**September 29, 2019 Matthew 5:3-12**

 ***Life’s Healing Choices – The Commitment Choice***

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:3-12 NRSV

(3)"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (4)"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (5)"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (6)"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (7)"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. (8)"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (9)"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (10)"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11)"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12)Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Notes:**

The ***Commitment*** Choice: consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.

*“Blessed are the* **meek***, for they will inherit the earth.”* Matt. 5:5 (NIV)

Meek is: ***Strength Under Control***

“*Christ, who suffered for you, is your* ***example****. Follow in his steps. He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.” 1 Peter 2:21-23 (NLT)*

***Meekness*** has always been God's way for humanity. (Job 5:11; Num. 12:3; Ps. 25:9; Eph. 4:1-2; Col. 3:12; Titus 3:1-2)

*“Now the man* ***Moses*** *was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth.” Numbers 12:3 (RSV)*

Meekness means I acknowledge: ***God’s*** ***Holiness***

* Confidence in ***who*** I am.

*“God, your God, is the God of all gods, he's the* ***Master*** *of all masters, a God immense and powerful and awesome.” Deut. 10:17 (MSG)*

* Confidence in ***whose*** I am.

*“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a* ***child*** *of God.” 1 John 5:1a**(NLT)*

Consciously: ***it’s* *my* *decision*.**

* choose to commit: ***over and over.***

*“Don't you realize that whatever you* ***choose*** *to obey becomes your master? You can* ***choose*** *sin, which leads to death, or you can* ***choose*** *to obey God and receive his approval.” Romans 6:16 (NLT)*

* all my life and will: ***Everything***

*“So no one can become my disciple without giving up* ***everything*** *for me.” Luke 14:33**(NLT)*

* to Christ's care and control:*“****He******Loves******Me****”*

***Come*** *to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you* ***rest****!” Matthew 11:29 (PH)*

*The Commitment Choice:* consciously choose to ***commit*** ***all*** my life and will to Christ's care and control.

*“I* ***[Jesus****] came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”* *John 10:10b (MSG)*

On this day, September 29, 2019, I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ my all to my Lord, Jesus Christ.

**Transcript:**

Growing up I have often heard it said by my parents when you commit to something, see it through. Often when growing up I would bellyache about something I wanted to do and after I was permitted to do it, I realized it wasn’t what I expected and wanted to quit. In order to reinforce what my parents told me early on, would make me follow through with my commitment no matter how hard it was and how badly I disliked it. You see I made a commitment to an organization, to a team, to a group; and I was bound to my word to see it through to the end.

I remember three such instances where this was very important. I wanted to quit band my senior year of High School. There were times throughout my college career that I wanted to quit and come home, but I saw it through and I am grateful for that to this day. And the third instance was my teaching career. By the time I had reached 15 years in the classroom, I was beginning to feel the frustration of being in a classroom. I interviewed for different positions elsewhere but nothing ever came to fruition.

However, in 2003, I began to get an inkling of God calling me to something different. I accepted this calling to become an ordained minister of the gospel, although I was not sure of where it would lead. So, I continued to teach; as I looked at this calling, I realized if I continued at the pace I was set on, I would become ordained around 2016, around the same time I would be able to retire from teaching with a full teacher’s pension. I could see God’s hand at work. I moved through the course of study faster than I expected and was ordained in the spring of 2014.

In the meantime, we here at Ryot were in the midst of a pastoral transition and I was acting as the interim pastor until a permanent pastor could be found. I remember the evening that the District superintendent asked me if I would be interested in filling the position; My response was yes if that is God’s will. It was a bit confusing for me, I never really expected to be a lead pastor, especially in the church I grew up in. But when you feel a tug from God, you obey!

We’re in part three of this series Life’s Healing Choices; following the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. You may ask, why are we doing a series on Life’s Healing Choices? Because if we want to be honest with one another, most of us in here have problems. How many of you would say that’s true about the person sitting next to you? There’s a lot of hurt in here, a lot of pain.

We are pretty good at covering up our pain. What we do is we develop harmful habits. These habits are attempts to quiet or to cover up our pain. A lot of times we look at bad habits in ourselves or in other people and we think, “That’s a character flaw, a weakness. They just have a bad habit. I was born that way.”

But I want to tell you, when somebody has a bad habit, many times that bad habit is really hurt and pain that hasn’t been dealt with; screaming out: “I’m hurting!” The habit is a cover up; a disguise. We skip the hurt and focus on the bad habit. It doesn’t matter what your bad habit is – drinking, smoking, rubbing snuff, gambling, pornography, shopping, television, lying, overeating – the habit will never stop screaming until you get to the root of the hurt.

