

3/24/24 SALT CO.
On the Path of Oncoming Beauty
Things Set Right

“looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy set before him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”
 Hebrews 12:2

WELCOME TO THE SALT CO!

When we say “Seasoned Adults” we mean this in two ways:

SEASONED AS IN...

Chronologically-- we’ve lived a lot of seasons of life.

BUT more importantly-

Spiritually--- ...like when sodium and chlorine combined make SALT... by the grace of God, when we receive Christ into our lives we become like THIS [gesture: one hand—two hands—joined together]

We become a new creation...transformed and *transforming* for the rest of our lives.

JESUS CALLS US THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

So we call this the SALT CO—situated alongside Route 60+ where we pull over-to share some stories of our journeys—to refresh, retool and REFUEL...

This Lenten Season we are exploring the theme:

Putting Ourselves in the Path of Oncoming Beauty

A group from our church traveled to Kenya with a member of our staff who was raised as a Masai. He brought our group to a village called Makobe where they heard devastating stories of children who had lost their parents to HIV. There were 22 little girls whose prospects were now dire. Our group was convicted. They prayed, wrestled, and decided they had to begin a mission to help these girls. That ministry went on over the next twenty years.

One of the little girls was Eunice, who in addition to losing her parents, was born with club feet. Our church brought her here so she could receive treatment at Shriners Hospital in L.A. This required her staying with us over a period of several months to have a number of painful operations and physical therapy. Then she returned to Makobe.

Some years later Suzanne and I joined one of our mission teams to visit Makobe. I can still see in my mind's eye (interesting turn of phrase), our group standing at the gate of the school where Eunice was a student. We rang the bell and waited and watched through the bars across a field. There, a long way off we could see a girl, running... smiling, laughing, jumping, and skipping. She arrived at the gate; her eyes wide with glad to be together joy. Our eyes filled with tears.

It was Eunice.

There is no other word for this than, "beautiful".

I can still see Don's face, one of the leaders in that mission who is here with his wife Margo. A few months ago, Don and I were at breakfast. I can still see his face, his eyes, as he described wrapping up a 20 year plus mission full of stories like Eunice's. Twenty-two girls all now

women, gainfully employed, some with their own families now, spread out all over East Africa, sharing in a story of grace of Jesus. Joy. Joy. JOY.

This is “beautiful”.

Let’s name it: **Relational Beauty**...something what we all know well when we observe it and even more so when we experience it.

We all have stories like this. And we are all PART of the Ultimate story of the return to “glad to be together joy”

Thanks be to God from Whom all blessings flow!

Two SALT CO’s ago I pointed out that the two words in our Bibles that are translated at times either as “beauty” or “beautiful”- TOB in Hebrew, KALOS in Greek, more often than not get translated as “good”.

What is good persuades us. What is beautiful woos us.

Today we’re exploring how when we witness something being set right- like Eunice’s twisted feet made straight-and the team of people God worked through to make it possible... we find we are on the path of oncoming beauty.

There are very many of these kinds of stories in our bibles.

Matthew describes how Jesus began his ministry this way:

“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and sickness among the people. So, his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics

and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan.”

Matthew 4: 23-25

Here's one depicted in The Chosen (Season 2, Episode 4 44:40-51:11). See all the things that get set right.

VIDEO

<https://www.angel.com/watch/the-chosen/episode/82250814-1158-45b4-aae3-119aa16dcc3e/season-2/episode-4/the-perfect-opportunity>

[44:40-51:05]

Here's the thing: If what is good is beautiful, you and I are invited into this “artistry”. --Again, our bibles serve up many examples.

A woman came to see Jesus at Bethany. She opened a jar of costly perfume and poured on his feet. Some complained that this was such a waste, that the money from this could have been given to the poor.

“But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service [KALON ERGON] for me... Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

Mark 14:6-9

This woman is an “artist” doing something beautiful, memorable, firing the imagination of all who contemplate her act of devotion. This is certainly a “good” work, but it is also “beautiful”. Her anointing Jesus is a work of love, *fitting*, appropriate, evocative, attractive. We are still talking about her two thousand years hence.

