

## Beauty Full... but Beasts

Ecclesiastes 3

#3 in our series from Ecclesiastes

September 25, 2016

Peter Hiett

### Prayer

*"Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity."*

Lord God, I pray that you would give us courage to believe the Word, the living Word, and also the written word—what's recorded. Lord God, it seems like whenever I seriously wrestle with Scripture it just terrifies me, kills me, and sets me free. Lord God, I pray that you would help us to believe the scriptures this morning because maybe that would help us to believe you—Jesus. We love you, and it's in your name that we ask that we would preach. Amen.

### Message

For the last two weeks, we've been preaching our way through Ecclesiastes. I've never preached through Ecclesiastes before, but I have preached Chapter 3 before. I think it may be the most incredible chapter in all the Old Testament. So I've been anticipating it and will refer back to it in weeks to come.

In Ecclesiastes 3:18 Solomon writes this:

*"I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them..."*

We're being tested... So let's have a test... Pop Quiz.

1. Take out a pen or a pencil and on the back of your bulletin sign your name legibly, in the upper right hand corner.  
Now list the Ten Commandments in order.  
[Jeopardy music plays in the background]
2. There appears to be some hesitation, and I understand – it's NOT about the law, right? So instead...I'd like you to write an essay: Discuss and illuminate three beautiful things you did this week, which demonstrate your faith in God's Grace.  
Write them down and then I'll judge them...

Actually, we should have a contest...

The words "goodness" and "beauty" are often interchangeable in Scripture—so we'll call it a beauty pageant. God is testing us, and He must be testing our beauty, so let's have a beauty pageant. Just think, you could win and I could sing:

*"There she is - Miss Sanctuary. There she is – your Ideal. There she is – walking on air. She is fairest of the fair, she is Miss Sanctuary."*

You get the idea. And here are some ideas for the talent portion of the show.

Clip for *Drop Dead Gorgeous*

Emcee: *And now here's the moment we've all been waiting for – the Talent Competition.*

[Contestant comes out onto the stage and sings "Give my Regards to Broadway."]

[Contestant comes out and does a tap dance.]

[Contestant comes out and does a gymnastics routine.]

Gladys Leeman (Kirstie Alley): *It is with overwhelming pride that I introduce to you contestant number 6 who is also the President of her class 2 years running, Honor Roll student, and the new president of the Lutheran Sisterhood Gun Club. Ladies and gentlemen Rebecca Ann Leeman.*

Rebecca Leeman: *You know what? The rumors are true. I do have a special fellow in my life and if nobody minds, I'd like to sing a little song just for him: "You're just too good to be true. Can't take my eyes off of you."* [A doll that looks like Jesus on the crucifix is rolled out onto the stage. Rebecca begins to dance as she rolls the crucifix around on the stage.]

Gladys Leeman: *Finally the moment that I know I've been waiting for...for the scholarship of \$500, courtesy of Leeman Furniture, an all-expense paid trip next weekend, when she will be competing for the title of Sara Rose Cosmetics Minnesota American Teen Princess. Our new Mount Rose American Teen Princess is contestant number...oh, oh, it's my daughter Rebecca Ann Leeman.*

Rebecca: *Thank you so much.*

Gentleman singing: *Here she is, our Mount Rose American Teen Princess...*

You know the problem with beauty pageants is that they can often be so...ugly.

Now if you've been in a beauty pageant, don't think I'm picking on you.

This whole world is a beauty pageant. If you're a student, you're in a beauty pageant. An "A" is beautiful, and summa cum laude is how you win that pageant. If you're in business, you win it with stock options and bank accounts. If you're a mom, you win it with beautiful, well-behaved children. Sport is definitely a beauty pageant and Jesus can help you win.

Jesus can make your family beautiful, your finances beautiful, your mind beautiful – He can help you win.

Clip from *Saturday Night Live*, December 10, 2011

Tebow character: *And also I gotta thank the most important person in my life, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because I could not do this without Him. Thank you, Jesus.*

[Fog forms outside the locker room doors. Jesus character walks through the doors.]

