The idea of meekness is very close to that of self-control. We associate self-control with "being strong" – that is, strong in character.

Among the "fruits of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-23) Paul puts "meekness" and "self-control" right next to each other, and not without reason.

The "meek and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of God" (1Pe 3:4) is the spirit held in check by the strength which God provides "through his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph 3:16).

THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Mtt 5:6).

Jesus is not talking here of wistful wishes, a passing interest, or polite approval, regarding righteousness. He’s talking about a craving for righteousness. We must be hungry for the bread of heaven and thirsty for the water of life. (Are you?).

The first psalm in the Bible's collection of Psalms says, "Blessed is the man... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-3). Here is a person who has a deep longing for the right way to live.

THE MERCIFUL

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Mtt 5:7).

We have an opportunity to show mercy when someone needs our forgiveness. "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph 4:32).

It’s not enough to be fair and just – we must also be merciful and show grace. The parable of the unjust steward illustrates this beatitude (Mtt 18:21-35).

Justice is tempered with mercy. The scales of justice balance justice on one side against mercy on the other. Often the fairest and most righteous course is to grant mercy.

In this beatitude, Jesus says that the merciful will be shown mercy. Later in his sermon on the mount he says, "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Mtt 6:14-15).

Especially when sinners genuinely “mourn” and are penitent and contrite, it is right and appropriate that they be shown mercy and given help instead of punishment. We expect this of God, therefore we should treat others in the same way.

DEEP THOUGHT

These questions are for you to think about and discuss. Other parts of this lesson may help you with the answers.

1. What does it mean to be "meek"?

2. Does Matthew 5:7 teach that if we are merciful to our fellow man we merit a claim to mercy from God?

3. What does it mean to "inherit the earth"? When Jesus says, in one place, "They shall inherit the earth", and in another place, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven", is he talking about two different groups of people? (Look up 2Peter 3:10-13).

QUICK QUEST

Complete the fragments below (Mtt 5:1-16).

inherit the...
poor in...
reward in...
salt of the...
falsely for...
kingdom of...
sons of...
thirst for...
persecuted for...
light of the...