

**The Beautiful Thing
(and Painting by Numbers)**

Matthew 26:17-29

Peter Hiett

November 20, 2005

God speaks to each of us uniquely, and He often uses the language of our culture, the language we understand.

Sheep, goats, and grain for first century peasants.
Monte Python and the Holy Grail for guys like me.
(I'm sorry, but it's just the reality you have to live with if I'm your senior pastor.)

Well, last Sunday, thinking of the "beautiful thing," I thought of this film clip, and suddenly I felt like I understood the Old Testament and how God could get so mad in such strange places.

[A film clip is shown from Monty Python and the Holy Grail. The king (FATHER) wants the prince to marry Princess Lucky. The prince is opposed to the idea so the FATHER is attempting to have him locked in a room until FATHER returns.]

FATHER: You're marrying Princess Lucky, so you'd better get used to the idea! Guards!

(Two guards enter and stand at attention on either side of the door. One of them has hiccups and does so throughout.)

FATHER: Make sure the Prince doesn't leave this room until I come and get him.

FIRST GUARD: Not... to leave the room... even if you come and get him.

FATHER: No, no. Until I come and get him.

SECOND GUARD: Hic.

FIRST GUARD: Until you come and get him, we're not to enter the room.

FATHER: No, no, no... You stay in the room and make sure he doesn't leave.

FIRST GUARD: ...and you'll come and get him.

SECOND GUARD: Hic.

FATHER: That's right.

FIRST GUARD: We don't need to do anything, apart from just stop him entering the room.

FATHER: No, no. Leaving the room.

FIRST GUARD: Leaving the room ... yes.

FATHER: All right?

SECOND GUARD: Hic.

FATHER: (Starts to leave.)

FIRST GUARD: Oh, if... er... if... we... er...

FATHER: Yes?

FIRST GUARD: If we... er... (trying to remember what he was going to say)

FATHER: Look, it's simple. You just stay here and make sure he doesn't leave the room.

SECOND GUARD: Hic.

FATHER: Right?

FIRST GUARD: Oh, I remember... can he leave the room with us?

FATHER: (carefully) No.... You just keep him in here... and make sure he doesn't...

FIRST GUARD: Oh, yes! We'll keep him in here, obviously. But if he had to leave and we were with him...

FATHER: No... just keep him in here.

FIRST GUARD: Until you, or anyone else...

FATHER: No, not anyone else - just me.

FIRST GUARD: Just you...

SECOND GUARD: Hic.

FATHER: Get back.

FIRST GUARD: Get back.

FATHER: Right.

FIRST GUARD: Right. We'll stay here until you get back.

FATHER: And, uh, make sure he doesn't leave.

FIRST GUARD: What?

FATHER: Make sure he doesn't leave.

FIRST GUARD: The Prince... ?

FATHER: Yes... make sure he doesn't leave...

FIRST GUARD: Oh yes, of course! I thought you meant him! (He points to the other guard and laughs to himself.) You know it seemed a bit daft me havin' to guard him when he's a guard...

FATHER: Is that clear?

SECOND GUARD: Hic.

FIRST GUARD: Oh, quite clear. No problems.

FATHER: Right. (Pulls open the door and starts to leave the room. The guards follow.)

FATHER: (to the guards) Where are you going?

FIRST GUARD: We're coming with you.

FATHER: No, no, I want you to stay here and make sure he doesn't leave the room until I get back.

FIRST GUARD: Oh, I see, right. (They take up positions on either side of the door.)

The master gave the command, but the servants couldn't get the picture or perhaps wouldn't get the picture, and the more the master expounded on his command the more clouded the picture became. He finally says, "Look! Look!"

That clip reminds me of being a father, a boss, and a pastor. You know, little children are incredibly legalistic. When my kids were little, friends would come over for dinner and say something like, "We drove down to the dam," and all the kids would open their mouths in shock and point their fingers and say, "He said a bad word."

Once I tried to explain to my pre-schooler, Coleman, that he could say “but” if it was used as a conjunction, but not as a noun. I thought I explained the difference.

Driving in the van one day I heard some ruckus in the back seat. Then I heard Coleman loud and clear. He screamed, “Elizabeth, you butthead!” Then it got deathly quiet. A frantic little voice broke the silence. “Daddy, it was a conjunction!”

See, I tried to refine the law, but he still wouldn’t get the picture. The truth is I really don’t care if Coleman says “butt,” as a noun or a conjunction. I care that he loves his sister. But he didn’t want to get that picture. Sometimes we use the law to avoid the picture, the meaning.

Sometimes we resort to law to cover our tails, and hide the picture. If your boss asks you to try something, it’s smart to turn it into a law and avoid seeing the picture for then you can always resort to legal disputes and avoid the demands of creativity imposed by getting the picture. You can say, “I couldn’t have done that ‘cause you told me to do this.”

Resort to law.

Cover your tail.

Hide from the big picture.

I’ve found that’s human nature. We want the law not the picture. We want to know,

Can I fornicate? And what exactly is fornication?

Can I kill if it’s the first trimester or if it’s a just war?

