand them in good stead for time and eternity.

Thirdly, there is the attitude of being receptive. Again, Jesus is the greatest example, for he was the most receptive of any person. None who come to Jesus will be cast out. Christ receives sinful men and women, for all are welcome to come and receive his forgiveness, his love, and his guidance. Jesus was also receptive of truth and guidance from his heavenly Father. Jesus never felt so adequate and self-sufficient that he could stop praying. Even though perfect, he hungered and thirsted for righteousness, for in

his ministry he needed constant grace to maintain that perfection.

Meekness precedes hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for the meek are receptive, and only the receptive can be filled. The proud and the arrogant are not open to new truth. They have 'arrived' and what doesn't fit their philosophy is rejected. Neither the Bible, nor the Holy Spirit, are permitted to offer any new light. Such people are never happy, for they must live in a non-expanding, self-created world. They have reduced God to a finite being and must live in fear lest some new discovery shakes their faith. In the French New Testament, a very interesting word is used for this beatitude. It reads, "Blessed are the *debonair*." Now that is a word the world uses, and it is an attractive word, so the French translation does not need to defend this virtue like we do the word 'meek'. After all, *debonair* people are fun loving, courteous, gracious and well-mannered, indeed all that we expect from others and would like to be ourselves.

Blessed are the *debonair*, therefore, for they are not burdened by pride's response to insults. They shrug off slights and personal attacks. They are receptive even to learning from their critics. They are not given to ramming their own views down anyone's throat, but rather they listen, learn and grow so that they might win others to Christ.

The non-*debonair*, or if you prefer the non-meek, are non-receptive and largely unteachable. Like most great servants of evil, Adolph Hitler was perceptive enough to see this weakness. He wrote in his book 'Mein Kampf', "The receptive ability of the masses is very limited, their understanding is small, their forgetfulness great -- out of indolence and stupidity they trot toward their doom." The devil himself could bear witness to the cursedness of the non-meek, because they are hard, closed, and self-centered.

The meek are open, receptive and gentle, all of which leads to great strength. But note, they do not conquer the earth by their power. Jesus says they inherit the earth. An inheritance is not earned, it is a gift. The meek would never seize the earth, it must come as a gift. There are many interpretations of this promise. Many point out

that history supports the truth. We read in the New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, "The mammoth creatures that once terrorized the planet are gone. They blundered to destruction, victims of their own too great strength, but the sheep still graze on the hills." The aggressors destroy earth, they do not inherit it. This is true in the animal kingdom and among humankind. This beatitude of Jesus is a direct quote from Psalm 37:11, "The meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity", and is referring to the Promised Land. There can be no doubt that Jesus is simply enlarging the concept of the Promised Land for the new Israel. The Promised Land for the meek in Christ is the whole world. We look for a victory over all the earth, for this is the territory where Satan reigns. Our hope is not just a matter of mansions in the sky, but of paradise on earth where it first began. The goal of aggressors through the ages had been to conquer and control the earth. This will never be realised by anyone but the meek.

The mighty meek shall reign with Christ. Let us, therefore, be strong in the Lord, and develop meek, debonair, attitudes of reasonableness, restraint, and receptivity.  
In the name of Jesus, **Amen.**

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Glorious Lord,  
**Hear us and renew us.**

Lord of life, in this pandemic we thank you for the scientists who have developed vaccines against covid. We pray that the world's richest countries would help the poorest with vaccines.

Glorious Lord,  
**Hear us and renew us.**

Lord of life, we pray for your people at this time, for our brothers and sisters in Christ in the wider church, especially those who are in fear of their lives and even facing death. We pray for the work of organisations such as the Barnabas Fund, Open Doors and Release International. Please bless

their work and ministry to those who live in fear because they call you Lord.

Glorious Lord,  
**Hear us and renew us.**

Lord of life, we pray for leaders of the world, not just our own leaders, and pray for a true meekness among them, that there would be humility before you and gentleness towards others. May they serve your purposes of justice and love.

Glorious Lord,  
**Hear us and renew us.**

We pray for those in pain and who are ill in body mind or spirit. May each one know you are an ever present help in times of need.

