

## How to Win the Beauty Pageant

Ecclesiastes 4

#4 in our series from Ecclesiastes

October 9, 2016

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### Prayer

Lord God we ask that your goodness would flow from the throne and through us as your Word preached. We ask that you would help us to preach, in Jesus' name, Amen.

### Message

We've been preaching through Ecclesiastes, and last time in Ecclesiastes 3:11 we read this:

*God 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.*

—Ecclesiastes 3:11

We spun that out a bit and realized that all space and time is like a stage set for the revelation of beauty—eternal beauty.

[Image of Olive Hoover—Little Miss Sunshine at a beauty pageant]

This world is a beauty pageant. We each try to win the beauty pageant.

[Image of the entire Hoover family from the movie *Little Miss Sunshine*—All the family members look awkward and a bit unattractive]

But we're each afraid that time will end with the revelation that we're not beautiful, but beasts—the apes on a planet of apes. Like this:

Clip from *The Planet of the Apes*

A couple is riding on a horse along a beautiful beach. They get off the horse and begin to wade into the ocean. A man looks up and says, "Oh my God! I'm back. I'm home. All the time . . . (the man falls to the ground and the camera focus on the women with him sadly observing him.) You finally *really* did it. You maniacs, you blew it up! Oh damn you. God damn you all to Hell!"

[The camera pans out to reveal broken down remains of the Statue of Liberty. The man remains distraught hunched over in grief as the woman stands nearby.]

That's the end of the 1968 sci-fi film *The Planet of the Apes*. I hope you're not offended with what Charlton Heston said because it's a theologically accurate statement. Charlton Heston's character sees the apocalypse; apocalypse means unveiling. He sees that man is no better than the apes, so he asks God to damn them all to Hell, and yet he's already in hell, for he sees that he's nothing but a beast.

Well, in Ecclesiastes 3:11, Solomon writes, “*God has made all things beautiful in their time.*” Then, in Ecclesiastes 3:18, Solomon writes, “*I said in my heart with regard to the children of the Adam (ha adam), that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts.*”

God is testing us, not so that He can find out something about us. God is testing us so that we can find out something about ourselves—that we are “but beasts.”

So, you exist in time, which ends in an apocalypse, which is the unveiling of a truth by which you will see that you yourself are “but beast.”

When *Planet of the Apes* came out in 1968, it caused quite a stir among Christians, for it implied that men were no different than apes, and that reminded folks of Charles Darwin who taught that men evolved from apes. Well, Solomon doesn’t argue that men are apes; he claims they still *are* apes. They’re beasts and beasts don’t win beauty pageants.

[Image of a monkey dressed in a fancy dress and plugging its ears]

Beasts are unprincipled and self-centered. A beast sees something good and just takes the good and consumes the good.

A beast can be beautiful.

[Beautiful image of a lion]

But what a beast *does* is ugly.

[Image of female lions devouring a zebra]

Beasts consume life to save their own life. They consume body broken and blood shed. They consume life and excrete death until they die. Now, you may say, “That’s not me. I don’t consume life. I consume chicken that comes in a nice cellophane wrapper. I buy it at Safeway.”

Well, Solomon wrote:

*I said in my heart with regard to the children of man (the adam—ha adam) that God is testing them that they may see that 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, (literally “one breath” one ruach) and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from 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, [or as he said earlier find good in his toil] for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him? Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun . . .*

Beasts oppress each other; they exercise power over one another.

*And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.<sup>1</sup>*

The oppressed and the oppressors both need comfort.

*And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been . . .*

What a statement: “*He who has not yet been . . .*”

It’s as if a person is somehow eternal, yet comes to be in space and time.

*But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun. Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man’s envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind—ruach. Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man’s envy of his neighbor.*

It’s all a desire to take our neighbor’s good and consume it, like a beast. “*We all are beasts and all our toil is envy.*” Do you think he really meant it?<sup>2</sup>

Ironically, that sounds a lot like Charles Darwin . . . or at least disciples of Darwin: “We are beasts and all our toil is envy. In fact, envy creates us—beasts according to some Darwinists.”

They refer to that idea as “the survival of the fittest.” It’s the idea that life is the result of competition. Competition occurs when two organisms desire the same good and so compete (that is fight) for that good—like beasts.