Can I get by on 10 minutes of prayer? How about 8?

Can I give 5% of net income and still be okay?

We want numbers. We want law. We want the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And Jesus asks us, “Do you love me? Me? Do you want me?”

We want law to avoid the picture, cover our tails, justify ourselves. We want a covenant of law. Couples want a covenant of law when the covenant of marriage is failing.

Well, the old covenant is the covenant of law. The old covenant is most of what we call the Old Testament. A testament testifies to a covenant.

Well, the Old Testament has gobs of laws, lines and numbers. In fact, one of the books is called “Numbers.” Much of the Old Testament is like paint by numbers.

It starts, “In the beginning God created. . . the earth was formless and void,” like this canvas. [Peter holds up a large blank canvas. Peter also has a blank white board on an easel on stage.]

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light, and God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.”

[Peter puts a line down the middle of the white board and writes “light” on one side and “dark” on the other.]

Then God created for six days. I think it’s still the sixth day for God is still creating us. He created, and He said, “Let us make man in our image.” Creators in the image of the Creator.

Well, Adam and Eve wanted “the good,” so they stole the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the law). [Peter draws a fruit tree.] Mankind fell, and God makes covenants.

There are some weird covenants early in Genesis.



- Through Noah and his ark and some bleeding, slaughtered animals, God establishes a covenant regarding all mankind.
- Then a few chapters later, using some bleeding, slaughtered animals and a smoking fire pot, God makes a covenant with Abraham, but Abraham doesn't do anything.
- Then finally, in Exodus God makes a covenant we understand, the covenant of law with Moses.

In ancient times when people made covenants, they'd slaughter an animal and walk between the pieces saying, "May it be done to me as it was done to this animal if I break the terms of the covenant." The animal was testament to the covenant, their blood bearing testimony.

Well, in those ancient covenants of Noah and Abraham there's like no terms for God keeps both sides. But in Moses' covenant, the terms are law, and there is a ton of law.

It's like God says, "You want law; I'll give you law." [Peter draws the tablets of the ten commandments.] He gives them the ten commandments which He makes them carry in the Ark of the Covenant.

He gives them the law, the terms of the covenant. It's like He says, "Paint these things. This outlines the good." The Law describes the good. But it's not just the ten commandments. It's a detailed elaboration of the ten commandments... how to fulfill them and how to maintain the covenant.

The Law includes what we call the "moral law" and the ceremonial law, priests, tabernacles, sacrifices, ointments, fragrances. [Peter puts all of these on the white board.] So there are laws on the laws, and laws on what to do when law are violated, laws on sacrifices and atonement, and laws regarding those laws. Law on law on law.



So the covenant of law is like this elaborate paint by numbers picture. [Peter shows a large paint by numbers picture.]



I got it out of this paint by numbers set titled, “Real Art.” The Law is a paint by numbers painting of the good... a dividing wall, a house (a temple), trees.

Well, the law was incredibly intricate and incredibly hard, and it seems no one could actually do it. The Pharisees tried by adding even more numbers and even more lines, and it got ugly.

You know, paint by numbers paintings look pretty good from a distance, but if you get close, it becomes obvious it’s an imitation, not *the* good but a *copy* of the good.

Another problem with painting by numbers is that it’s not really painting. It’s not really art, so you’re not really an artist, a creator in the image of the Creator.

Henry Ward Beecher said, “Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures.”

When you paint by numbers, you don’t do that. When you live by the law you don’t do that.

Yet, where there is no law things can get pretty ugly. Maybe that’s because the painter’s nature is ugly. So he or she paints without meaning, just paint thrown on a canvas. It’s ugly and a little paint by number might help that person begin to see how ugly.

You know, when my children were little they all loved to paint, and it could get ugly. I suppose painting by numbers could help a child grow and learn in certain ways at certain times. So sometimes children paint by numbers to learn to paint.

Well, we kept lots of our children’s art, but as far as I know none is paint by number ‘cause that’s not really art and not really them.

And even if they paint a bit ugly and even “outside the lines” we’d rather have their own original painting ‘cause at least we have their soul, and they’ve offered their nature. And even though they may not have obeyed all the laws at least they’re beginning to see the picture. That is, they’re painting from their heart for me because they love me. Painting with what they have, all they have, painfully, joyfully, sacrificially, naturally, extravagantly. So even if it’s ugly, it’s beautiful.

I treasure some of my children’s art, like I treasure some of their good deeds, but none of the good deeds I treasure were ever paint by number.

When the strange woman in Matthew 26 dumped a fortune of perfumed oil on Jesus’ head that was not paint by numbers.

If you want to know a number to write on your giving card there are tons of laws regarding giving in the Old Testament and some can give perspective, but it’s all paint by number.

Well, paint by numbers and that scene from Monte Python help me understand the old covenant, the law, and how God could get so angry in such strange places.

In 2 Samuel 6 (and 1 Chronicles 13), at King David’s instruction the ark of the covenant is brought into to the city Jerusalem. At the threshing floor of Nacon the Ark of the Covenant slips, and Uzzah stretches out his hand to catch the Ark so it would not fall. 2 Samuel 6:7, “And God smote him.” Colored outside the lines just a little it seems, and God “smote him.”