We recognize the habit and may say, “I have to stop drinking!” “I have to stop eating so much,” “I need to curb my spending habits.” Then we try to conquer that habit, but then we just replace it, with something else. Because we haven’t dealt with the hurt. It’s a sick and vicious cycle that leaves us on the doorstep of pain and misery.

But there really is good news today. The good news today is that you and I can make some choices; we’re calling them Life's Healing Choices. With God’s help you and I can be different.

Does that sound like something you would be interested in? We can heal our hurts and we can experience greater joy, a deeper peace, more enriching relationships, a more profound wisdom. We can live out God’s given potential for us. How many of you would be interested in that? If you would like that say it, “I WANT THAT”.

We’re talking about Life's Healing Choices in this series, and chopping it into bite sized choices. Week one was the reality choice. Realize I’m not God. Admit I’m powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable. Don’t minimize this one; for some of you this one’s big. Some actually think they’re God in some ways. You don’t actually say I am a god, but you live your life as if you are. You want to control other people, you want to control the marketplace, you like to be in control of your own future. Your life is unmanageable but you haven’t admitted it.

Personally for me this one’s real easy. I know that I’m not God. If I was God do you think I’d have some of the health issues that I do? I have no God complex in my life. It’s easy for me to admit that I’m powerless to control my tendency to do wrong on my own will.

Week two is the hope choice. To earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him and he has the power to help me change. In the midst of life’s difficulties, this journey is going to be filled with pain and hurt, I can be comforted by a God who is crazy about me regardless of how I look; and He has the power that I don’t have to transform me into something spectacular. That gives me hope.

These two points, may leave you feeling good. I’m not God; I don’t have the power to change myself. But there’s a God who loves me, and wants a a deeper more meaningful relationship with him, who wants to see me change. That’s good news. But this isn’t enough, it really doesn’t get us anywhere. It’s nice to know those things, but it really doesn’t bring about a total transformation; it will not bring you the healing that you need. Knowing is not enough.

Consider this: there are a lot of things that you and I know that don’t change our lives. I know lots of useless facts but they are no help me unless I can find a use for them. There are a lot of things we know that don’t change us. What I’m saying is, there’s got to be something bigger than simply knowing that God is God and he cares for you and he has the power to change you. Satan knew that, and look where that got him.

So thankfully there’s a third choice; a critical choice, because the rest of the five weeks really build on whether you make a commitment to this or not. That’s why we call it the Commitment Choice. To consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ’s care and control.

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, we find the Beatitudes. Eight statements; that tell us how we can be blessed; in other words, how we can be happy. So where in the beatitudes do we see this critical choice mentioned? Jesus says this *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”* We hear that and go, “Really? That’s it?”

Jesus’ is talking to a group of people who are very prideful, very spiritually proud. You have the Jews; who had their sights set on a Messiah, who would come and deliver them. A Messiah to come and restore them to their rightful position; a position of power and Yahweh’s chosen people. This group of religious elites, must have though Jesus was crazy for them to hear “Happy are the meek…. You can have a full life if you’re meek…” The Jewish people didn’t want meekness. They wanted power, they wanted control; they didn’t want a meek Messiah; they wanted Braveheart. They wanted Jesus to paint his face blue and yell “Freedom!” They wanted a messiah to bring a physical revolution and Jesus came to bring a spiritual revolution. The Jews understood that great causes are fought by the proud, not by the humble. You can’t conquer Rome, the greatest empire on earth, with meekness and humility. But that’s his audience. And Jesus said, *“Blessed are the meek.”*

The Bible says every time Jesus taught there was this large crowd. So I’ve got to imagine there’s some people in the crowd going, maybe we heard him wrong. They didn’t have PA system and sound systems. So when he taught, the large crowd were probably going, “What did he say? What was that? Blessed are the meek?” In the first century this concept was hard to understand; a lot of us don’t understand it. Or maybe you do understand what meek means, you just don’t want to embrace it. Because meekness feels mousy, feels weak.

But if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, meekness is not an option, it’s the norm. On the surface meek can mean mild or humble. If we stay on the surface, that kind of fits with a common stereotype of a Christian. They see us as mild and humble, kind of weak, spineless, wimpy; this fits the stereotype.