According to John, in the New Testament, the whole world is under the power of a beast—a dragon. C.S. Lewis once wrote, “You will seldom find more than one dragon in the same country.” You see, that’s because a dragon eats all his competitors or his neighbors. A dragon is a beast. “There is nothing a dragon likes so well as fresh dragon,” wrote C.S. Lewis.

Well, Darwin and Solomon argue that we are beasts, and all of our toil is envy. Some even say, “life is the product of envy—the survival of the fittest.” Nietzsche wrote, “What is good? Power...What is bad? Weakness.” Hitler had his soldiers carry Nietzsche in their knapsacks, for he believed the Arian race was the next evolutionary step. But it’s not just Hitler: Isn’t all politics the politics of envy? Both Democrat and Republican, both Communist and Capitalist all point to the good and assume you envy the good. All politics is the management of envy with envy. Doesn’t our economy run on envy?

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<sup>1</sup> I am deeply opposed to abortion, for as Solomon will say, we do not know how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child. But I’m not as concerned for the babies as I am for the mothers, for Jesus has the babies, but the mothers may not be aware that He has their babies or them. They need someone to comfort them.

<sup>2</sup> Almost everyone seems to say Solomon is wrong or doesn’t really mean it. And clearly the Bible quotes people who are wrong like the Pharisees that said Jesus had a demon. But this is Solomon, and Scripture refers to him as the wisest man alive.

Doesn't every commercial appeal to your envy? Don't we teach that competition is good, and that teaching is competition?

Our entire educational system runs on envy. Why should I learn math? Why should I learn history? Why should I learn to paint, or sing, or dance? Why? Not because I want to dance with my neighbor but because I want an A in order to beat my neighbor.

In The Revelation, John sees the dragon who makes war on the woman who appears to be us. The dragon stands on the edge of the sea, and a beast rises out at the sea. The beast is political power (like Rome, Greece, Persia, and Babylon). And then John sees a beast rising out of the land. This beast is religious power (the false prophet). It looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon.

That sounds like most religion.  
We advertise the Lamb, but we speak like the dragon.  
We advertise Love, and we teach envy.

Think about it: the natural way to preach against envy is to point out the ugliness of envy and the beauty of Love—the opposite of envy—and then say, “Wouldn't you like to love and not envy? Just look at the beauty of those who don't envy. Heaven is a place with no envy. Don't you envy those that don't envy? You better try harder to not envy by envying those that don't envy. In other words: ‘See the good? You better envy the good. You better take the good and save yourself. You better save yourself.’ And yet, ironically, that's exactly how you damn yourself: *“He who seeks to save his life will lose it,”* said Jesus. And *“He who loses his life, for my sake will find it.”*<sup>3</sup>

[Image of a bumper sticker with a Jesus fish consuming an evolving Darwin fish]

This is actually a bumper sticker that people put on their car. It's a Jesus fish eating a Darwin fish. Do you see how twisted that is? Shouldn't the Darwin fish be eating the Jesus fish because the Jesus fish says to the Darwin fish, “This is my body broken for you, and this is my blood poured out for you? Eat me and drink me, for unless you eat my body and drink my blood you have no life in you.”

I was a Geology major at the University of Colorado, and in all seriousness, I think the most ardent Darwinists that I ever met called themselves “Christians.” They believed they are most fit to be saved because they took knowledge of the good and made themselves good, and so they will eternally win and find joy in the fact that others will eternally lose and endlessly suffer.

It's hard for me to imagine anything more beastly than that. And you know, I think I'm better than them because I see that . . . so I “win” and they “lose,” which makes me even more beastly than them! Agghh! I always want to be the best. Think about it. Anytime you want to be the best at something, aren't you envying the Good in someone?

If I want to be the best at swimming . . .

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<sup>3</sup> So, most religion is giving people knowledge of good so that they can save their lives. It looks like Love, but it sounds like a snake. Most religion teaches people to compete for righteousness and in the process “makes people twice the children of *Gehenna*,” to use the words of Jesus talking to the Pharisees.

Aren't I envying the good in Michael Phelps?  
If I want to be the best at running . . .  
Aren't I envying the good in Usain Bolt?  
If I want to be the best at preaching . . .  
Aren't I envying the good in Karl, Frances, Kathleen, Paul Young or  
Billy Graham?