The very next story is how King David dances nearly naked in front of the same Ark. That was scandalous and way outside the line for many. Then read David’s life story. He didn’t color outside the lines a little, but, like, a

lot... adultery, deception, murder. Yet he was “the man after God’s own heart.” He perceived God’s heart.

So both men colored outside the lines: Uzzah a little, David a lot, but David got the picture.

Uzzah tried to save the Ark of the Covenant... catch it, control it.

David surrendered before the Ark of the Covenant and lost control.

David was the man after God’s own heart.

And Uzzah got smoted.

So I don’t think it’s that God is all uptight about the details of law as much as He just wants us to get the picture. With these laws He’s painting a picture that He wants us to see.

Our text is Matthew 26. It’s the first place in the New Testament that we read the word covenant. We’re at the edge of a new covenant.

At the start of Matthew 26, the strange woman dumps a fortune of perfumed oil on Jesus’ head. It appears to be scandalous and way out of line. With Judas, the disciples grow indignant, and Jesus says, “Why do you trouble her? She’s done a beautiful thing to me (a “kalos ergon,” a good deed).”

“Kalos” means “beautiful,” like gracious.

Grace is the word Paul liked to use for Matthew’s word “mercy.” Mercy translates to the Hebrew word “Khesed,” which also translates into English as “love, loving kindness, faithful love, steadfast love, and love that never quits.”

I remember my professor in seminary saying over and over that “khesed” meant “covenant love.”

Jeremiah prophesied one day the Lord will make a new covenant, write His law on our hearts, and forgive our sins, put His law in His people like they put the law in the Ark. And in that day no one has to say, “Know the Lord” because they’ll all just do it. It will be like their nature.

Well, in Matthew 26 Jesus says He’s gonna be crucified. The strange woman does the beautiful, good, kind, merciful thing, and Judas goes to betray Jesus (the messenger, Ark of the Covenant).

Judas reminds me of Uzzah. He tries to control the Ark, maybe even save the Ark from falling.

The woman reminds me of David. She gets the picture and comes unglued with praise.

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?” He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time [Literally, my “kairos” is at hand. The time, the day is now.] is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’ ” [It’s interesting that this is the only place in the New Testament that Jesus tells His disciples to get a building. We got a building. It’s a big chunk of our budget. We got a building, and I think it’s for the same reason.] And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to

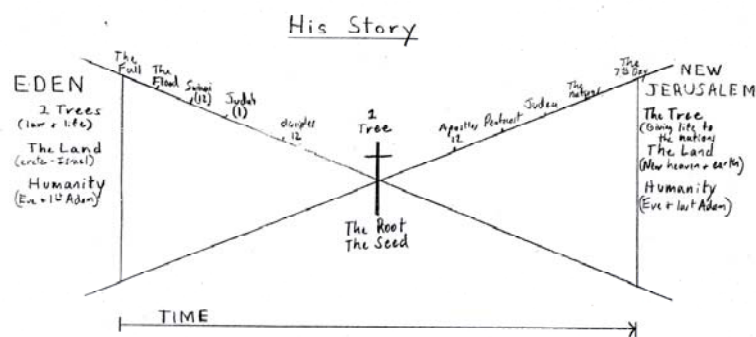
you, one of you will betray me.” And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?” He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better [Literally, “kalos,” beautiful] for that man if he had not been born.” Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” [Judas is the only one that calls Jesus Rabbi. The others call Him Lord. You can control, accept, or reject a Rabbi, but not the Lord.] He said to him, “You have said so.” Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant.”*

Now this is insanely hard to preach because everything’s here

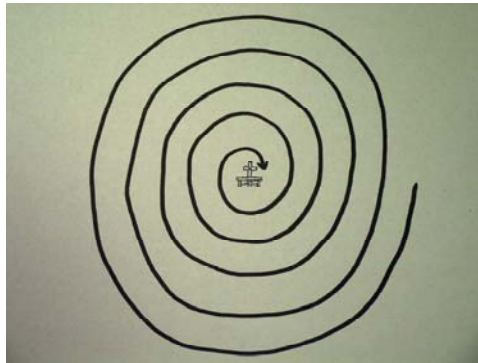
not just all of Matthew,
not just all of scripture,
but indeed all of creation.

* Note: Young’s Literal Translation

Remember the picture from last January from Oscar Cullman? It's a picture of history and how everything old is made new at the cross. Right now in Matthew we're at the table which is at the cross, so everything is here at the door of the new creation. [The diagram is shown on the screen.]