But there’s deeper meaning to this word and it’s the one I really want you to get. In the Greek, the word was often used to describe animals whose naturally wild spirit had to be broken by a trainer. Why did their spirit have to be broken? So, they could become useful. A wild stallion who is tamed and brought under control.

**Meekness is strength under control.**

That’s the tame stallion. Strength under control. Being meek is simply more than just being nice, it’s actually courage under fire. It’s strength. It’s conviction with a gentle spirit that comes from God’s infusion in your life. It doesn’t come from your own rebellious spirit. It is the spirit of meekness; the spirit of Jesus dwelling within you.

1 Peter 2 *“Jesus who suffered for you is your example. Follow in his steps. He never sinned and he never deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God who always judges fairly.”* Jesus not only said, blessed are the meek; he lived it and modeled it in his life. Why? Meekness has always been God’s way for humanity. Consider Moses in the Old Testament, the great leader and deliverer of the Jews, the one who oversaw the escape from Egypt, the shepherd of the people. Numbers 12 says, *“Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth.”*

What I want you to get is this: with God meekness wins. It wins! It’s what separated Moses from everybody else and God said that’s the heart that I want. Fast forward to the New Testament and you’ve got Jesus delivering the most important sermon that he ever gave. He said, Happy are the meek. Why? Because he’s calling us to a different lifestyle. He’s calling us to live at a different level. He’s calling us to live in a way that goes beyond everyone else’s expectations.

The third choice that we’re talking about today, requires meekness, humility. It’s not like you can walk out of here thinking, “Ok, that makes sense to me. I’m going to become meek.” You can’t just flip a switch and bang, now you are meek. It doesn’t work like that. There’s got to be something deeper that drives it. Here’s what it is. It’s based on God’s holiness.

**Meekness means I acknowledge God’s holiness.**

When I look at myself in light of who God is, I’m humbled by his righteousness, by his worthiness, by his holiness.

**Meekness is a confidence in *who* I am.**

You’ve got to be confident in who you are, but resist the temptation to be arrogant and prideful. When you see people always boasting about themselves, always bringing attention to themselves – arrogant, prideful – you can be guaranteed that’s a deep sign of insecurity. I’m not talking about that type of confidence, but about a confidence of who I am in light of who God is.

Personally, I am Kevin Davis; a sinner, imperfect; at times, I struggle with evil thoughts, inappropriate words. There are times when I am fearful and struggle with pleasing people. There are things about myself I do not really like; I can be selfish and mean. Some of you may be thinking, “Man you are just saying that for the effect.” Others may be thinking, “If you are that bad what are you doing standing on a pulpit?” What you need to be thinking is, “Wow! He sounds just like me.” I am nobody special; I do not have all of the answers, I am just a man doing my best to follow the will of God in my life.

Meekness is confidence in who I am. I’m confident that I’m not God. In light of who God is that’s not me. Look at this verse in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 10 *“God, your God, is the God of all gods, he’s the master of all masters, a God, immense and powerful and awesome.”* That’s not me. Meekness is a confidence in who I am. I know who I am and I’m not that.

**Meekness is a confidence in *whose* I am.**

Under all of the layers there lies a wonder, the wonder that’s inspired by the presence of God. You know whose I am? I’m a child of the King. I am one of God’s children. I am adopted and welcomed into his family because Jesus died for me. The Bible says I put my faith in what Jesus did on the cross as a payment for my sins. I am his. I’m not just a creation of God, I’m a child of God. 1 John 5 *“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God.”* I’ve got a new identity. There’s the sinful side; that’s the confidence in who I am. But there’s also this wonder side, in *whose* I am. I’m a child of the King.

If I’m not meek I can’t realize my brokenness. If I don’t humble myself, I can’t commit all of myself to Jesus Christ. It’s not a weakness, but a confident humility in who I am and whose I am.

This third choice has been broken down into specific phrases. Today, I’m going to ask you for a commitment. I’m going to ask you to make this commitment. Not just read the choice but make a commitment to this choice. I don’t like bait and switch stuff; I want you to know the stuff in advance.

So **consciously**, **“it’s my decision.”** next to consciously, write that down

Some of us kind of assume a commitment to Jesus because of what is referred to as an unconscious heritage. This means you grab a position of faith based on your heritage. We’ve heard it said, “My parents drug me to church when I was a little kid. I’ve always been a Christian.” Or “We’re a Christian nation and I’m a citizen so therefore I am a Christian.” Or “I’ve got a brother- in- law who’s a pastor.” We play the bloodline card. Or maybe your middle name is Christian or you’ve got a Christian bumper sticker or something. It’s this healing choice that requires a conscious decision, your choice not anybody else’s choice. You are not a Christian because of your parent’s faith, only by your own faith and actions. It’s your conscious decision; consciously choose to commit.