Jesus told us”, “***Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works*** [KALA ERGA] ***and give glory to your Father in heaven.***” (Matthew 5:16)

From time to time, I get to offer Fresh Market devotionals. While I’m sharing some thoughts I see all those faces, people of all ages who work together to offer not only food and clothing, but warm smiles, prayer and conversation over a hot cup of coffee.

Think of where you have encountered this kind of beauty. When you have participated in something being set right that seemed to you. You’ll be talking about this at your tables.

TABLE TALK

1. Share your name and how long you have been coming to Calvary Church?
2. Talk together about what you observed in this scene from *The Chosen*. What was set right?
3. Share some stories you have of people coming together as God’s conduits to set things right that you consider to be “beautiful”.
4. What impact do these stories have on the teller and the listener?

Today is Palm Sunday. In the Church this is sometimes called Palm/Passion Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week- when we are invited onto the path of setting things right, that leads us to the cross, and beyond!

To oncoming beauty.

So here is our theme verse as we join our Lord on this path:

“...let us run the race with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy set before him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12:2

What is this joy that Jesus saw before him? It is beautiful!
Consider the word of God:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us... that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace.”

Ephesians 2:13-15

“For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”

Colossians 1:19-20

“So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”

John 16:22

The joy set before him...is busting down the barriers that prevent us from being able to “be GLAD TO BE TOGETHER WITH GOD” again!

The CROSS is the point of entry that has not been open and available/accessible for us to be able to COME INTO THE LORD’S PRESENCE...

THAT'S THE RELATIONAL BEAUTY OF THE CROSS

No more sacrificial system and barriers and silence...

"The immediate accessibility of the King and His Kingdom"

GLAD to be together JOY! The ULTIMATE Glad to be together Joy restored that makes ALL other glad-to -be -together joy POSSIBLE.

That same power at work in us so that "in that space" the Holy Spirit can help us be the kind of people who can seek the good of each other and others..."

This is what our Lord could see as he entered into the last hours of Good Friday. He could see that the abuses of the Temple system would be replaced by HIM (Israel/New Adam/TEMPLE raised up in 3 days) so that we can go TO HIM on the THRONE...

Artists have struggled to evoke the scene at the first station in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus wrestles with Satan, the darkness of evil, death and fear. We can only begin to comprehend his agony (while the disciples slept!).

In Mark 14:32-42 we hear, ***"And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet not what I want, what you want.'"***

Luke's Gospel says, ***"when he 'arose'"*** (=ANASTAS, the word used for resurrection- 24:45) from this battle, resolved in heart, mind, soul and body, with joy (!) set before Him. Picture His eyes fixed on what He came to accomplish, the joy set before Him, He is God on the planet, to do what only the Loving Creator Father God could do- what no one else

could see, let alone imagine, how the cross, as... the way all things will be set right.

Good Friday is “good” because it is Beautiful Friday.

Curt Thompson reflects:

“The Romans intended crucifixion not only as a mean of killing someone but of maximally humiliating the victim, along with the entire society in which it took place. It was intended as a knockout punch to beauty. What could be uglier for the religious, political, and social structures- whose very institutional existences are intended to make possible the creation and stewardship of beauty and goodness in the world- to converge to tortuously execute an innocent man, a man who had himself been only a conduit of beauty over the course of his life? Instead of curating beauty, they moved to destroy it in an act of horror, one that was seemingly equal and opposite to the beauty it attempted to devour.”

*But Easter changes what is grotesque about a Roman crucifixion. In light of the resurrection, we no longer see the crucifixion as a symbol of all that is awful. Instead, paradoxically, **we see it as a gateway to life**. For we do not look on it on evil’s terms. We look on it on God’s terms.” (Desire, p. 169)*

Jesus shows us the way. He is our example. For our difficult races. What we suffer. To have before us what held Jesus in his deepest struggle- the joy set before him is also set before us.

So we can see ourselves on this path; helping others onto this path- demonstrating how all things, you and I, are being set right, even in small acts of beauty, that, by the victory of Good Friday and Easter, the presence of the kingdom of God is here and now .

This too is what we mean by the practice of the fine “art” of eldering.