Well, if you were to turn this on its end and look inside, I think it would look like this:

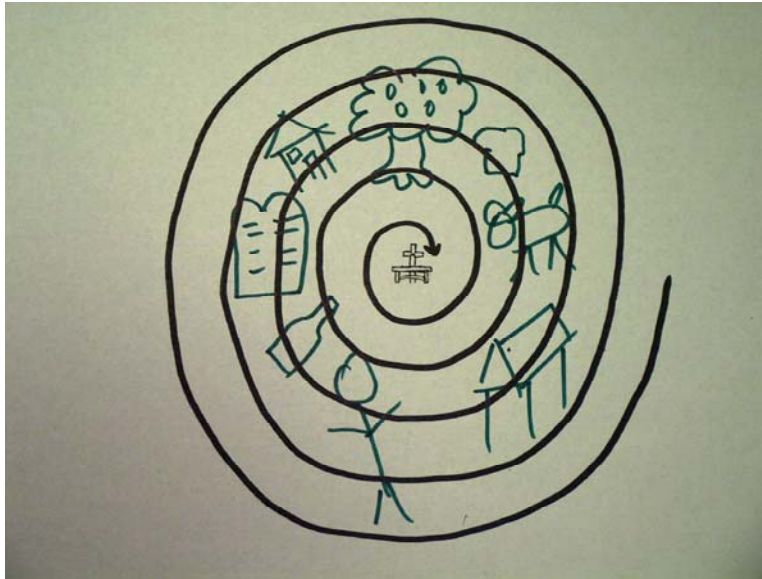


... a vortex where everything is being sucked into this door (the way). That is, everything is being sucked into this table which is the presence of the cross which is the body broken and blood shed

which is the heart of God revealed
 which is Jesus revealed,
 who is God revealed,
 who is love,
 that is, khesed,
 which is His judgment,
 that is grace.

In the vortex we see:

- The feast of unleavened bread that went 6 days commemorating the wilderness journey and the days of creation—our wilderness journey through this world.
- We see, the Passover
- The twelve
- The City
- The kairos, the day of the Lord
- Judgment
- Atonement
- The tree
- The temple
- The sacrifices
- The priest
- The blood, the life they were forbidden to drink
- We see all that they were to paint by number, the law, the old covenant.



And now Jesus says, “My blood of the covenant.” Some manuscripts say, “New covenant.” The best just say, “Covenant.”

You see, even the new is old. In fact, Hebrews says it’s eternal. I think it’s what Noah and Abraham saw. And even the covenant of the law is a foreshadowing of the covenant of grace.

And not just all of the Old Testament is sucked into this vortex, but all creation ready to become new.

Jesus says, “This is my blood of the covenant.” As if all the covenant blood is His, indeed all blood is His, all life is His. He is the life, and He did suffer to make all things new.

“And this is the plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him.” (Ephesians)

“And to reconcile to Himself all things making peace by the blood of His cross.” (Colossians)

“He is the slaughtered lamb that stands on His throne calling, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” (Revelation)

And so your house is in this vortex. Your dog is in this vortex. Quantum physics and Cheetos are in this vortex. Marriage, sex, alcohol, food, family, banquets, sorrow, and joy... they’re all in this vortex and all at this table.

This is where they all get their meaning, their logos. And this is the meaning they’re all made to reveal. Everything, everything, everything is about this, for “from Him, to Him, and through Him are all things.” (Romans) The Lord God revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified who “fills all in all.” (Ephesians)

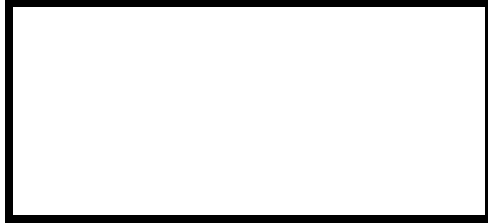
So if you thought it was just some bread and wine or one more man on a cross, you were wrong. It’s everything, everything that’s anything. It’s the good, the light, the life, the truth, the way, and it’s a person. Not a number but a person. He’s the beautiful one, and here His beauty is revealed: Covenant love, mercy.

Once you get the picture,
you’ll paint the picture.

Once you see him,
you’ll ingest Him,
and paint Him,
paint His beauty.

Not by numbers but by nature,
a creator in the image of the Creator.

And once you see Him, He gives you this... [Peter holds up a blank canvas.]



I believe it's called freedom.

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand fast and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”

Scary, but good.

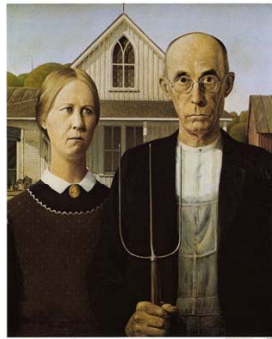
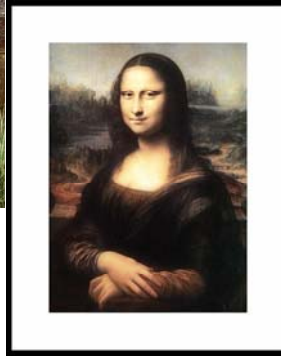
Freedom.