Jesus character: *Hello everybody.*

Tebow character: *Jesus! He has risen!*

Jesus character: *No, no, no...not really, just a quick visit. So, hey everybody take a seat. Go ahead, take a seat. Chill out. First of all, you're welcome. Yes, I Jesus Christ am indeed the reason you've won your past 6 football games.*

Player #75: *So Jesus just spends His time helping people win football games.*

Jesus character: *Well you know here's the thing. I just go where people call me the most. Now a days that's a lot of football games, also the Country Music Awards – you know I decide all of those. I'm right there at any Black event where food is served.*

Player #75: *Hey man!*

Jesus character: *I'm sorry. I'm forgiven. You see the point is you guys gotta help yourselves a little. I mean can you do that for me?*

All the players nod and say that they can.

Jesus character: *Well anywho, I'm off to a beauty pageant. Best of luck next week. I'll try to watch*

Now, I think it's great that athletes thank God for their talent, but thanking God for helping you beat your neighbor is a bit weird... I mean making yourself beautiful at the expense of another's beauty just isn't that beautiful. And using Jesus to glorify yourself, that is make yourself beautiful doesn't make the ugliness go away – perhaps it makes it worse. Maybe we don't understand what really beauty is.

I read about a cosmetics company that held a beauty contest by mail.

People were to mail in photos of women they considered beautiful along with a short letter explaining why. A young boy from a broken home wrote the following:

A beautiful woman lives down the street from me. I visit every day. She makes me feel like the most important kid in the world. We play Checkers and she listens to my problems. When I leave she always yells out the door that she's proud of me. ...I hope I have a wife as pretty as her.

The president of the cosmetics company read the letter and then asked to see the picture. His secretary handed him a photo of a smiling, grey-haired, toothless old lady, in a wheel chair with a twinkle in her eye. The president smiled and said, "We can't use this woman. She'd show the world our products aren't necessary to be beautiful."<sup>1</sup>

I think the greatest beauty is making others beautiful.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, he didn't use her photo in their promotional, for beauty like that can't be bought – at least not by us.

The most beautiful man I've ever knew was my dad.

I think that's why I became a pastor – to be like him.

I wanted to make myself beautiful by making others beautiful.

I wanted to be the very best at it – that is I wanted to be the most humble.

I wanted sacks full of letters from grateful, underprivileged kids.

I wanted (and still want) to make myself more Christ-like than anyone.

In fact I use Christ to do that.

In other words, I want to win the beauty pageant, called religion and yet often there's nothing more ugly than religion. (Not true religion like that Kierkegaard spoke of, but man-made religion.)

Read your Bible closely and you'll see—religion is the very thing that got Christ crucified and nothing is more ugly than that.

Well Solomon wrote, "*God is testing us.*"

And like it or not, this world is a beauty pageant. It is!

So how do we pass the test? How do we win the pageant?

Last week we saw that Solomon tried to make himself good by taking the Good. And that was vanity and striving after the wind—it was ugly.

Then he tried to make himself good by taking knowledge of the Good. And that was vanity and striving after the wind—very ugly.

Then he saw the Good, the beautiful. Then he wrote Ecclesiastes chapter 3 (these verses should be familiar):

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:*

Time is created by God for a reason—what reason?

*a time to be born, and a time to die;*

Did God make death? Genesis 1 states that everything God made was good (that is beautiful). I don't think God made death—there's nothing to make. Death is an absence—not a substance—Death is the absence of Life. God didn't make death, but He made a time and space for death, and death is ugly

*a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;*

*a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;*

*a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;*

Scripture says weeping lasts for the night and joy comes in the mourning. Also, He turns our mourning into dancing. (Commentators suggest that's a euphemism for making love... I'm cool with that.)

*a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;*

*a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;*

*a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate; a time to war, and a time for peace.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

*“A time to love and a time to hate.”*

It sounds like He’s saying there’s a time for the absence of love.

*“A time for peace and a time for war.”*

That’s a time for the absence of peace.

“God is Love” and Jesus is the “Prince of Peace.” The absence of Love and absence of Peace is like the Absence of God and His Word, and I think that’s evil . . .

Choosing evil is sin . . . and God doesn’t sin.

BUT He made space and time for us to sin:

Space and time for us to reject Love and His Word

Space and time for us to crucify the Prince of Peace

Space and time for “the evil business” Solomon mentioned in chapter one

Space and time for us to choose the ugly and make things ugly

But... can we choose to make things beautiful? As Solomon puts it in the next verse:

*What gain has the worker from his toil?*

What can we do???

*I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.*

That’s the “evil business” that he mentioned in chapter one—the business of choosing nothing.

*He has made everything beautiful in its time.*

Ecclesiastes 3:9-11a

If God has made “*everything beautiful in its time,*” what could we make beautiful in our time?