Glorious Lord,  
**Hear us and renew us.**

We pray for ourselves. You are the God who meets us in the risen Christ and by the power of your Holy Spirit. Through this time, as lockdown eases, give us the courage we need to speak and act in your name and for your glory.

Glorious Lord,  
**Hear us and renew us.**

Finally, we pray for all who mourn the loss of loved ones at this time. We thank you that you are the God of hope through the resurrection of your Son, and pray that many may come into your eternal kingdom.

Glorious Lord,  
**Hear us and renew us.**

All these things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our risen Lord. **Amen.**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done on earth as in heaven  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation**

but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are  
yours now and for ever. Amen.

**SONG: I'M SO AMAZED**

<https://youtu.be/uvyVZWd5a1k>

I'm so amazed by Your grace,  
pouring out from Your heart of love.  
Precious Jesus, precious Saviour,  
I'm so amazed by Your grace.

Can I find words to describe  
what it meant when You gave Your life?  
Precious Jesus, precious Saviour,  
I'm so amazed by Your grace.

If You take away the power of the cross,  
where would I ever be?  
If You take away the cleansing of Your blood,  
I'd be lost for all eternity,  
But You made the way for me.

**THE PEACE**

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as  
members of one body you were called to peace  
(Col. 3:15).

The peace of the Lord be always with you  
and also with you.

**HOLY COMMUNION**

As we gather at this table, we remember that Jesus  
was born of Mary; he lived our common life on  
earth; he suffered and died for us; on the third day  
God raised him from the dead; and he is always  
present with us through the Holy Spirit.

In his presence, and in the company of all the  
people of God, past, present, and to come, we  
celebrate the Supper of the Lord. 'Listen! I am  
standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my  
voice and open the door, I will come in to you and  
eat with you, and you with me.'  
(Revelation 3: 20)

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We give thanks to you, O God, that from the earth  
you cause the grain to come for the making of  
bread and that you cause the vine to yield fruit.  
We praise you for Christ, the bread of life and true  
vine, whose body was given for us, and whose  
blood was poured out for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and these your gifts  
of bread and wine, that the bread which we break  
may be the communion of the body of Christ, and  
the cup which we bless may be the communion of  
the blood of Christ. As we share the sufferings of  
Christ, so give us grace to know the power of his  
resurrection, that we may be made one and  
evermore abide in him, to your praise and glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When Jesus had given thanks he broke the bread  
and said: 'Take, eat: this is my body which is for  
you. Do this in remembrance of me.' When Jesus  
had given thanks, he gave the cup to his disciples  
and said: 'Drink this, all of you; for this is my blood  
of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for  
many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often  
as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' **Amen.**

**GIVING OF COMMUNION**

The Body of Christ broken for you.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

**God of a love stronger than death, you have given  
us new birth into a living hope through the gift of  
your Son. God with us, like a mother you have fed  
us with yourself & strengthened us for the  
journey ahead. Now may the love which bids us  
welcome at this table gather all your children into  
one, in your eternal presence. Amen.**

**SONG: MEEKNESS AND MAJESTY**

[https://youtu.be/xWiiULt\\_xeY](https://youtu.be/xWiiULt_xeY)

Meekness and majesty,  
manhood and Deity,  
In perfect harmony,  
The Man who is God.  
Lord of eternity  
dwells in humanity,  
Kneels in humility

and washes our feet.

*O what a mystery,  
meekness and majesty.  
Bow down and worship  
For this is your God,  
This is your God.*

Father's pure radiance,  
perfect in innocence,  
Yet learns obedience  
to death on a cross.  
Suffering to give us life,  
conquering through sacrifice,  
And as they crucify prays:  
'Father forgive.'

*O what a mystery...*

Wisdom unsearchable,  
God the invisible,  
Love indestructible  
in frailty appears.  
Lord of infinity,  
stooping so tenderly,  
Lifts our humanity  
to the heights of His throne.

#### **CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING**

Lord, we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all whom you love, now and for evermore. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**