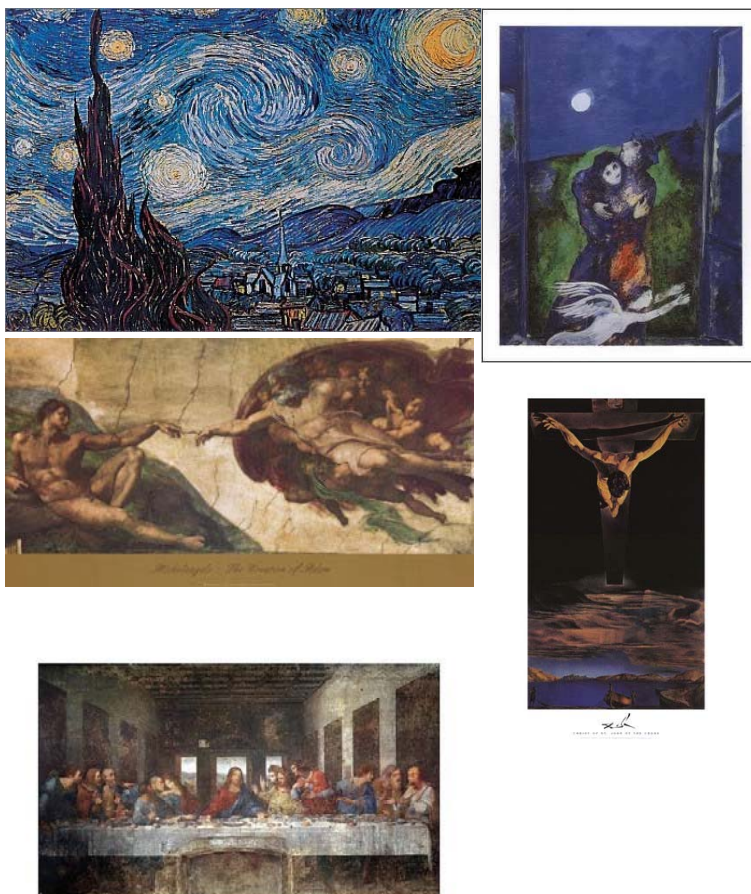
You know, there are an infinite number of ways to paint a blank canvas and paint so none of the paintings are ugly.

Here are some of the ways. [Peter shows several slides of famous paintings.]



You see none are ugly. They're all filled with meaning, and the meaning is beauty.





And yet none, absolutely none, are paint by number, and yet none are out of place or ugly like paint spewed on canvas.

None are constrained by numbers and lines, but all are constrained by beauty... beauty in the heart and mind of an artist.

Paul writes, "The love of Christ constrains us." The covenant of love within us constrains us—body broken, blood shed, the Beautiful One—and He said, "Feed on me."

If the Word of God is only a paint by numbers set,
all the paintings will be just the same,
and it will be really easy to judge who's crossed the line,
but none of the paintings will be beautiful.

On the other hand, if the Word of God is like food,
all the paintings will be different,
and it will be hard to judge who's crossed the line,
but all the paintings will be uniquely beautiful.

Robert Benson writes,

On the wall of one of the cathedral bays at Saint John's, . . . there is an inscription carved into the stone, . . . "Thy will be done in art as it is in heaven." Amen, I say. And in plumbing and paper pushing and publishing as well. And in teaching and board-membering and doctoring and bricklaying, for that matter. Or in whatever else it turns out is the work that you and I are given to do by the One who is looking forward to seeing our "stone" in the long-awaited Cathedral. The work that we do for the Cathedral is in front of us each day.

The cathedral is the temple, the heavenly city, and we are living stones.

Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good thing He planned for us long ago.” We are God’s masterpiece, and while we paint, He’s painting us.

So I help paint His art, and I’m surrounded by His art—some dirty, some defiled, some only just begun but all pictures of Him... Andrew, Susan, Aram, each beautiful, each unique, and none paint by number.

We don’t paint by number,
 we paint by mercy, with mercy.
 We don’t paint by law,
 but by body broken and blood shed,
 Christ’s body and blood
 that has become our body and blood.

And now you may ask, “Why all the lines and numbers in the first place? Why the law?”

Well, numbers and lines can’t make you beautiful, but they can help you long for beauty. They can help you long for mercy.

So, if you’re committing adultery or lying to your neighbor, some of those old lines tell you that your work is ugly. Yet you can’t make your work beautiful by painting by numbers.

Paint by numbers can help you see you’re not painting, but it can’t make you paint. You have to go back to the Beautiful One, see the beautiful thing, ingest the Beautiful One, and then paint your new nature.

“Well, why all that painting by numbers for 1,500 years?” you might ask. “Why the law, the priests, the

temple, the lambs, the goats, the ointment, the fragrance, the covenant?"

Well, you see, they're all at the table, and they all reveal the Beautiful One.

So for thousands of years

God had His people paint by numbers,
 paint the Beautiful One by numbers
 so when the Beautiful One appeared
 they might see Him,
 not just some bread and wine,
 not just another man on a cross,
 but the sacrifice,

the lamb,
 the judgment,
 the atonement,
 the eternal Ark and Covenant,
 who fulfills the old and ratifies the new,
 the love of God,
 the love that is God
 poured out,
 khesed,
 mercy.