SEE? Sounds nice—God makes things beautiful—

But it’s a hard pill to swallow, ’cause it means that you don’t.

*“He has made everything beautiful in it’s time...” everything—even things that haven’t yet been made in time, He has—already accomplished—He has made beautiful in their time.*

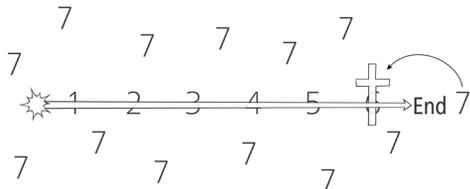
Well, If God *has made everything beautiful in its time*,” what’s the purpose of our time? What’s the test? I mean God’s not wondering if we can make something beautiful in time...

God has made everything beautiful in time—everything.  
Actually, That’s what we learned in the first chapter of the Bible.

The six days of creation span all of time. At the end of the sixth day God looks at everything he has made and it’s all very good. And He rests on the Seventh day cause all his work of making things beautiful is done. But obviously, everything is not beautiful, so obviously we still live in the six days of time.

Before Jesus was crucified on a tree in a garden, in John 5:17, He said, “*My Father has been working until now.*” That means He had never stopped working, which means it wasn’t yet the Seventh day, which means God was, and maybe still is, making things beautiful in time.

The Seventh Day must be the end of Time and the edge of Eternity.  
Well on the tree in the garden on Calvary, at the end of the sixth Day, Jesus—Prince of Peace and Word of God—“*It is finished*”, through whom all things are created—cried, “*It is finished.*”



If you’ve been around awhile, hopefully you understand this picture. If you’re new, I’m just pointing out that Eternal Beauty isn’t stuck in time, but the Seventh day encompasses time, and it invades time at a tree in a garden called the cross.

At that tree we did the evil business and God revealed His Good Business.  
Through Christ God gives us life and that life is “eternal.” It is unfading beauty.  
On one side of the cross “it is *not* finished”... on the other side, everything is beautiful.

Verse 11

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.*

So, we have Eternity in our hearts with time on our hands and a fog in our heads.  
We see it on a tree in Calvary, but it was planted in our hearts as a breath in Eden.

In the Hebrew mind, Eternity is the presence of all time—the fullness of time when we’re no longer stuck in time but the masters of time. C. S. Lewis that pointed out how we are all so amazed at time and yet we live in time. We say, “I can’t believe I’m fifty-five; only yesterday I was a child.”

We’re constantly amazed at time and yet we live in time.

We’re like fish constantly amazed at being wet.

That would make no sense, unless these fish were destined to, one day, walk on land. Perhaps we’re creatures of Eternity—but created, (or revealed), in time. OR maybe you’re like a creature of Eternity but revealed in time—as you’re created and constructed in time.

Verse 12-13

*I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil. Literally translated “see good in all his toil – this is God’s gift to man.”*

Not “make good” with his toil, but “see good” in his toil. A woman can’t make a baby with her toil, but she will come to see a baby in her toil. Maybe you’re giving birth to something or someone with your toil...

Verse 13-14

*also that everyone should eat and drink and see good in all his toil – this is God’s gift to man... (the thing, or person, you find in your toil...) I perceived that whatever God does endures forever...<sup>2</sup>*

“Forever” - is the same word that gets translated as “eternity” in verse 11  
SO “whatever God does endures forever or to eternity.”

And what does God do? He makes all things beautiful in time.

And those beautiful things endure forever. They are Eternal.

- So, the ugly is temporal and the beauty is Eternal.
- The weeping is temporal, but the laughter that it turns into is Eternal.
- The mourning is temporal, but the dance it turns into is Eternal.
- The doubt is temporal, but the Faith is Eternal.
- Despair temporal, but Hope Eternal.
- Hatred temporal, but Love Eternal.
- Sin temporal, but Grace Eternal.
- Death temporal, but Life Eternal.

Like an eternal Harvest of Beauty grown in the temporal, dirty and broken soil of this world.

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<sup>2</sup> It’s like I can’t change a thing but maybe I can enjoy a thing... If I trust God will make all things beautiful in time. Verse 14: “I perceived that whatever God does endures forever...”

The ugly soil of this world produces an indestructible harvest of Beauty. And that means there must be some sort of eternal repository for all of this indestructible beauty. And that must be the Seventh Day, God's rest—Heaven.

