

The Beauty of the Lord, 1/11/26, David Marsh

1. Dismiss children

2. Pray

3. If you had one wish, one request...when assailed by evildoers, adversaries and foes...

a. Psalm 27:4 **One** thing have I **asked** of the LORD, that will I **seek** after: that I may **dwell** in the house of the Lord **all the days of my life**, to gaze upon the **beauty of the Lord** and to **inquire** in his temple.

b. David responds to adversaries differently in other psalms (up to/including “break teeth”)

c. Says much about beauty

i. David, after God’s own heart, cherishes **abiding** (“dwelling”) in God to see His **beauty**

ii. Beauty **attracts** / **demands attention** (“asks” and “seeks”) and **satisfies** (“all the days of my life”)

iii. Beauty correlates with **truth** (“inquire in his temple”) and **goodness** (v 13: “I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD”)

4. Why beauty? DRM, visual artist: admire beauty & occasionally create it

a. So, when I heard pastor/theologian John Piper interview Jonathan King re: “The Beauty of the Lord—Theology as Aesthetics”

b. I had to read it

i. Piper named it the “book of the year” in 2024

ii. Written through a Reformed Protestant perspective.

iii. Breaks new ground, makes hypotheses, seeks debate

iv. Worshipful reading: Aims to: “explore and develop a theology of beauty based on God’s plan in Christ” to...

1. **Build up** the church

a. Delight even more in wonder of God’s eternal plan

b. Exalt Jesus even higher

2. Fuel **evangelism** so many are drawn to source of GTB

a. CS Lewis: “The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing...to find the place where all the beauty came from.”

c. Chapter Outline

i. **Introduction**

ii. **Beauty Triune**

iii. Creation: Beauty’s Debut

iv. The Incarnation: Beauty Condescending

v. The Cross: Beauty Redeeming

vi. Re-creation: Beauty’s Denouement

vii. Conclusion

5. My plan today: take us through the first third

a. Intro

i. Identifies the need for and benefits of a theology of beauty

ii. Describes beauty and how to recognize it

b. Beauty Triune (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)

- i. Deep in places (how could it not be?)
- ii. Ends by introducing highlights of the beauty of Jesus
- c. My aim—Informed by King's—is to suggest **vocabulary**, **ideas**, and **entryways** to more fully delight in the Lord's beauty
- d. **Enjoyed v. admired** beauty: digging deeper enriches

6. Author's introduction

- a. Theology of beauty
 - i. Not 1) Natural theology (heavens, red rocks), 2) Theology of the arts (Bach), 3) Religious aesthetics (stained glass)
 - ii. Premised on Scripture: creation-redemption-consummation
 - 1. ==**Theodrama**, the real “arc of history” ordered by God
 - iii. Focus
 - 1. the objective beauty of the person of Christ
 - 2. the beauty of work of Christ (redemption accomplished)
 - 3. the beauty of Christ's ongoing work through the Holy Spirit (redemption applied).
 - iv. Theology of beauty neglected
 - 1. Beauty (to the untrained eye) can seem fuzzy, ambiguous, a matter of opinion (unlike truth)
 - 2. No theological consensus on validity of beauty
 - a. Tree of knowledge of good/evil was a delight to the eye (Gen 3:6)
 - b. “... even Satan disguises himself as an **angel of light**” (2 Cor 11:14)
 - v. Author's position: not only SAFE, but also EDIFYING, to ponder beauty of Christ and His work
- b. Beauty
 - i. Achieved when certain **design elements** are selected and arranged in a pleasing way
 - 1. Symmetry, unity, simplicity, proportion, variety, harmony, intricacy, delicacy, suggestiveness, etc.
 - a. Before you say, “What is he TALKING about?!”
 - b. Familiar concepts (landscape painting: symmetry PLUS variety)
 - c. Learned in music or art appreciation course.
 - i. Never too late to take them!
 - 2. Objectively apprehended by the intellect
 - 3. Subjectively stimulates aesthetic pleasure or delight
 - a. Exceptions (cf crucifixion—enjoyed v. admired)
 - 4. Beauty demands to be noticed
 - ii. Ancients' **transcendentals** or universals
 - 1. Fundamental properties of being that transcend categories: animal, vegetable, mineral, abstraction
 - a. TGB are yardsticks to evaluate something
 - 2. The **true** is intelligible to the **intellect**, i.e., being **unDeniable**
 - 3. The **good** engages the **will**, i.e., being **Desirable**
 - a. Challenge: train affections to want the truly good
 - 4. The **beautiful** engages **both** the intellect and the will, being **Delightable**

