

The Beautiful Vision of Humanity

2020-07-26 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on Revelation 7:9-10

Welcome

- Psalm 121
- We'll talk more about our approach for community this fall next Sunday. Stay tuned...
- Right Now Media—Begin perusing possibilities for our spiritual investment.

Way Maker

Sprouts

Teaching

What is the most beautiful place you've ever seen before? What is the most beautiful place you've ever visited? Our hearts crave beauty! This past week we received tragic news that our very own church family member, Josh Yarrow, died on a hiking trip in Montana.

Josh Yarrow was drawn to beauty. Go scroll his Instagram account and you'll see the most beautiful views from his recent hikes. That John Muir quote that resonates so very deeply with Maris and I resonated with Josh too. "The mountains are calling and I must go."

I've had such a mixture of emotion this week as I think about Josh being pulled into the mountains for one last hike. He went back to retrieve a backpack doing the thing he loved, hiking, when he fell 500 feet. I'm excited to hike with Josh one day.

Let's pray.

We as humans are drawn to beauty for beauty's sake. We create beauty for beauty's sake. In Psalm 27:4, King David said that the one thing he asks of the Lord and the one thing he seeks after is to dwell with God in His house forever and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple. Meditate on what? Meditate on the beauty of God!

Our hearts ultimately long to be filled with the beauty of God. Let's contemplate beauty for a few minutes together. I can't see God, yet my heart was designed to resonate with King David's when he said the one thing he wanted was to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, and King David had seen much beauty during his lifetime.

We intuitively understand that the human heart craves beauty. This is why the visual arts are a thing. This is why music is a thing. This is why poetry is a thing. This is why novels are a thing. This is why dance is a thing. We were designed to enjoy beauty.

Flip back to the very first page of the Bible with me. We learn why our hearts are captured by creation. Every time God creates something He looks at it and sees that it is good. He sees that it is beautiful. Over and over again, the pattern repeats, the pattern repeats... Five times.

The mountains, the oceans, the birds, the animals, all of it, beautiful....and worth looking at.

Then we come to the sixth day when God creates male and female and what does he say about humanity? He looked and the man and woman and behold, he saw that it was VERY GOOD. They were VERY BEAUTIFUL....naked and unashamed, we learn in Genesis 2. Unadulterated humanity. Pure man and woman, the pinnacle of creation. In fact, we learn in Genesis 1 that humanity was created in the image of God. So if God is beautiful, and if God is worthy of King David's deep desire to gaze upon God's beauty...then what does that say about humanity, who is created in the image of God.

Listen to King David's words in Psalm 8.

Psalm 8:3-5 ³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

Humanity is incredibly beautiful! That means that YOU, yes YOU, are incredibly beautiful!

Does that resonate with you? Does that feel odd to hear me say? You are beautiful, my friend, it's true!

But, sadly and quickly humanity became incredibly simultaneously ugly. Just flip one chapter over to Genesis 3. The pinnacle of creation became broken through believing a terrible lie from God's Enemy.

You know those scenes in so many movies when the beautiful family portrait falls to the ground and is shattered? And the movie is all about if that beautiful family will ever be repaired if it will remain broken and end in utter tragedy. That's what Genesis 3 is, a shattering of the image of God. But you can still see glimpses of it but it's very difficult to see the complete picture of beauty.

Humanity—simultaneously amazing and brilliant and beautiful and yet utterly broken. We can even say evil. Consider for a moment. Do you see more glimmers of hope or indicators of despair in our society today? In our politics today? In our arts today? In the possibilities for the future of humanity today?

In small groups, discuss ways you see the beauty of humanity on display and ways you see the brokenness of humanity on display.

There are some who try to capture news about the goodness of humanity:

- Tanks Good News— <https://tanksgoodnews.com/>
- #SomeGoodNews hosted by John Krasinski
- Almost every other world religion besides Christianity

But who are we kidding, for all of human progress over the centuries we're not actually very good at being human. It's actually a bit mind blowing how committed humanity is to fixing ourselves despite our utterly consistent track record of wreaking havoc, both in our own personal lives and in our societies.

So many think that the Biblical account of humanity and history is flawed, even foolish or stupid. But I would challenge anyone who has that thought to take a serious look around them and inside of them and ask which worldview that's out there better fits the data. Which possible perspective on life and reality best fits the evidence and is livable?

