# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“God Blesses Those Who Are Humble”**

**Matthew 5:5**

 **January 29, 2023**

These past couple of Sundays we have been exploring Jesus’ Beatitudes and today we take a closer look at the third Beatitude: “God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.” I invite you to turn with me to Matthew 5:1-10

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them. “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied. God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

“God blesses those who are humble.” This third Beatitude is closely related to the first two. Realizing our need for God in order to be saved, and mourning the sin which separated us from God, Jesus is saying that we have little room for pride in who we are. The self-righteousness that kept us separated from God in the first place has a way of rearing its ugly head even after we have been saved. While we may no longer rely on the external forms of religion to make us right with God – like church attendance and behaving better than others – such actions can easily lead us to experience a false sense of spiritual pride as Christians. In fact, we may even be so foolish as to believe that Jesus came to commend people like us for our wonderful spirituality, and to tell us that God is very pleased with us. If so, we are in for a rude awakening. Essentially, Jesus is saying in this Beatitude, “The Kingdom doesn’t belong to such as you. The Kingdom is not designed to magnify self-righteous people who are spiritually pompous. Rather, the Kingdom of Heaven is for those who are humble.”

I’m sure when Jesus said, “God blesses those who are humble,” there were more than a few raised eyebrows among his listeners. To be humble sounds weak, timid, and lacking in self-confidence. I looked up the word online, and Wikipedia told me that dictionary definitions speak primarily of humility as low self-regard and sense of unworthiness. None of us wants to be humble if that’s what the word means. But, as is often the case, what the world means and what the Word means are two different things. Since this characteristic is crucial for those who are in Christ, for those who are citizens in the Kingdom of God, and results not in losing what is important but in gaining the whole earth, we need to understand what Jesus meant when he said it. Perhaps we can best understand Jesus’ meaning by seeing it demonstrated in the Bible.

In the story of Abraham and his nephew Lot, found in Genesis 13, both men had grown rich with huge herds of animals and there was a dispute among their servants over what land each would use to graze their flocks. In order to avoid any further conflict, Abraham went to Lot and gave him first choice between the two pieces of available land. Lot chose the better land, and Abraham was satisfied with the lesser land. Abraham was the stronger of the two, as well as being the one whom God had called, and he could easily have insisted on having the better land. But he chose to forgo his so-called “rights” and there was peace between him and Lot. Here Abraham demonstrated one of the characteristics of humility which is strength under control. The humble person is not weak. Rather, there is an inner strength, an inner confidence and trust in God that allows the humble person to let others have the greater share. As Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, “Consider the needs of others before your own.” That’s humility in action.

Our best New Testament example of humility is, of course, Jesus himself. Hear his words from Matthew 11:28-29: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Learn from me how to treat others as I treat you: humbly and gently. No one who has read the Gospels can accuse Jesus of having low self-regard and a sense of unworthiness, of being weak, timid, and lacking in self-confidence. He was strong, he was courageous, and he knew exactly who he was and what his heavenly Father wanted him to do. And he did it with humility.

To be humble in Jesus’ meaning of the word is to have a gentle spirit, to be tender-hearted, to be strong and yet exercise that strength under God’s control. It is the opposite of aggressive domination of others, and of seeking revenge for real or perceived hurts. It is inward strength of character that does not need to exercise outward power and control over others. Christ’s humility is possible when we are convinced that the best way for us to live is his way, and then having the courage to do so. God blesses those who are humble.