

**The driving force of the Kingdom of God is love,
acting through meekness**

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

February 1, 2026

The propulsive force of the Kingdom of God is love, acting through the meekness of God's children. The love of God is seen in meekness. But what does meekness look like?

How often have you driven through a neighborhood and seen someone's appliance or piece of furniture standing at the end of someone's driveway, no longer needed, waiting for someone to pick it up who could really use it?

You and I live in a throw-away culture, discarding things left and right that no longer have a purpose; that doesn't match our current décor. Or, maybe we're just getting tired of that old model and want something new, an upgraded version. It is true of things. It is true of people.

Our country used to have many more repair shops around town where shop owners could take our items and make them run again. In our society, newer is often better. And newer is often cheaper than repairing the old one. Today's gospel speaks about the power of discarded and rejected things. This is meekness. This is Jesus.

On that day, Jesus and his disciples had left the crowds to find a quiet place, a place where he could teach them about the ways of the kingdom of God; ways that were very different than what they had often encountered in the marketplace or in civil society. And if his Father's kingdom would have any

chance of surviving and possibly thriving, it would depend on today's lesson. Jesus was preparing to teach them the beatitudes; the blessings that would come to those who walked in God's ways.

Jesus gave them a list of behaviors that would demonstrate the marks of the kingdom of God. He said that there would be blessings for those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, are meek, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are merciful, pure in heart, are peacemakers, and would be persecuted because of these behaviors. Jesus lived and taught this new way of life, and he expected it of all his disciples.

Before discussing meekness let me quickly run through a very brief explanation of each of the other beatitudes. Here is what Jesus said to his first disciples, and to us: God blesses the pious poor, those devout spiritual individuals who are struggling to survive in life, just trying to meet their basic material needs. It is these poor people, Jesus said, unlike the rich, who deeply recognize their need for God. God blesses those who grieve and mourn now, for it develops meekness, and one day they will be comforted. God blesses those who readily extend mercy to others and seek for peace, for they are indeed the children of God.

Now on to meekness. I began this message with these words; the propulsive force of the Kingdom of God is love, acting through the meekness of God's children. Jesus told his disciples that day, "Blessed are the meek." Meekness is translated from the Greek word *πραῦς*. It is also translated as gentle, humble, or mild. In many American subcultures the word meek is often

seen negatively as overly submissive, or timid. Like some soppy milk-toast kind of a person. Someone with little substance to them; no backbone or inner strength. But Jesus, in his demonstration of meekness, was no timid milk-toast kind of man!

So, what was Jesus trying to say that day as he spoke about meekness? He was talking to his disciples in the Aramaic language, which was later translated and written down into Greek as “πραυς,” and later into English as meek, or humble, or mild. How do you and I discover Jesus’ brand of meekness?

I believe the words of the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53 reveals the training and evidence of this meekness. Bibles often title this section in Isaiah as “The suffering servant.” The early Christian church, and the authors of the New Testament associated Jesus with this suffering servant. As I read this Isaiah passage, try and picture how it related to the life and teaching of Jesus.

Isaiah begins: *“Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm? My servant grew up in the Lord’s presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a*

punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed."

Listen to the prophet's words once more, and see how striking they are in reference to Jesus' life and ministry two thousand years ago.

"There was nothing beautiful or majestic about Jesus' appearance, nothing to attract us to him." – There was MEEKNESS.

"He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way." – There it is again, MEEKNESS.

"He was despised, and we did not care." – MEEKNESS.

"Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down." – MEEKNESS.

"And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!" – And yet there was no sin in Jesus. He willingly took this undeserved shame on himself. – MEEKNESS.

"But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed." – MEEKNESS.

Jesus had no beauty or majesty in his appearance; nothing that would attract anyone to him. He was despised and rejected and the people turned away. He bore our sorrows and weaknesses. We even thought his suffering was a punishment from God. If anyone were to hear these words without any knowledge of historic events, they would assume that Jesus' ministry

must have quickly petered out and ended in abject failure! After all, no despised and rejected insignificant nobody could ever obtain true greatness. Or so we think! But we know that this is far from what actually happened. Jesus changed the whole world, all time, by his presence.

This mysterious wonder, is due to the power of Jesus' genuine meekness. Through his meek submission to ridicule and animosity and rejection, his life has had far more impact on this world than any other individual who has ever lived. His weakness and meekness, made him strong and powerful. Jesus' sorrows and grief and suffering were the marks of great love and power and meekness. It was in that meekness, that Jesus remained silent while on trial before Pilate and his religious accusers. In meekness, he overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple, and called the religious leaders whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones.

My brothers and sisters, we as Jesus' disciples, are called by our Lord to live a similar life of meekness; to lay down our lives; to be willing to suffer ridicule and misunderstanding and animosity from others and not retaliate. The apostle Paul spoke of this, our way of meekness in today's passage. He wrote: "For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart... For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and

despised in the world, things that are not, to abolish things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.’” You and I are called to a life of meekness.

But when we live instead by the world’s way of greatness; when we push our way, or demand our rights, we are not living in meekness. When we tear others down, we are not living the way of meekness. When we gossip and speak unkindly of others, we are not living in meekness. When we seek out power and position and status, even as clergy in the church, we are not living in meekness, this quality that alone can change our world. Meekness has nothing to do with timidity or being a doormat. Meekness is great strength!

The propulsive force of the Kingdom of God is love, acting through the quality of meekness seen in God’s children. As we follow this example of Jesus, we usher in the reign of God here on earth.