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And when they had sung

a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The hymn traditionally sung at the end of the Passover meal was the Hallel, Psalm 118. It ends with, “Oh, give thanks to the Lord for He is good for His steadfast love endures forever.” For a thousand of years they’d sung that song. Now they get the picture.

Do you “get the picture?” It’s the love of God for you. He’s given everything for you. He’s suffered hell for you. He gives His heart on a cross at a table to you.

Get the picture? Get the picture, and He hands you one of these, an empty canvas. [Peter holds up the blank canvas.]

I believe it’s called freedom.

It’s good.

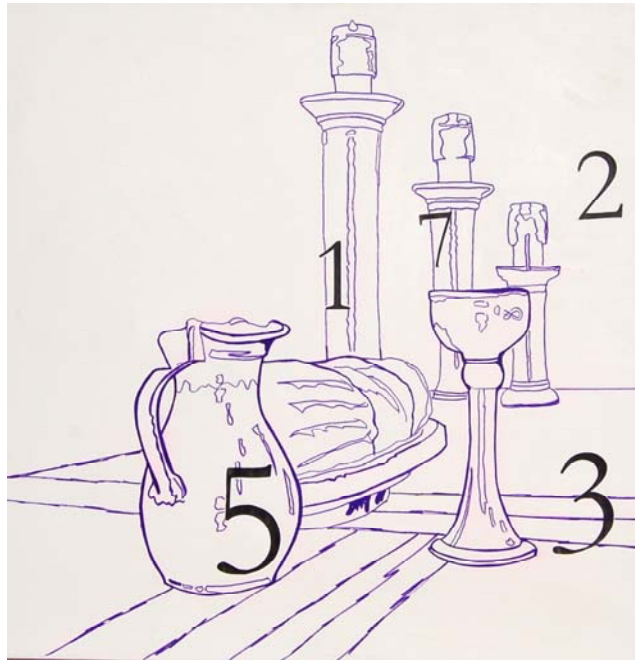
It’s an invitation to create in His image.

It’s good,

but it’s scary ‘cause you have to walk by faith.

Madeleine L'Engle wrote, “An artist at work is in a condition of complete and total faith.” Faith in mercy. Hope in mercy. Love for mercy. For without that we’ll hide from the picture, covering our tails, and justifying ourselves with law.

We’ll take our freedom and start drawing lines and numbers on it. We’ll do this. [Peter holds up a canvas with a large paint by numbers drawing of our communion table.] We’ll turn the table into a paint by numbers set.



They make paint by numbers pictures by taking real art and reducing it to lines and numbers. They kill it. Pharisees still take Jesus and reduce Him to lines and numbers.

Without faith in God's mercy, we'll come to the table and try to reduce it and comprehend it, rather than surrender to it, ingest it, and dance before it...

like Uzzah rather than David,
like Judas rather than the strange woman.

Without faith in God's mercy, we'll take grace and turn it into law and betray mercy, and Jesus is mercy. In fact, that's what we pay pastors to do. We say, "Tell me what it means for me. Make it simple. I mean draw some numbers and lines. How long do I have to pray? How much do I have to write on that giving card?"

Well, I don't know. You have a brain. You have a heart. You know we need a house to celebrate the Passover in a temperate zone like Colorado. So come to the table. Get the picture, and paint what comes natural. Might be a million dollars.

Might be ten dollars.

Might be a global mission organization.

Might be a hug for your mother,
but get the picture
and then paint what comes natural,
and whatever it is, it will be beautiful.

Now, you may be thinking, "I don't know. This doesn't sound safe."

Well, no. It isn't safe.

In fact, it cost God everything, everything to make you in His image, to let you paint with His flesh and blood.

It's not safe, but absolutely beautiful.

Don't miss the picture, hiding in the law, thinking it's safe. You know the Pharisees had Jesus crucified with strict attention to the minute details of the law. They were painting by law, but ended up way outside the lines. Paint by numbers became murder by numbers. [Peter sings, "Murder by number, 1, 2, 3. It's as easy to learn as you're A, B, C's..."]

Of course, they needed those lines and numbers to hide from The Picture. How else could you ever murder the Beautiful One?

So stop painting by number.
Paint with flesh and blood.

I told Marcia Hinds about my message this week.
She heads up our Fine Arts Ministry. She e-mailed me,

You know what I just remembered. My story... I was eight years old, living in Texas with my mom and brother in a 4' x 4' garage apartment with spiders and mice and no food to eat. I was sitting on the top of the steps that led to the apartment with my first set of oils-color-by-number. I loved the colors of the paints but didn't want to paint by number. So I just "painted." The Spirit of the Lord fell on me (I didn't know that but He did), I looked up into the Texas cloud-sky. It was at that time I heard the voice of God, "I am Jesus! I am God!" I knew at that time who loved me most and his name was God-Jesus! I went back to painting my 8 year old picture—of a small red sail boat skipping across the deepest blue ocean anyone has ever seen. I can still see that painting even today! Our God does come full circle. I was painting on his "Body and his Blood." Whoa!

