



“Blessed Are the Meek...” For They, Too, Will Inherit Economic Uncertainty

By Mike Cook

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In the current state of economic uncertainty, there are clear signs calling for you and me to become forever a ‘humble student’ to the changing lights and limitations of the world in which we live:

- Globalization has leveled the economic playing field and this trend has been hastened by our desire to continually improve our standard of living.
- None of us will be able to know enough, be skilled enough, or work hard enough to achieve financial security on our own and on a consistent basis.
- We are insufficiently prepared for the uncertainty in which we live. In a world of constant change, we attempt to prepare by employing more control. The reality is that we have virtually no control.

These current scenarios are prompting questions such as, “What are we supposed to do *now* to ensure employment and financial security?” At the root of this question lies a deeper question, “What are we supposed to do to protect ourselves from the upcoming uncertainty?”

The problem with these questions is that they are insufficient in our rapidly changing world. When change is the constant, it is often challenging to figure out what action to take. We need a more sustainable approach. Instead of asking ourselves “What to *do*...?” we need to focus on the question, “How do I need to **BE** in order to respond properly to the impending uncertainty?” We would be wise to look to some past teachers for guidance to answer this question.

Be Humble and Be Learning

Over 2000 years ago in his famous ‘Sermon on the Mount’ speech, Christ told his followers that “the meek shall inherit the earth.” By using the word “meek” he did not mean to suggest that we approach life timidly. He intended to guide followers to assume an attitude of humility towards life. “Humility,” as the Buddha encouraged his followers to practice, means to adopt the mindset of the beginner. Both Christ and the Buddha were leading their followers to continually be *open to learning*.

Modern day management thinker Charles Handy offers insight into why being open to learning is so crucial in dealing with the uncertainties of our modern world. In one of his recent compilations, “Waiting for the Mountain to Move,” he wrote:

“The search for that connection between the belief and action—my being and my doing—is never-ending and always changing because the world and its problems are always changing... We are forever going to be searchers after the truth.”

His words resonate with the previous teachings of Christ and the Buddha—the world is ultimately unknowable (always changing) and yet simultaneously available for our education (if we can be open to learning and can give up the idea that “I know it all”).

To deal with current and future uncertainties, each of these teachers offers us the choice of new *perspective* rather than a course of action—a new way to *be* instead of a new thing to *do*. Two perspectives, both based in humility, are necessary in order to thrive in chaotic times. As discussed above, the first is that of being a beginner or student. The second is to be living a humble existence.

A Humble Existence

I believe that it is now more readily apparent than ever that finding personal happiness solely from the material domain is no longer viable. It has become necessary to shift our gaze and find true satisfaction in non-material resources. If we lead a humble existence we will not be bound by the attainment of material goods. We will instead be guided by the desire to be the student and continually search for the truth—ultimately, how we can better ourselves and enrich our lives in the ways that really matter.

Humility allows for *being*...flexible and adaptable

Perspectives based in humility can give us a tremendous edge in navigating the changing lights and limitations of our future:

- ***Mental Adaptability***—Relinquishing the “never let them see you sweat” attitude:
We can never assume that we know it all, and we must realize that we are insufficient



to succeed all on our own. Humility is in opposition to arrogance. In order to be humble, we have to shed our pride. This will open us up to our own mistakes and limitations, and allow us to discontinue the glorification of ourselves. Once we are more modest about ourselves, we will see in others what we lack and be prepared to fully appreciate what they possess. Then we will not be ashamed by our need to ask for help or form partnerships that ultimately make us stronger and able to deal with changing circumstances.

- ***Financial Flexibility***—*Determining what we need rather than what we want:*
Books like “Think and Grow Rich” and shows like “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous” have led us to believe that more of anything is always better. In our haste to grasp material possessions we have missed the fact that more is what it has always been, just more. “More” has never guaranteed personal fulfillment, successful relationships, or happiness. And “more” can trap you in an unsustainable lifestyle given the economic uncertainty of our modern world. Humility must be our guide as we search to redefine a fulfilling life.

Our world is now calling for a focus on *being* as opposed to *having* or *doing*. By surrendering to uncertainty and embracing humility, you can be mentally adaptable and financially flexible as a means to open up new possibilities...perhaps even the possibility of peace amidst the chaos.

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