*"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"* AND God is revealing Heaven in Time.  
God is revealing Eternal Beauty in time.

So time is a stage, for Eternity, for the Revelation of Beauty . . . a pageant if you will—but not a contest.

Verse 14

*I perceived that whatever God does endures forever (or is eternal);  
nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done  
it...*

And what has God done? *"Made everything beautiful in its time,"* which leaves how much for you to make beautiful in your time? – Nothing.

And *if* whatever God does doesn't change, God didn't do *the ugly*, because *the ugly* changes into *the beautiful* in time... And *the beautiful* always was and always is.

So, maybe the ugly is like an illusion in time, caused by believing a lie in time, as if the ugly were a shadow cast by our faithlessness in time . . . whatever the case, doing the *ugly* is doing *nothing* in time... and *Beauty* is timeless.

*I perceived that whatever God does (is eternal); nothing can be added  
to it, nor anything taken from it.— "what God does..."*

SO, Are you something that God does and has done? (Ask yourself)

If so, you are eternal, indestructible and absolute beauty.

OR Are you something that you do or have done?

If so . . . you are an ugly illusion . . . according to Solomon.

(I'm sorry, I didn't write Ecclesiastes)

*I perceived that whatever God does (is eternal); nothing can be added  
to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it so that people fear  
before him. <sup>15</sup> That which is, already has been; that which is to be,  
already has been; ...*

—Ecclesiastes 3:14-15

Did you get that? That which *is* . . . is *Eternal*.

That which truly is . . . is not subject to time.

And now listen again to this line:

*That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away. Literally “persecuted and driven away.”*

Jesus said He came to “*seek and to save the lost*” - literally “*the perished.*”

You can only be lost if you once belonged.

And if you once belonged to God, you belong *eternally* to God.

The lost must be like a piece of eternity trapped in time or the illusion of time and Jesus is the Will of God, and Truth that is God, who descends into time and finds the lost.

Jesus said He came to “*seek and to save the lost.*” He won’t stop until all that are “driven away” have been made beautiful in their time – *their* time; different than your time – but they still have a time within God’s eternity.

So, God is the Creator; God is the Savior; and God is the Doer of all things.

Like Julian of Norwich saw in her vision: *Sin is no-thing and God does all things. God is the only “doer.”* Like Saint Paul says in 1 Corinthians, “*Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things*” So, if you do a real thing, it’s Love in you, that’s actually doing that thing.

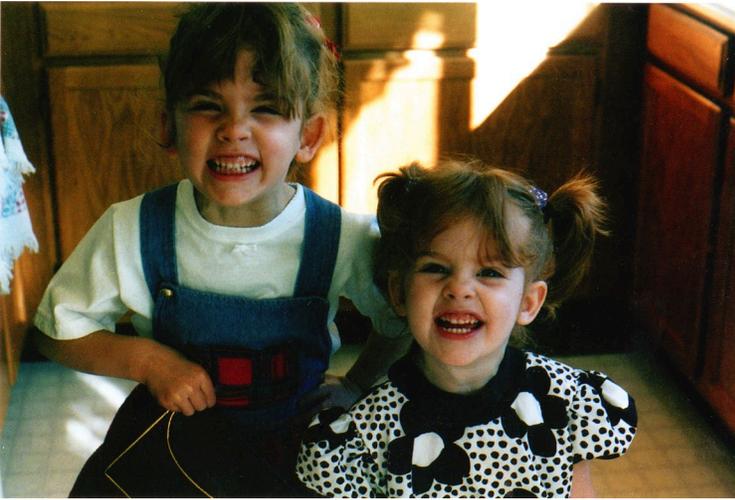
You’re not striving after wind, you’re being driven by the Wind, constrained by Love—like a sailboat powered by the wind; like a dancer swept away by the music.

It’s like Jesus, Prince of Peace, said, “*Apart from me, you can do nothing.*” Solomon, Prince of Peace, said, “*God has made all things beautiful in their time... Nothing can be added and nothing taken away.*”

God does everything that’s anything. So, you might ask: “Well, if a person believed that, why would they do anything?” If you really believed that there was no beauty that you needed to make and no beauty pageant you needed to take and win—why would you be beautiful and why would you do anything?

Have you ever met a two-year old? Do they do things? Are they beautiful? Yeah! Now, there’s some ugliness I know, but also this outrageous beauty beyond my ability to describe.