So He took the bread and He broke it, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them saying, "Take and eat." He gives it to you saying, "Take and eat." And in the same manner after supper, having given thanks, He took the cup, and He said, "Drink of it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. I

will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

So we invite you to come to the table, tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup. The black cups are wine. The purple cups are juice. There will be six stations. First some friends and artists will come forward, and I'll give them communion. And then we invite you to come to one of those stations.

What does God want from you? He wants you to get the picture, to see His heart. This is love. This is mercy. This is His heart for you.

See His beauty.

Ingest His beauty,
and live beautifully.

In Jesus' name, amen.

[Several artists come on stage and paint while music plays softly in the background.]

"You Are Beautiful"

Words & Music by Danny Byram

To kneel beside your feet is something
I never thought I'd do
To kiss you and anoint you with my tears
But now I find I see the world
Through eyes I never knew
You're the one who sees beneath my fears.

CHORUS

You are beautiful, Lamb of God
Spotless without stain
Yet You touch my heart again

You are wonderful, Son of Man
 Let praise pour out like sweet perfume
 Let it fill this room
 You are beautiful.

To run my life, to walk my way
 is what I've known to do
 I've always been the one who's in control
 You pulled me up to stand but now
 The strong is somehow weak
 I surrender my life, my heart, my soul.

CHORUS

You are beautiful, Lamb of God
 Spotless without stain
 Yet You touch my heart again
 You are wonderful, Son of Man
 Let praise pour out like sweet perfume
 Let it fill this room
 You are beautiful.

This Is My Father's World
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This is my Father's world,
 And to my listening ears;
 All nature sings and round me rings
 The music of the spheres.
 This is my Father's world;
 I rest me in the thought

Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
His hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world;
The birds their carols raise.
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise;
This is my Father's world;
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.

This is my Father's world,
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world;
The battle is not done;
Jesus, who died, shall be satisfied,
And earth and heaven be one.

Lord Jesus, You are beautiful. In fact, I think it's your beauty that makes me want to hide from the picture because, Lord God, when I begin to see your beauty I think I might just start dancing, and the congregation would look down on me, or I might just dump oil on your head, and the disciples would chastise me, or I might just give away all I have, like a rich young ruler that has nothing except

dancing off into the sunset. I might just get crucified from people that seek to harm me. Lord God, Your beauty scares us, and yet it is so good. And so, Lord God, we keep coming to this place that You would open our eyes, and You would transform us. Until that day, we paint Your beauty, not just in this fallen world, but in a new heaven and a new earth where Cheetos will no longer give us heart disease. Lord God, thank you. We love you, and we praise you. Amen.

Now listen. At this time, don't go because we're bringing those giving cards up to the front, and the idea is that you're not just painting by numbers. Okay? There's a number on your card, but let it be art. In other words, you're joining in with these strange women up here, and Danny and Rob are strange women, too, because we're all the strange woman. We're the church, okay? So bring your cards up front and just place them here. Now listen, if you already handed your card in, or you're going to, and you thought to yourself, "Oh, I don't know what it is or whatever." Just fake it, okay? I mean, fake the card, but don't fake the worship. So you can just come forward if you're not part of the church or whatever, just touch the stage or whatever we call this and pray for the church. Okay? But let this be an act of worship as we give, as we paint the Beautiful One. In Jesus' name, we're painting this place together.

Come back in here. Close those doors.

Now listen. You need to remember this picture, okay? Because this is what we're doing together. You may

work in McDonald's, but they can take the cheeseburgers that you flip and turn them into money, and we build this thing together.

We ran an experiment here is what we did. We fed all these strange women, including Rob, the same food, but they painted different pictures. Look at this, here's one of them. Marcia's still working on it, and it's beautiful. Here's another one that Deanne is working on, that she painted. Beautiful. Here's one by Elizabeth and Josie. Rob has a collage over here of children that he works with, and he's photographed. But all these things are worship. All these things are our lives together, the thing that we are doing here together. And so, this is the Gospel. Believe the Gospel. Ingest the Gospel, and live the Gospel. Okay? Now you can go watch the football game. Amen.



Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my **covenant** with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

Genesis 6:17-18 (ESV)

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. . . . And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?". . . When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a **covenant** with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."

Genesis 14:18-20, 15:6-8, 15:17-18 (ESV)

They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. . . . And you shall put into the ark the **testimony** that I shall give you.

Exodus 25:10, 25:16 (ESV)

So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them.

Numbers 10:33 (ESV)

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps **covenant** and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.

Deuteronomy 7:9 (ESV)

And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God. . . . And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn. As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart. . . . And David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD—and I will make merry before the LORD. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor." And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death. Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you."