And what is the good in Billy Graham? Well, isn't it the Spirit of God that produces the fruit of the Spirit in Billy Graham? So, when I envy the good in my neighbor, it's like envying the fruit on a tree that is my neighbor. I take the fruit and everything dies. I take the fruit and crucify the good. I catch the wind in a jar and then it's no longer the wind.<sup>4</sup>

Biblically speaking, I think the only time it's right to desire to be the best at something is when you're desiring to be the best at being yourself, which would mean that you are no longer trying to be beautiful, you just *are* beautiful—like a little child.



They see themselves reflected in my eyes.  
I think it's *envy* that makes us not want to be like little children that enter the Kingdom.

[Peter pulls out a ladder and while he's talking moves up the ladder as he speaks about various stages that we go through during our lives.]

Do you see? Envy is the energy that makes us climb that ladder that we preached about in chapter two. It's the energy of the aesthetic stage and the ethical stage. It's politics and religion. It's the "survival of the fittest."

You may say, "Well Peter, it's only natural. It's the way of the world." Exactly! That is the point exactly!

We all climb the ladder, for we want to reach the top of the food chain. We want to be the good we see at the top of the ladder. We want to be the king of the beasts—like a lion.

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<sup>4</sup> The snake said to the woman, "*Take the fruit,*" and the woman saw that the tree was "*good for food, a delight to the eyes and to be desired to make one wise.*" She took (separated the fruit from the tree). She took and she ate, and everything died. She envied the good, wanted to be the best, and everything died. I catch the wind in a jar and it's no longer wind.

[Beautiful image of a lion repeated]

We all want to be the lion.

Well, anyway, maybe Solomon was right, and all of our striving and toil is envy even though we call it love. Maybe we really are “*but beasts*,” even though we pretend to be “human.” Maybe our situation is a bit like this:

Clip from *Beauty and the Beast*

*Narrator: Once upon a time, in a faraway land, a young prince lived in a shining castle. Although he had everything his heart desired, the prince was spoiled, selfish, and unkind. But then, one winter's night, an old beggar woman came to the castle and offered him a single rose in return for shelter from the bitter cold. Repulsed by her haggard appearance, the prince sneered at the gift and turned the old woman away. But she warned him not to be deceived by appearances, for beauty is found within. And when he dismissed her again, the old woman's ugliness melted away to reveal a beautiful enchantress. The prince tried to apologize, but it was too late, for she had seen that there was no love in his heart. And as punishment, she transformed him into a hideous beast and placed a powerful spell on the castle and all who lived there. Ashamed of his monstrous form, the beast concealed himself inside his castle, with a magic mirror as his only window to the outside world. The rose she had offered was truly an enchanted rose, which would bloom until his 21st year. If he could learn to love another, and earn her love in return by the time the last petal fell, then the spell would be broken. If not, he would be doomed to remain a beast for all time. As the years passed, he fell into despair and lost all hope. For who could ever learn to love a beast?*

*Beauty and the Beast* is an old French fairy tale, and it's not perfect, but it should sound familiar. The prince's name is Adam, and please note the curse didn't turn him into a beast. The curse just made it obvious to Adam that he already was a beast. So, Adam is a beast hiding alone in his castle with a mirror and a rose—kind of like “eternity in his heart.” So, now he has some “knowledge of beauty,” but he can't make himself beautiful, and who would love a beast?

Maybe we really are beasts. And now you might say, “Hey! Didn't God breathe His breath into man? And aren't we made in the image of God?” Well, it turns out that only one man—one Adam is said to be in the image of God: “*He is the image (singular) of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*” (Col. 1:15) He is the head of the body, the firstborn from the dead.”

Paul calls Him the last or ultimate Adam. In Romans 5:14, he tells us that the first Adam was like a “type” or “imprint” of the last Adam—like an empty space in which the true Adam would be revealed—unveiled—*apocalypso*.<sup>5</sup>

We're like the shadow of the image—like a vanity of vanities. We think we're men, but we don't even know what a man is until we meet *ha adam*—the Adam—the first-born of all creation who is the Head of the Body. He is the Head, and we are the Body.

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<sup>5</sup> In Psalm 36:6 David writes that every man goes about as a shadow (*tselem*) image worrying about *hebel* that vanity.