I remember just being amazed at the absolute beauty of my kids when they were about two. I wanted to write down every word they said, make a movie of everything they did. They were absolutely, stunningly beautiful – yet they didn’t try to be beautiful. They were unaware of their beauty, or the weight of their beauty so they just enjoyed their beauty, loved to display their beauty for me—singing for me, dancing for me, displaying a beauty pageant for me. But they never tried to make themselves beautiful. They didn’t have to be beautiful – they just were beautiful. Their beauty was free.



Maybe you can't make yourself beautiful, you can only *be* beautiful.  
Maybe you can't make yourself good, you can only *be* good.

Well, there came a day when they, like, covered it up—wrapped it in fig leaves. They lost that outrageous, unadulterated, and free beauty that was themselves. They lost Beauty when they gained the knowledge of Beauty and began to try to make themselves beautiful.

There are several places in the Old Testament that inform us that little children don't have the "knowledge of good and evil" (Deut. 1:39, Isaiah 7:16). That means the garden story is your story, and at one point, long ago, you took the fruit of the knowledge of beauty.

Well, each of my children at some point, gained the knowledge of beauty . . . and began to strive for beauty . . . and lost beauty. They entered the beauty pageant that we call "The real world." When they entered the beauty pageant, they covered up that free and outrageous beauty they had as a child. They judged their beauty and no longer simply enjoyed being beautiful.

- They sang, but not for the Joy of singing; they began to sing in order to get approval.
- They began to dance 'cause they were in a class and received a grade.
- If they put on a beauty pageant it wasn't to enjoy their beauty but to compete for beauty and win the pageant.

Maybe that's why we have such a problem with beauty pageants for little girls. They destroy beauty. My children lost beauty when they felt responsible for Beauty (maybe we all did). They lost it or covered it up. Actually, I know it's still there because Beauty is indestructible, and I am their father; I've seen it.

Well, Jesus said, "*You must become like little children to enter....*"

One day we'll be like little children . . . yet not little children . . .  
For we'll know something little children don't know.  
We'll know the *weight* of our own Beauty  
And yet we'll still be able to dance  
For we'll know that Beauty is a Gift. It's free!  
We'll know Grace.

Verse 16

*Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.*

That is, everything in this world is a mixture of beauty and ugliness; good and bad; righteousness and wickedness.

Verse 17

*I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work. Literally, "There is a time for everything and every deed is there."*

There is an *eternal moment* – called *Judgment* –

A moment when all time is judged by eternity;

A moment in which all ugliness is exposed and all Beauty is revealed and all things are made new.

Verse 18

*I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see...*

Now stop right there!! This is absolutely enormous<sup>3</sup>. God is testing us...*BUT* not so that He might see something, like

—who gets saved

Or – who remembered the Ten Commandments

Or – who had sufficiently beautiful faith with which to win the beauty pageant.

The purpose of time is not to inform the Creator about His Creation.

God does everything; God knows everything.

God is not testing us to learn anything!!!

God is not testing us in order that He might see;

God is testing us in order that we might see.

God did not put the tree in the middle of the Garden

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<sup>3</sup> And the difference between Heaven and Hell.

In order that He might “see” something about us.  
God put the tree in the middle of the Garden  
In order that we might “see” something about Him and also ourselves.

Solomon writes, “*God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts.*”  
They themselves are “*but beasts.*”

- Many of you, like me, wonder “*God what’s my problem?*”
- People ask me “*Pastor what’s my problem?*”  
Well here’s the answer: “*You are a butt beast.*”

Verse 18-20

*...they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.*

Like Abraham said to God, “*I am but dust and ashes.*”  
A butt beast, made of butt dust—that returns to dust...  
And you need to see it for some reason.

We ourselves cannot make Beauty and we cannot preserve Beauty.  
“*Glory days; oh they’ll pass you by – Glory days.*”

My father was the most glorious, beautiful man I’ve ever known, and I watched him turn to dust. This is his dust. [Peter picks up a bag of his dad’s ashes.] It’s like Dad made this body of dust every time he chose to consume some life (I’m talking food). Every time he chose to consume the good to make himself good, he made this body—just like a beast makes a body—and it turns to dust. Dad made this bag of dust, but God used this bag of dust, to make Dad—the true eternal, indestructible and glorious Dan Hiatt.

My Dad recognized beauty—in other words he loved love because Love had loved him and so He loved. He gave his life away and now he’s found Life . . . and He is glorious. He is the New Jerusalem and She “*has the Glory of God.*” (Rev. 21:11) Dad knows The Good, He knows Beauty.

