Meekness, then, is controlled strength. Meekness tames the temper, subdues the self, calms the passions, manages the impulses, and brings order out of chaos in the soul. Growing in meekness will lead us into contentment, bringing us peace as we get used to the hand of God on our life. Most of all, growing in meekness will position us to be useful in God’s service.

But getting there is hard work. Meekness is strength brought under control through submission to God. Our English word “submission” is, again, a combination to two words: “mission” and “sub” (meaning “under”). Submission means putting your mission under the mission of someone or something else. For the Christian, submission means putting our personal missions under the mission of God.

Back to our horse analogy: without the direction of the jockey, a racehorse will run wildly or in circles. It is only when it submits to the bit and bridle, and to the guidance of the rider, that the horse can have any hope of winning the race! Likewise, it is only when we submit our missions to God’s mission that we can be of use to God and have any hope of fulfilling our calling. Meekness is controlled strength that comes through submission to God: God’s Word, God’s will, and God’s people.

**God’s Word**. Meekness is submission to God’s Word. The apostle James wrote: “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (1:21). To receive God’s Word with meekness means we place ourselves under the authority of Scripture, allowing God to shape what we believe and direct what we do. Through submission to God’s Word our lives are nourished and we grow. Through submission to God’s Word our lives have direction and meaning. Through submission to God’s Word we set ourselves apart from the norms and values of the world, and put into practice the truth that we hear from God.

**God’s Will.** Meekness is submission to God’s will. There are times in life when God puts us in places where we would not choose to be. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus found himself facing a situation he would just as soon avoid: arrest, interrogation, torture, and crucifixion. His friends were asleep and would soon abandon him. He prayed earnestly, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; but not my will, but your will be done” (Matt. 26:39). This is meekness: Jesus submitted himself to the will of God at unimaginable cost – death by crucifixion. To this same path of submission Jesus calls us, saying “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

**God’s People**. Meekness, which brings our strength under God’s control, is practiced by submitting to God’s people (Eph. 5:21). If you think submission to God’s Word and will is hard, submission to God’s people may prove to be even harder; but this too, is the will of God, and this is where true blessing may be found.

In 1999, I completed seminary and started the process of finding a church job. I petitioned my home Presbytery to certify me as “Ready to receive a Call,” meaning that I had fulfilled all the necessary educational and practical requirements to serve God’s People in a church. My home Presbytery denied my request for this certification and compelled me to serve an additional one-year internship under the supervision of a seasoned pastor.

That was a bitter pill to swallow. I was angry and hurt by their decision. Having completed all the usual requirements, I expected to be ordained. But God’s People in the Presbytery wisely saw that I needed some on-the-job-training and a good role model from whom to learn. Twenty years later, I am grateful for that additional training. I’ve learned that sometimes “I” am not as smart as “we” are together. And their decision ultimately led me here, to Federated Church, which is a great blessing for me (and I hope to you!).

Meekness grows through the discipline of committed relationships in the body of Christ. Meekness comes into play in the church when you don’t get your way, or when a decision is not to your liking. Your first impulse may be to walk away from your brothers and sisters in Christ; but God calls you to stay and submit to them. It takes real strength to do that, but when you do, you will grow in the blessing of meekness. (They just might be right!)

Let me give you four examples of meekness in practice. Scripture says, “**Moses** was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Nobody in the Old Testament modeled controlled strength more than Moses. God called him out of retirement to lead God’s People of Israel out of slavery and into freedom. With God’s help, Moses did this, only to be confronted with the impassable Red Sea which, again with God’s help, they crossed. The people faced hunger and thirst and snakes in the desert, but God provided food and water and healing for them. Instead of being grateful, the people complained, they blamed Moses for their sufferings, and they considered killing him and going back to Egypt. What did Moses do? He prayed for the people, he continued to serve them, and on one occasion he offered to lay down his life for them (Ex. 32:32). Moses modeled “sub-mission” by giving himself over to God’s purpose.