In Genesis 9:4 God says a crazy thing to Noah, “*You shall not eat flesh with its life* (that is its blood). *And for your lifeblood, I will require a reckoning from every beast and from the Adam* (singular). From his fellow—*ish* (That’s the common word of man in Hebrew). I will require a reckoning for the life of the Adam—the man—*ha adam*.”

Whoever sheds the blood of the man by the man shall his blood be shed, for God made the man—*ha adam* in his own image.

Scripture says, “*The breath—ruach— is life*”, and “*the life is in the blood.*” And we know that blood circulates through a body, bringing life. And Scripture tells us that we are a body. A body being united under one head, who is Christ. We are the Body of the Adam—*ha adam*—Jesus Christ.

On the sixth day of creation, God breathes His *neshawma*—breath of life—into dust, and the man becomes a living *nephesh*—a soul. But all the beast are also *nephesh* and have *neshawmah*. So, it’s just like Solomon says: men and beasts have the same breath. They all take the breath and die.

Well, I once did a detailed search and discovered that although every man and woman, beast receives the breath of life, no *adam* is said to surrender that breath until all four gospels record that Jesus—the ultimate *adam* surrenders His Spirit on a tree in a garden.

At that tree, the Adam surrenders the breath and the blood. He loses His life and finds it. And “*In this is love,*” says Scripture. Love is surrendering your life, and the life is in the blood.

God said to Noah, “*For your lifeblood I require a reckoning.*” And Noah offered the blood of beasts. In most places, for most of history, to eat meat was to sacrifice. Sacrifice was a way to thank God for the life you took and ate. Americans usually just take life, like chicken meat in nice cellophane wrappers, and we seldom give thanks and think we’re somehow sophisticated. Beasts never give thanks.

Israel sacrificed in the tabernacle and then the temple originally built by Solomon until Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and I’ll build it with my own body.” That temple is living and eternal. It’s all of you.

Because of bad theology most people think sacrifice is all about appeasing a very temperamental and blood-thirsty God, and maybe God is blood thirsty, *but* He’s blood thirsty like your heart is blood thirsty. It pumps blood to every member of your body and receives blood from every member of your body: “*The life is in the blood.*”

This much is true for every member of your body:

Each must lose its blood to receive more blood, full of *ruach*.

Each must lose its life to find it.

Each must expire the life to inspire the life . . .

And in this is life—the circulation of the blood.

If one of the members of your body, my body, or Christ’s body envies the life, and so takes the life and hangs on to the life, it dams the life, damns itself, and everything dies.

It may look alive for a day or so, but then it gets very ugly. Death is ugly, but life (the death of death) is beautiful.

In Ecclesiastes 4:4-5 Solomon writes:

*Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind*

*"A striving after ruach,"* after Spirit, after the breath of God, after Life, and *"in him was life,"* wrote John.

*"All toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy..."* If all we do is envy and the evil business, as Solomon puts it, maybe we should do nothing...

*The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.*

If we do nothing... we'll starve—we'll consume our own flesh till we die. And if we do something, it's envy—and even envy is eating my own flesh.

According to Scripture, my neighbor is my own flesh, so when I compete with my neighbor I'm competing with my own flesh...

[Peter's hand begins slapping his hand, then his arm and it hits face. Then he bights his arm and begins flailing his arms in panic and pain screaming, "Ahhh!! Stop it!"]

See? I hate when that happens... but that actually never happens...because my body parts don't compete with one another. They don't envy the good in one another. They constantly sacrifice the good, one to another. They constantly bleed, one into the other. They don't pump the blood; they surrender to the flow of blood pumped by the heart.

If all you do is envy, then if you do anything but envy it's not you that's doing it—but the heart. It's the heart in the center of the body—like the temple in the heart of Jerusalem, like Jesus from the bosom of the Father.

Solomon continues in Ecclesiastes 4:6-12:

*Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind,— the Spirit, the Breath, the Life, the Good. Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business. (Literally: the evil business)*

He's alone, like a dragon... that consumes the good and shares no good therefore finds no good in His toil.

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is*



*alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

So, “*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow (his neighbor).*”

What is the good that they find in their toil? Is it simply a lift or a bit of warmth?