I’ve got nothing against beasts, but most beasts don’t recognize beauty nor do they have Eternity in their hearts – like my Dad. If you took your dog to the Grand Canyon, she’d sniff the trash and have no concept of that timeless beauty, stretched out before her. We may have no advantage over the beast and yet God puts Eternity in our hearts and God is making us beautiful in time.

And maybe that is the point of this beauty pageant called time:

- #1 That I would see Beauty
- #2 That I would see that I myself am a beast but,
- #3 God is making me beautiful in time. So . . .
- #4 At the end of Time, I will know my Beauty is a Gift.  
Beauty in the beast, a beauty-full creation.

At the edge of Eternity, at the judgment of all time, at a tree in a garden, I will see – I am created by Amazing Grace... and thus rejoice in my Self – His beautiful creation.

Hey, what if you did win the test—the contest?

- What if you wrote down all Ten Commandments?
- What if we decided that you performed the best deeds..,
- And I pointed you out and everyone sang, *“There she is....Miss Sanctuary?”*
- How would you feel?
- How do you feel, when you pass a test or win an award?

You know if I think I preached a beautiful sermon,  
- I’m really thrilled and then... almost immediately, terrified.  
- I think, *“I can’t do that. I can’t maintain that – I can’t be responsible for that beauty.”*

If a sermon is ugly – I feel awful. And if a sermon is beautiful – I feel terrified.  
You know that feeling. Now contrast that feeling with the feeling you get when you see a great movie or hear a beautiful song or stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon. It’s different, isn’t it?

- The first is a beauty that you think you made
- And the second is a beauty that you know you didn’t make—a beauty you just enjoy.

Well, what if God really is making you beautiful? And I don’t mean kind of beautiful. I mean absolutely, profoundly, astoundingly beautiful. How are you gonna enjoy the glory of your own awesomeness?

It’s no wonder that beautiful people like Marilyn Monroe or Whitney Houston can’t seem to rest in their own beauty. How are you gonna enjoy the glory of your own awesomeness, in Heaven? Saint Paul wrote, *“These slight momentary afflictions prepare us for an eternal weight of Glory (of Beauty) beyond comparison.”*

How are you gonna enjoy the glory of your own awesomeness  
OR the glory of anyone else’s awesomeness?

If I think I’m a contestant in a beauty pageant, responsible for my own beauty,

I'll stress over my own beauty and I'll hate everyone else's beauty.  
I'll smile on the outside (like a good contestant), but hate beauty on the  
inside –“hate Beauty” —and what is Beauty anyway?

Solomon continues in verses 20-22

*...All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the  
spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into  
the earth? So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should  
rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will  
be after him?*

Who, indeed?

Well that's where you and I have seen something Solomon had not yet seen.  
We've seen Beauty Himself. We've seen the End of Time. We've seen the  
One who died and rose again. <sup>4</sup>

All space and time is a stage, set for the Revelation of Him, that we might see Him, and He is  
Beauty.

It was the religious folks trying to win the beauty pageant that grew jealous of His Beauty, and  
so hated His Beauty and so took His Beauty on the Tree like beasts—making themselves ugly  
as beasts. Humanity tried to take His Beauty, and yet He gave His Beauty and that is the  
essence of Beauty: giving Beauty away.

And He really gave it, not to get it, but to give it. He cried “*Father Forgive them*” and “*My God  
why have you forsaken me?*” for He really bore our sin to destruction and gave us His Beauty.  
Then He cried, “*It is finished*” and there . . . all Beauty is finished.

*“For in Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,” writes Paul, “and through Him to  
reconcile to Himself all things whether on Earth or in Heaven; making Peace by the Blood of  
His Cross.” (Colossians 1:19-20) He humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a  
cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him above all things... (Glorified Him. That is revealed  
His Beauty.) So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow... and every tongue confess  
that Jesus is Lord, to the Glory of the Father.” (Philippians 2:8-11)*

Through Jesus Christ and Him crucified, God gives Himself away and makes all things  
beautiful in time. Dad, me, you, and all who have been lost and driven away.

[Image from *The Passion* of a bloody and beaten Jesus hanging on the cross]

So, this is the winner of the beauty pageant. The One who would choose to lose that all might  
win—that all might be Beautiful. And it's necessary that you see Him. This is the purpose of

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*“Before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,”* writes David, Solomon's father in Ps.22

space and time. This is why you're being tested. So that you might see Him passing the test . . .