Shimei, a relative of King Saul, didn’t like **King David**. He had nothing good to say about David. He was a thorn in David’s side, cursing him and throwing stones at the king (2 Sam. 16:5-7). Abishai, one of David’s military commanders, offered to kill Shimei and end the harassment, but David stopped him. With a simple command David could have put an end to Shimei and his foolish antics, but he chose to demonstrate meekness (controlled strength) in the face of extreme provocation.

The apostle **Paul** traveled the empire planting churches, enduring great personal hardship for his efforts. Oftentimes fellow believers offered Paul hospitality, financial support, and prayer; but sometimes these Christians let him down. When he was arrested and put on trial, not a single Christian brother or sister appeared in court to support Paul or testify on his behalf. Disappointed, Paul could have written them all off; instead he said, “At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!” (2 Tim. 4:16). A wrong was done, but the one who was wronged sought the good of those who brought the disappointment. That’s meekness.

**Jesus** is the supreme example of controlled strength: “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to [God] who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23). Think about the soldiers who mocked Jesus, the men who nailed him to the cross, the thieves who hurled abuse at him, and the crowds who laughed at him. Jesus could have rained destruction down on all of them. Instead he prayed: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Sometimes meekness involves bearing the sins of others and absorbing the injuries they inflict. It is the only hope we have of breaking the unending cycle of retaliation.

Meekness is the third ring in our movement toward a blessed life with God. With the first ring - spiritual poverty - we recognize our inability to progress without God’s help. With the second ring – spiritual mourning – we count the cost of our sins, we grieve with humility and hope, and we experience the gift of repentance. Only after these two rings, is the third ring – meekness – within our grasp.

Prayer: Lord, grant me grace today to wait on You. You know my tendency to get angry, frustrated, and impatient with others, myself and my circumstances. Almighty God, help me to drop my defenses this day and be approachable, kind, merciful, non-defensive and appropriately assertive. Help me to be meek for the sake of Jesus. Amen

Source: Colin S. Smith, *Momentum: Pursuing God’s Blessings Through the Beatitudes*. Moody Publishers: Chicago, IL. 2016.

**Give Up Control**

**World Communion Sunday, October 1, 2017**

**Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN**

**Matthew 5:5**

What comes to mind when you hear the word “meek”? Is a meek person someone who is soft-spoken? Or maybe someone with a weak handshake? Or maybe a person who doesn’t have much backbone? One impression that comes to mind is from a hymn by Charles Wesley: “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.” (I suspect Wesley used “mild” because he was trying to find a word to rhyme with “child”!)

But when you put *meek* and *mild* together, it gives the wrong impression. A mild salsa doesn’t have a very strong taste, and really isn’t worth eating. A mild shampoo isn’t strong enough to get your hair clean. A mild cleanser won’t be strong enough to remove tough dirt and grime. To make matters worse, our English word “meekness” sounds suspiciously like “weakness,” and if that’s what it means, it doesn’t sound like something we would want to pursue.

Well, it turns out that the meaning of the word “meek” has nothing to do with weakness, and everything to do with being led by God. In Latin, a meek man is called *mansuetus,* which is a combination of two words: *manus*, which means “hand,” and *assuetus* which means “used to.” Meekness means being “used to the hand,” which calls to mind the taming of a wild animal.

The Bible compares God’s people to wild donkeys and restless camels (Jer. 2:23-24). It’s not a flattering description, but it is accurate: by nature, we are like wild animals who have strength which is neither directed nor controlled. If we want to be useful to God, we need to get “used to the hand” of God on our lives. With God’s hand upon us our wild passions are subdued, our strength is harnessed, and begin to experience peace.

My Grandparents had a small horse farm in the mountains of Vermont. I spent seven summers working that farm. My favorite job was exercising and brushing down the horses each day. One summer, there was a new filly born. I spent weeks training her to get used to the feel of bit and bridle, the reigns, a saddle, and finally a small cart. By the end of the summer, she was used to my hands directing her. Although she was physically much stronger than me, I could control that horse with the smallest turn of my hand.