

## 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, perceivable)
  - 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 <sup>14</sup> God 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. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All 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 <sup>15</sup> 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..."<sup>27</sup> 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 <sup>18</sup> 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 <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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**,<sup>23</sup> 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 <sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> 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

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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**...

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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)