Next **“choose to commit: over and over.”** write that down.

I’ve got to choose to commit over and over. This is 24/7/365 – the choices we make every day. A lot of times people go, “I chose God I think it was in January of ‘97.” And they think that’s it, I’m in”; but you are not. You’ve got to make the choices over and over, “Do I choose my own agenda or God’s agenda?” Every day, all the time.

Every day, in every decision I make I’ve got to decide, am I going to choose my agenda or God’s agenda? My reaction to other people’s comments; my reaction to things that don’t go as I planned, my reaction to somebody’s Facebook post; it’s a choice to commit – over and over; every day; all the time. How about you?

You’ve got a friend who’s hurting. You know they’re hurting. Do you help them? It’s your choice. Somebody invites you to be a part of a small group in this Life's Healing Choices campaign. You know you need to obey God, but you’ve got twenty-five reasons why you shouldn’t be in Sunday School class or a small group because you’re so busy. Do you obey? It’s your choice. Over and over and over again you’ve got to make choices. It never stops. This is critical in Life's Healing Choices. My way or God’s way?

Romans 6 *“Don’t you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin,* [your way, your path your agenda] *but that leads ultimately to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval.”* You’ve got to make that choice over and over and over. So I consciously choose to commit – here’s a biggie, this one’s tough – **all of my life and will.** Next to that write down **“everything.”**

This is part of the choice that separates those that walk authentically and intimately with Jesus and those who are casual occasional fans of Jesus. It’s all in the word “all.” All means everything. Choosing a commitment to Jesus is not about half measures. You cannot be a Player in the game while sitting in the bleachers; you are either in the game whole heartedly or you are a spectator. He wants you in the game. Because when you are in the game, he gives you a new perspective a new self. That’s the win. The win for you is the new self. But what is the catch, what is the cost? The cost is Everything! Not my words, but Jesus words: *“No one can become my disciple without giving up everything for me.”* All my life, all my possessions, and all my will. Everything we have must be used for his kingdom.

There are a lot of us that choke on the word “all.” We choke on the word “everything.” And here’s why. I think we do it because Jesus is just something, we check off of our list of things to do. We go to church because it’s on our list; we tithe because that is what we are supposed to do; we’re in a small group because Pastor said we need to be there; and we occasionally read the Bible, some to fact check the pastor. So, we’ve got Jesus and can check it off of our list.

Jesus is just another thing on our list of things to do. Our kids like coming, everybody likes Jesus. But it takes too much of our time if we commit everything. That’s one of the reasons why we can’t deal with the pain and the hurts in our lives. It takes time away from our children’s activities and sports, it takes away our time to clean the house and do laundry, it takes the time we use to mow the lawn or wash our car. They are all things that need to be done. Here’s what happens. We get stuck in our hurts because Jesus is just another thing to do and rarely do we make him first, rarely do we make him the priority.

This Commitment Choice requires that I commit all of my life to Jesus. When I do that it might look something like this – we wear it differently. It doesn’t mean that those other roles we have in our life disappear. They’re just not prominent. It’s Jesus plus nothing, He is not an extra, He’s everything. There are other roles that I play so I can always point –I’m a dad. But I’m a dad who’s trying to be a dad based on being a follower of Jesus. Does that make sense? I am friend, but I don’t hide Jesus from my friends. And I try to treat my friends the way Jesus taught me. I have possessions that I have gathered; a car and house and things like that. But I’m not trying to stockpile stuff to keep up with the neighbors. Jesus is not a bonus. He’s not an extra. He’s God. It’s about committing my all to his power to change me. So I consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ’s care and control. That’s the final part.

**Christ’s care and control.** Next to that I want you to write down **“He loves me.”**

That’s what Christ’s care and control is – he loves me. In week one we talked about he’s in control. In week two we talked about he’s crazy about me and he cares for me. For some of you today this is the only thing you need to hear. For some of you, you needed to come here to hear that Jesus is crazy about you. That he loves you. That he wants a more intimate and authentic and real relationship with you. It’s not another thing to do; it’s a relationship to be lived. He wants you.