Maybe the good that they find in their toil is love.

But you see love is not a possession.

Love is not the result of your toil, but something you find in your toil.

Love is not something you can own. And if you think you do it dies to you.

Love is not something you can possess. Love must possess you.

Love is not something you can do. It must do you.

It must flow through you and into another.

Love is not something smaller than you like the things you envy.

Love is infinitely larger than you, and love is jealous for you.

Love must own you and flow through you like a river.

All human toil is powered by envy, but love is not human toil. God is Love:

*“And he who loves is born of God and knows God.”* (1 John 4:7b)

Then Solomon writes, *“A threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*

For eighteen hundred years the Church has said that God is three persons and one substance. That substance is Love, and Love is Life.

We are being made in God’s Image... but we’re not finished in His image until we learn to love and Love is Life. We come to the tree of Life at the end of the sixth day in a garden.

I’ve said this many times, and I need to say it many more: The survival of the fittest” doesn’t explain life.

It explains the limits of life. It explains death. Any biologist knows that.

Life is not the “survival of the fittest”

Life is “The sacrifice of the fittest so all will survive.” Life is Love.

Life is:

One molecule sacrifices for another molecule.

One cell sacrifices for another cell.

One body part sacrifices for another body part—it sacrifices blood and the life is in the blood.

It’s when the sacrifice stops that the organism dies.

If you consider your life to be your own life, you’ll envy every other life.

You’ll live like a beast and die like a beast... and that’s ugly. But what if your life isn’t really your life and life is much bigger than you? What if Life owns you? What if life is an infinite river of sacrificial love.

Well, when one falls and another lifts up we see the good in our toil.  
Maybe that's the reason that we all have fallen... in order to the One that lifts up—the Good in our toil. Jesus said, “*God alone is Good.*”

And now Solomon sees something. In Ecclesiastes 4:13-16 He writes:

*Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice.<sup>6</sup> For he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor. I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place. There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.*

- Some think Solomon is thinking of Joseph. He went from prison to the throne but wasn't born poor . . . and he didn't lead everyone under the sun.
- Some think Solomon is thinking of his father David he was born poor and went to the throne, but wasn't in prison . . . and he didn't lead everyone under the sun.
- I think Solomon is picturing the true Prince of Peace—Jesus.
  - Both David and Joseph are a picture of Jesus.
  - He is Lord of all who are under the sun, and He leads all under the sun.
  - But not all rejoice in Him, even those who name Him
  - Millions name Him, but actually hate Him, for He is Love poured out. He is Grace.
  - Jesus is Wisdom born poor and in prisoned in flesh for each of us, in order to be enthroned on a cross, and stand in the King's place. He is the Lamb of God, standing as if He'd been slain, on the throne of God. He only does what he sees His Father doing. That's what He said. He always takes His Father's advise.

In Revelation 5, John hears a voice cry, “*Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered.*” The Lion is the King of beasts. He is the top of the food chain. He is the Good that we all desire to conquer. “*Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, has conquered.*” John looks and sees a lamb, standing as if He'd been slain.

Do you understand?

The Lion is the Lamb and the Lamb is the Lion.

The first is last and the last is first.

And that pretty much obliterates all competition and envy.

The Lion and Lamb is the Word of God, which is the Wisdom of God.

From the throne flows a river of life and the life is in the blood.

In Him is Life and the Life is the light of Men.

He is the radiance of the Glory of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Maybe that was Solomon at some point. Solomon had consumed the Good and taken knowledge of the Good. When he was old, he may have thought he needed no more advice about the Good. I imagine he felt alone... and maybe even like a fool.

He is the revelation of Love.

He is Beauty, and we are but beasts . . . and all our toil is the envy of Him.

The World is a beauty pageant, but you can't make yourself beautiful through envy, for envy is the opposite of beauty.

So how can you win the beauty pageant?

#1 Stop trying... It only makes you more ugly. It's called sin.

#2 Admit that you're a beast. That's called confession.

#3 Worship Beauty—admitting that all three steps are the work of Beauty.

That's called faith in Grace.

In the Revelation, John sees The Beautiful One standing on the throne and every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth worships him. Then John watches as the dragon and the beast from the land and the beast from the sea are conquered. Then John sees the Bride descending from Heaven and she has the glory of God. She is eternal. She is who you truly are. She is the Temple and Body of Beauty.