That you might see Him – crucified for you and by you;  
That you might see you're a beast, and He is the Beauty;  
That you might watch Him *give* you His Beauty;  
That you might be filled with Beauty (in the very image of God) A creature of unspeakable Beauty, *and yet* able to bear that Beauty and delight in that Beauty because you know that Beauty is Grace. God has done it and it cannot be taken away!

See? With these “*slight momentary afflictions*,” with this world of trials and testing God is giving you yourself<sup>5</sup>. God is preparing you to enjoy the gift of your own awesomeness and the gift of everyone else's awesomeness—Jesus in everyone!

Heaven is this ecstatic, wild and endless dance of shared awesomeness. I think we call it Love. God is Love, and Love is Beauty and we will be Beauty full. It begins here, when we stop trying to make ourselves beautiful and begin to see Beauty and trust Beauty in us. Beauty is Grace in Flesh. Beauty is Jesus and His dancing Body.

One of my favorite movies is *Little Miss Sunshine*. In the movie, every character is trying to make themselves beautiful and failing miserably—Mom, Dad, Grandpa, Uncle Frank, Dwayne and seven-year-old Olive, who happens to qualify for the Little Miss Sunshine Pageant. Because of finances and circumstance, the whole dysfunctional family drives across the country with Olive to enter her in the pageant. Her Grandpa teaches her a dance routine and then dies of a heroin overdose on the way to the pageant. No one bothers to check the dance routine that Grandpa taught Olive before the pageant, but when Olive starts to dance, they all forget themselves and the ugly little worlds that they have created. They each lose and all win, and that's how they all become beautiful.

Clip from *Little Miss Sunshine*

Olive Hoover: *I'd like to dedicate this to my grandpa who showed me these moves.*

Emcee: *Oh that is so sweet. Is he here? Where is your grandpa right now?*

Olive: *In the trunk of our car.*

Emcee: *Oka-a-a-y. Well, take it away Olive.*

[Olive begins to dance to a song “*She's a very kinky girl...*”]

[One of the judges goes up the Olive's parents]

Judge: *What is your daughter doing? Get off! Get her off the stage! I want her off. Go get her. Right now, right this minute!*

Olive's dad, Richard Hoover: *Don't touch my daughter.*

Olive continues to dance as Emcee tries to grab her. Olive's dad goes up on the stage.

Richard Hoover: *Hey! Hey, let go of my daughter. Just let her finish.*

[Olive's dad grabs the Emcee.]

Emcee: *Get off of me.*

Richard: *Daddy's okay.*

Judge: *Get your daughter off this stage right now! Now! (now shouting)*

You are giving birth to Christ in you, you are giving birth to your true self.  
[Richard begins to dance with Olive on the stage. Friend and Dwayne both join them on the stage and dance. Then Olive's mom goes up on the stage to dance with all of them. The music is stopped and slowly one or two people begin to clap and then there is silence. One man stands up and cheers but everyone else is silent.]

The Dance starts here. [Peter points to the communion table)

### **Communion**

For on that most ugly of all nights, He—The Beautiful One, the one whom the world thinks is a super freak (but we know He is far more than that) took bread, and He broke it saying, “This is my body given to you. Take and eat and do this in remembrance of me.” And in the same way, after supper and having given thanks, He took the cup and He said, “This cup is the Covenant, in my blood; poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me.”

For thousands of years He had been telling them, “Listen! The life is in the blood. Drink it. God did not do this in order to find out who you are. God did this because He already knows who you are. Apart from Him you are but a beast, but filled with His life you are His eternal Beauty.

You are His Body and His Bride, and it’s time to start dancing. “*We love because he first loved us.*” And in this is love. We come to see love when we see that we are but dust—but beasts, and yet He pours into us His beauty. So, come to the table beautiful ones.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, I confess that I’m a beast. I consume life in order to live. Thank you that you give your life and in so doing I do live. Thank you for the life that flows from the tree where you are enthroned. May it flow through me and into my neighbor as mercy compassion and delight. And may it flow back from us to your throne as praise, where you send it once again to your Body and we all join in the Dance—your Dance of Love that is Life Eternal.

May we see that you are beautiful and that you make us beautiful. I think that when we see that we will live beautifully, and we will live free. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### **Benediction**

In Jesus’ name, believe the Gospel and be free. Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*