The Bible teaches that each and every human has inherent value because we were created by God and that we simultaneously are each and every one of us capable of evil, and we see it all around us...and, if we're honest, even within us...even the best of us at times...and I'm not putting myself in the category of the best of us. Man, I've been digging into my own life recently in our Pure Desire group and I'm discovering some anger that is still deep within me that frankly scares me at times...and I'm the pastor of a local church...in case you didn't know that.

So, you have to hold in tension both the dignity and depravity of each and every person you interact with...including yourself. We have to hold in tension simultaneously the great beauty and brokenness of humanity.

C.S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory*

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."

Each human is truly a case of beauty and the beast!

Exodus 12:37-38a

³⁷ And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. ³⁸ A mixed multitude also went up with them...

Now we're going to fast forward in the Biblical account all the way to the last book, Revelation.

Listen, if you're going to take the time to look into future predictions of how the Coronavirus may impact your life when thus far we have more questions than answers than I would encourage you to take at least the same amount of time, if not more, to look into future predictions of what the Bible says will happen and then consider why you might trust these claims about ultimate reality. I'll give you a hint, the Bible has other future predictions that did happen that would lead a thinking person to strongly consider the truthfulness of the Bible's future predictions that have not yet happened.

- *Discovering God* by Dennis McCallum is a free book that you may want to pick up to help you along in this journey.

Revelation 7:9-10

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

- Salvation does not come from getting the right system in place that is given oversight by humans.
- Yes, we need to address systemic issues that prevent human flourishing for all humans. However, our salvation is not in any human system that has been or ever will be devised.
- This scene that John was privy to on the island of Patmos in the 90s, not the 1990s, but the 90s AD, was a glimpse into something that is yet to come.
- This scene in Revelation 7 is what will happen. I, we, don't know exactly how this will happen and we certainly don't know when this will happen but this is true news from the future. It's like a dystopian novel that's actually true and ends really, really well...for those who are united by the Lamb, who, BTW, is Jesus Christ, just in case you didn't know that. So it's more like a utopian novel but that's historical although hasn't happened yet.
- When God sees this scene, of people from all nations of the earth worshiping Him, I promise you He will say, "This is VERY, VERY GOOD. This is VERY, VERY BEAUTIFUL. This is even more beautiful than day six when I first created male and female. This whole story of redemption, including the death of my Son, the Lamb of God, has been totally worth it for this most beautiful scene of all time."
- The beautiful vision of humanity is centered on the sacrificial Lamb who sits on the throne of God!
- This vision of our future has everything to do with our lives now.
- Tallgrass Mission Statement: Because God first loved us, we exist to love God and love our neighbors.

Application:

- Follow the Lamb who brings salvation. In verse 17 it says, "For the Lamb will be their Shepherd."
- Deepen our understanding of humanity, both the beauty and the beastly. Live in that tension as you love your neighbor. They have inherent worth as an image bearer of God. They are also deeply flawed and in need of salvation.
 - How does understanding this tension about humanity impact the way you relate to your neighbor? Your family? Your workplace? Your politics?
- Help bring the future vision of beautiful diversity to fruition now! Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Helping International Students

- Tallgrass Church is supporting HIS for the month of July.
- I've been really involved in this organization in the past. I believe strongly in their mission and vision.
- They provide amazing opportunities for us to neighbor people from around the world who are in our very own backyard.
- Let's listen to Terry Cole, the HIS Director, share about how we can be involved now even during COVID-19.

- Now we get to hear from two of our very own international students, Naemi and Tshego, and another international student who is a friend of Bill Bickmeier's, Sipasi (from Nigeria). Naemi is from Namibia and Tshego is from Botswana.

Thanks so much for sharing with us! As Dave and the rest of the band comes up let me read a little more of John's vision on the island of Patmos.

Revelation 7:11-12

¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Revelation 7:13-14

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:15-17

¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. (Psalm 91:1-6)

¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Revelation 21:22-24

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it...

- The beautiful kings of the earth will bring their glory into the city of God...
- Beauty wins!

Pray

You make beautiful things!

11:00—After Party

Chopping Block:

Passages:

- **Psalm 91:1-6** He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
² I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”
³ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.
⁴ He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
⁵ You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,
⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
- **Isaiah 49:10-15**
- **Jeremiah 31:9**
- **Isaiah 25:8** He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

Declaration of Independence—We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.