

Wal*mart received some criticism this week – not the local Wal*mart, this was a store in another part of the country. Some employees complained that they were required to work extra hours off the clock. At the end of the workday, they'd clock out, start toward their car, and then the supervisor would tell them they had to clean up the back room or something. Or when arriving for work, the boss put them right on a register before they had a chance to clock in. The employees complained that they were putting in hours of extra work and not getting paid. Church employees have to be careful about this too.

Some people find it hard to stand up to the boss. They fear they might lose their job if they complain. Still, if some injustice is being done, somebody has to speak up.

Today's gospel is one of the most popular passages in the bible. Jesus says he is meek and humble of heart, and those who learn from him will find rest. "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." In a society where people work hard and don't rest enough, these words feel like lotion on a sunburn.

But these words are also a reason why some people find organized religion repulsive. Nonbelievers charge that Christians are too meek and humble of heart, that we obey without thinking, that we are doormats who let people walk over us.

Well, not really. In truth, Jesus is not a warlord. He does not advocate aggression. You won't find him saying, "Blessed are those who take advantage of someone in order to get ahead." Or, "Learn from me, for I am as tough as a linebacker." Spokespeople for Christian religions rarely get angry in front of a camera. Politicians can do it; boxers can do it. But it looks contrary to what a religion stands for.

Even so, Jesus never says let people take advantage of you. He advocates meekness and humility here and throughout the gospel. The beatitudes bless the poor in spirit and the meek who will inherit the earth. When Jesus rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Matthew quotes today's first reading, saying he appeared meek, riding on an ass.

But Jesus never tolerated people who shut up when there was some injustice. He advocates meekness as a way of accepting his teaching. If you become one with his philosophy, you will find rest, for his burden is light. But if we are one with him we will not remain silent.

So, yes, Christians should be meek and humble, but whenever we see injustice in the workplace, in society or in nations around the world, we speak up with the wisdom God revealed to the little ones.