- a. Intellect perceives it. The will desires it.
 - b. Beauty does **double** duty
- 5. Soul work
- 6. Think of the **3 DDD**.
- iii. How the true, the good and the beautiful **satisfy!**
 - 1. Intellect **rests** at truth, Will rests at goodness, often Both rest at beauty
 - 2. Beauty has delight as its **end**; the others “OK, now what?” (momentary rest)
 - a. Example: conviction, surrender/repent, S of Ss
 - 3. Mt 11:29 “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls.” (cf Gen 2:2; Heb 4:10)
- 7. Author’s “Beauty Triune” => Explores aspects of the **Doctrine of God**
 - a. Is beauty a divine **attribute**?
 - i. Not found on lists of attributes/perfections of God
 - b. Briefly consider God’s **beauty, glory** and **beatitude**
 - c. God’s **beauty**: Biblical references to beauty few
 - i. Isaiah 33:17 Your eyes will behold the king in his **beauty**
 - ii. But scripture is full of aesthetic words
 - 1. Splendor, sublimity, radiance, majesty, pleasing, lovely, delightful, fairness, comely, radiant, adorned
 - iii. Ps 96:6 **Splendor** and **majesty** are before him; **strength** and **beauty** are in his sanctuary. (3 “aesthetic” + 1 attribute)
 - d. God’s **glory** (external, perceptible)
 - i. Glory (OT: KA-bode, 200X): weight, gravitas, honor, fame, dignity, splendor (NT: doxa, 150X): glory, splendor, radiance, majesty
 - 1. Glory == outpouring of God’s attributes
 - ii. Visible in the amazing **acts** of God
 - 1. Deliverance from/destruction of Egypt, desert wandering, Mt Sinai, (Exod 13:21-22; 14:24-25; 16:10; 24:17)
 - 2. Tabernacle, temple: (Exod 29:43; 40:34-38; 1 Kgs 8:10-11; 2 Chr 5:13-14; 7:1-3)
 - 3. Prophetic visions (Isa 6:1-4, [John 12:41]; Ezek 1; Rev 1:13-18; 4:2-3)
 - 4. Son of God/Redeemer (Jn 1:14; 17:5; 1 Tim 4:10; Heb 1:1-3)
 - 5. New Jerusalem/Bride of Christ: (Rev 21:1-22:5)
 - iii. Glory associated with **other perfections**, including beauty
 - 1. Eph 1:6 to the praise of his **glorious grace**, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved... (cf Exod 33:18-19; 1 Sam 15:29; Job 40:10, Ps 145:5,12; Isa 6:3, 28:5)
 - 2. Exod 28:2 And you shall make **holy** garments for Aaron your brother, for **glory** and for **beauty**.
 - e. **Divine simplicity**: God is so radically ONE that he has no composition
 - i. Glory seems to be the sum of God’s attributes
 - 1. Two **prisms**: white light->color spectrum->white light
 - ii. God’s external glory elicits an aesthetic response
 - 1. Beauty (and often much more!)

f. God's **beatitude** = internal blessedness

i. HOLY GROUND -> take off shoes

1. Age 4: coal truck, chute, noise, bin, dust, shovel, furnace => INSIDE: so bright, so hidden
2. 1 Tim 6:16 glorified J...who dwells in **unapproachable** light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

ii. Only a few references to His beatitude or blessedness:

1. 1 Tim 1:11 ... the gospel of the glory of the **blessed God** with which I have been entrusted.
2. 1 Tim 6:15b ...he who is the **blessed and only Sovereign**, the King of kings and Lord of lords, (cf 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3)

iii. God's beatitude refers to His **intrinsic blessedness** = the eternal condition in himself of absolute delight, satisfaction, rest, love, self-existence and fullness

1. Ex 3:14a ¹⁴God said to Moses, "I am who I am."
2. Acts 17:25 nor is he served by human hands, **as though he needed anything**, since he himself **gives** to all mankind life and breath and everything."