2 Samuel 6:6-7, 6:14-16, 6:21-7:3 (ESV)

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new **covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the **covenant** that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my **covenant** that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the **covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 (ESV)

But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. . . . Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where

will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.' " And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so." Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the **covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Matthew 26:10, 26:17-29 (ESV)

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

John 6:53-58 (ESV)

They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the **covenant** he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first **covenant** had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new **covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the **covenant** that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my **covenant**, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the **covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” In speaking of a new **covenant**, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. Now even the first **covenant** had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent¹ was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence.² It is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section³ called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the **covenant** covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the **covenant**. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Hebrews 8:5-9:5 (ESV)

Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his **covenant** was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings,⁴ peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

Revelation 11:19 (ESV)

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV)

Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two **covenants**. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia;⁵ she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is

written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." . . . For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 4:24-27, 5:1 (ESV)

Freedom is a terrible gift, and the theory behind all dictatorships is that "the people" do not want freedom. They want bread and circuses. They want workman's compensation and fringe benefits and TV. Give up your free will, give up your freedom to make choices, listen to the expert, and you will have three cars in your garage, steak on the table, and you will no longer have to suffer the agony of choice.

Madeleine L'Engle, Walking on Water

The artist who is a Christian, like any other Christian, is required to be in this world, but not of it. We are to be in this world as healers, as listeners, and as servants. In art we are once again able to do all the things we have forgotten; we are able to walk on water; we speak to the angels who call us; we move, unfettered, among the stars. We write, we make music, we draw pictures, because we are listening for meaning, feeling for healing. And during the writing of the story or the painting or the composing or singing or playing, we are returned to that open creativity which was ours when we were children. An artist at work is in a condition of complete and total faith.

Madeleine L'Engle, Walking on Water

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us/that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21 (ESV)

It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed.

C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have

concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

2 Corinthians 5:13-15 (ESV)

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

1 John 4:9-10, 4:16 (ESV)

God is a Master Artist. And there are aspects of your life and character—good, quality things—he wants others to notice. So without using blatant tricks or obvious gimmicks, God brings the cool, dark contrast of suffering into your life. That contrast, laid up against the golden character of Christ within you, will draw attention . . . to him. Light against darkness. Beauty against affliction. Joy against sorrow. A sweet, patient spirit against pain and disappointment—major contrasts that have a way of attracting notice. You are the canvas on which he paints glorious truths, sharing beauty, and inspiring others. So that people might see him.

Joni Eareckson Tada

Then I saw a second vision with a fierce wind blowing, like tornado or hurricane winds only with no discernable direction. Flying around in the air were all these body parts—arms and noses and feet and hands and every kind of body part. I looked for some place of grounding, something that wasn't blowing around. I couldn't find anything for the longest time and then suddenly there was the cross. The wind blew all the body parts forcefully into the cross, nailing them there by impact. And there they were in the form of Jesus. The blood began to pour from all the parts of His Body, pouring until there was a river of blood flowing. It was so deep, it seemed bottomless. He said "This is My mercy, poured out for all my creation. Let My mercy flow from you, Lookout Mountain Church. I have called you to declare the mercy of the Lord God Almighty, the One and Only True God. To give My mercy, you must know My mercy. 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.' You are My arm of mercy, Lookout Mountain Church. Receive My comfort for your pain. "Sing, O barren woman,

you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,” says the Lord. “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. . .” (Isaiah 54)

Kate Eden, 11-13-05

The Lord gave me a vast picture this evening, kindly bear with me as I attempt to translate. First appeared an enormous canvas. The opening scene of the canvas revealed the words, “In the beginning, God *created*.” The ending scene displayed the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, which in the future God is going to re-create for us. In the middle of the canvas, to my surprise, instead of the cross I saw the Lamb of God who sits upon the throne; His angels surrounded Him, His glory revealed. In between the Lamb of God and “In the beginning, God created...” were many, many stores and pictures. Following the scene of the Lamb were also many, many stories. These stories displayed pictures of the lives of His people. In one specific part of the canvas was His Church, not a building but people. I believe what God is saying to us is “*The calling upon Lookout Mountain is to express thee creativity in your heart.*” . . . I believe everyone in this room is called to creativity that we might reach this world through His creativity placed within our hearts. The warning the Lord gave me is that it will be lonely, it will be scary, it will be frightful, and it will be humbling. . . . A portion of the canvas God showed me is the people of Lookout Mountain in villages where they have no food, no lodging; in the inner-city where children have no mother, no father; with alcoholics who only know the answer in a bottle. We have His Light. Ask the Lord how you can creatively express His love. During the closing to this vision, the canvas began to beat in tempo with God’s heart. His ending words were, “Be creative in love. Love those who know me and love those who do not know me, for I see both the same and love both the same.” So Lookout Mountain you have a calling upon your heart to live out your Creativity—whether you are young, maybe a teenager who loves to dance; whether you are older, an artist who loves to paint the very heart of God; whether you are one who opens your heart to those hurting; or whether you are given His words to share with others.

Marcia Hinds, 10-3-01

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 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."

Revelation 21:1-5 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. . . . And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

John 1:1-5, 1:14, 1:16-18 (RSV)

In the beginning, God created . . . Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

Genesis 1:1a, 1:26a (ESV)

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Lookout Mountain Community Church

534 Commons Drive, Golden CO 80401

Phone: 303-526-9287 Fax: 303-526-9361

E-mail: info@lomcc.org