This is Beauty and He makes you beautiful in time.

[Image from *The Passion* of Jesus beaten and bruised and suffering on the cross]

Beauty exposes the beast, kills the beast, and transforms the beast into Beauty.

Beauty exposes the beast: The Cross of Christ is the apocalypse at the end of the age that exposes the fact that we are but beasts on the "planet of the apes."

When we envy the Good, we envy God, and crucify God in flesh like beasts.

Beasts kill Beauty and Beauty kills the beast: The Cross reveals that all the Good we take, He freely gives, so there is no point to our envy. "*All things are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's,*" writes Paul. "*These slight momentary afflictions prepare us for an immeasurable weight of glory beyond compare.*" There is no point in comparison or envy for beauty belongs to the whole Body and flows through each member as an infinite river of life. So, it was beauty that killed the beast. I think you already know that because you probably saw the movie.

Clip from *Kong*

Male Voice: *What does it matter? The airplanes got him.*

Carl Denham: *It wasn't the airplanes. It was Beauty killed the beast.*

It's not tanks, guns, and ammunition that killed the beast; it was beauty.

Beauty not only kills the beast, Beauty resurrects the beast and transforms him into beauty.

Belle is simply the French word for beauty. In the film *Beauty and the Beast*, Adam the Beast wants beauty and so captures Beauty.

But in the end, Beauty captures him.

Beauty exposes him, kills him, resurrects him and transforms him into Beauty.

Belle (or Beauty) sacrifices her life for another, and Adam sees it.

He sacrifices a little for her. And she sacrifices her life for him.

Then he loses his life for her and finds it.

Clip from *Beauty and the Beast*

[Belle weeps because she thinks her one true love has been lost. Suddenly, the beast turns into a handsome prince before her eyes.]

Peter sings, "Tale as old as time, song as old as rhyme, Beauty and the Beast."

So, the curse is broken and everything is made new.

Adam and Beauty marry, become one body and blood and live happily ever after...

That's the Gospel!

Of course in Scripture, all humanity is the bride who acts like a beast.

And Jesus is the Groom, who makes us beautiful with His Love.

He makes us His own Body. The Body of Beauty.

Well you can't win the beauty pageant with envy, because beauty is the opposite of envy. You can only win the beauty pageant, because Beauty has won you. And when you see it you will live Beauty-fully!

### **Communion**

On the night that He was betrayed—which appears to be the Passover, when Israel would sacrifice the Lamb, the Lion of Judah took bread and He broke it saying this is my body broken for you. And in the same manner He took the cup and said, "This cup is the covenant" (and remember it's a marriage covenant) "in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins." Remember: the life is in the blood. So, you see? I think this is the throne and this is the Lion who is the Lamb. We are the beasts and Beauty says to us, "Eat me. Drink me. *Become* me. I love you."

So, see Him and you will worship Him, and you will live beautifully.

## **Benediction**

What advantage does man have over the beasts? It's a really good question. Solomon says none. So maybe like we don't deserve anything or have preeminence over the beasts. But Psalm 49 says this, "*Man in his pomp, yet without understanding, is like the beasts that perish.*" So we have an understanding that the beast doesn't have.

I think maybe we have an understanding that God makes all things beautiful in time. And we begin to understand how He does it with His very own body and blood. In other words, I think you could say that we are beginning to know good and evil with the fruit that we took from the tree, and we are beginning to have life. Because we understand we begin to worship, even in this time.

I think every message I preach is basically this: Love is not the survival of the fittest; it is the sacrifice of the fittest for all that they might love. And why then do we love? Because we understand that and we worship. You could come to church and I could give you a bunch of laws (like this is how beastly you are), and I kind of try to do that at the start of every sermon. But we always end up back at this table and the point is worship. Why? Because you can't make yourself a "not-beast" by trying.

You can only make yourself none beastly by worshipping and receiving the life that flows from the throne and is manifest in your body as you leave this place and go into the world. That's what a worship service is. A worship service is a place where you remember that truth. That's why it's important to find a place where you can do that. And hopefully this is a place where you can do that. So, now all I'm saying is believe the Gospel and worship. In Jesus' name, 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.*