iv. One more big word: **beatific vision**—When WE finally see God face to face (David in Ps 27; beloved in SS)

v. Summary of case to elevate beauty as attribute/avenue

1. Bible has much **aesthetic** language, language of beauty
2. The visible **beauty** of God's **glory** accompanies His amazing external acts, especially in His **theodrama**
3. His glory is the sum of His **attributes**
4. **Triune God** is invisible, but scripture reveals what we need to know about its **beatitude**
5. The **beauty** (~glory) perceived in God's theodrama **reflects** the internal beatitude of the Trinity. (God does what He is.)
6. The **delight** we sense in beauty corresponds to the self-delight within the Trinity.
7. God's **unity** has no parts, so if beauty is evident in his glory, beauty is an attribute (might take centuries)

8. **Beauty** of the Son of God as the Incarnate Redeemer

a. Of course, HE is the main character in God's theodrama

b. His beauty: a function of the **symmetry** of his role in theodrama

- i. One cannot help but **delight** in the beauty of
 1. creation/recreation
 2. image of God/image of God
 3. Son of God/sons and daughters of God

c. The Son **creates** and the Son **re-creates/renews** creation

- i. John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were **made through him**, and without

him was not any thing made that was made. (cf John 1:14, 17-18; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:2, 11:3; 2 Pe 3:5)

- ii. Rev 21:5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am **making all things new.**” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”
- iii. Not just symmetry, but also **simplicity**, its **suggestiveness...**

d. The Son is the **pre-existent image of God** through whom humanity is imaged, and He is the **last Adam** through whom the redeemed are imaged eternally

- i. Col 1:15 ¹⁵ He is the **image** of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (cf Col 2:9; Heb 1:3a)
- ii. Gen 1:26-27 Then God said, “Let us make man in our **image**, after our likeness...²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- iii. 2 Cor 3:18 ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed** into the same **image** from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (Gal 4:19; Col 3:10)
- iv. Rom 8:29-30 ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed** to the **image** of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also **glorified**.
- v. Not just symmetry, but also **unity** (marriage) and **variety**

e. The **Son of God** is the only begotten Son of the Father and as incarnate Redeemer, He procures **adoptive sonship** for the redeemed

- i. Ex 4:22-23 (LORD speaking to Moses) Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn **son**,²³ and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.”’
- ii. Gal 4:4-5 ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption** as sons. (Eph 1:3-6)
- iii. 2 Cor 6:18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be **sons** and **daughters** to me, says the Lord Almighty.”
- iv. Not just symmetry, but also **proportion** (greater v. lesser) and **harmony** (family)

9. Summary

- a. Recap: We looked at...
 - i. **Beauty**, a function of a pleasing arrangement of design elements, like symmetry, unity, simplicity, etc
 - ii. The transcendentals: **truth**, **goodness**, **beauty** often travel together and are perceived by our intellect, will and both
 - iii. How our **soul** rests or is **satisfied** upon apprehending 1+
 - iv. The doctrine of God, specifically how to ponder and savor his external **glory** and internal **beatitude**
 - v. A case for beauty as an **attribute** of God

- vi. A preview of **beauty** of the **Son of God** in God's **theodrama**, specifically his symmetrical role in creating/recreating, in placing his image on his own, and in sonship
- b. The **scope** of Christ's beautiful work is astounding
 - i. Creation/recreation: everything external to the Triune God
 - ii. Image: our being, identify (such a high view of life!)
 - iii. Sonship: our eternal relationships, security and delight
- c. King: "...[we are] to not only grow in sound **knowledge** of God and the revelation of his plan—that is, growing in "**truth**"; and not only to **perform** more faithfully and reflect in our lives the revelation of his ways and character—that is, growing in "**goodness**"; but equally vital, to **delight** increasingly in God for who he is and for making us partakers through the person and work of Christ in his eternal Triune life—that is, growing in "**beauty**."
- d. Delighting in the beauty of the Lord is serious business

Tools to identify beauty and to delight even more in scripture, meditation, prayer, praise, worship and what we have to look forward to—that beatific vision—in glory. Let's **pray**...

Num 6:24-26 The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his **face** to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his **countenance** upon you and give you **peace**. (rest, delight)