Some of you say, I’m hurting and I’m wounded. I know. But he cares. He was wounded on the cross and died for your sins. He cares. So you have a relational loss right now. He cares. You’ve got financial loss. He cares. You’re struggling with a secret habit in your life that’s killing you and you don’t want to tell anybody. You know you need help. He cares. You’re unemployed and fearful about the future. He cares. You’ve stepped down from a perfectly good job. He cares. When you commit all of your life to the will and care and control of Christ, the Spirit of God enters you and fills you with love and a new desire. You don’t have to do it alone. You just walk on his path rather than your own.

The memory verse this week for our small groups and part of this campaign is Matthew 11:29 *“Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you rest.”* Because he cares. On this hand he says give me everything. That seems kind of radical and harsh. Over here it says, Come to me and I will give you rest. And that seems loving and nurturing. Which is true? Both. That when you give him everything you can rest on the fact that he’s God and you’re not.

There are rewards down this path. You know what those rewards are? Blessings. Blessed are the meek. Happiness. Favor. Character transformation. The stallion is tamed. Meekness appears. *“Happy are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ’s care and control. My guess is if we were to go out to lunch after this, just the two of us sitting at a table and talk; about your pain, about my pain, we could relate on a pain level. But then if I ask you “are you ready to commit all of your life and your will over to Christ’s care and control?” the majority of us here would say, “I’m ready!” Some of you may be saying, “There’s got to be something better than the way I’m living on my path.” And there are a lot of testimonies in this church that would say, there is. There is a better way.

When I was a kid me and my cousins would play in the woods out behind my house, or the yard in front. When we played I could pretend to be any of my baseball heroes of the day. We lived in a simple world and there was so much that we wanted to do, but were limited by our location and who we were. Every Sunday evening the Wonderful World of Disney would come on the television. We would be able to see the first few minutes and then we were hustled off to church, many times kicking and screaming. We were craving something more, something exciting; and Walt Disney always offered that in the opening of his show. “Come,” he would say, “let me take you to adventure, fantasy, and excitement.” We as children wanted it so badly.

A lot of us go through life playing life in the woods outback, or the yard in front; pretending to be somebody we are not. We think it’s good, we’re living it up. We’ve got friends, we’re in relationships, we’ve got resources, we’ve got stuff that we’re doing. But Jesus is saying, “Hey, I’ve got something here. It’s more than a magical kingdom. It’s an eternal kingdom. And I’ve created it just for you. I’m not going to force you to go there but I want to let you know, you go there and you’re going to live life to its fullest. You’re going to come alive in ways that you’ve only dreamed of.” That’s what Jesus said in John 10:10, *“I came so that they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”*

That’s what I want, don’t you; a better life than we ever dreamed of. Being in the center of God’s will. Living life the way that God designed it to be. That’s what I want, and that’s what I want for you too. So my final question to you is this: will you? Will you commit all of your life and will over to the care and control of Christ? Will you choose to commit everything to the God who not only created you but who loves you enough to change you?

To make that commitment you have to be meek. You have to be humble. Here’s what you have to do. You have to humble yourself. You have to drop your pride and say, my way isn’t working. And you have to pick up his love and his grace and his forgiveness and allow it to seep into your life and change you.

Will you? If you’ve never said yes to that invitation to a new life, if you’ve never said yes to God coming in and forgiving you and heading you in a new direction, I want to challenge you to make that your commitment today. If you would, on the bottom of your bulletin, fill in the blanks, “**On this day, September 29, 2019, I Kevin Davis will commit my all to my Lord, Jesus Christ.**” If you do not have a bulletin just write it out. And I want you to circle it. The circle means this: I’m stepping across the line for the very first time. In my mind it’s like God’s love circling you. The perfect love that has no beginning and no end. You begin on that journey today.

There are many of you, maybe even the majority that say, I’ve stepped across the line many years ago. I want to ask you today to recommit. Some of you may have gone a sideways in your relationship with God. Some of you have maybe slid back, some may have neglected the commitment you made way back then. Whatever the situation that you want to refer to it as, I ask that you recommit with the one who gave His all for you; will you give your all to him? If you would, on the bottom of your bulletin, fill in the blanks, “**On this day, September 29, 2019, I Kevin Davis will recommit my all to my Lord, Jesus Christ.**” And those of you who have recommitted their lives, I want you to underline it. If you underline it, you are recommitting to the foundation of who you are, to strengthen that foundation in my relationship with Jesus.

The next five weeks are built on today, if you have committed or recommitted, you have placed Jesus at the cornerstone of your foundation to your life in him. We have had a lot to think about and consider today. I’m really glad you were here today. Let’s pray together.