



Worship Service Theme: Beauty

Helpful Elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

“Wabi-sabi” object(s): See Interactive Homily for ideas

Welcome: Welcome! It’s so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I’ll be leading our worship time. Today we’ll be looking at the theme of **beauty**. Thank you for joining us. Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, “The Lord is My Shepherd,” together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

First reading: From the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (62:1-4):

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,

and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,
until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
and her salvation as a burning torch.

² The nations shall see your righteousness,
and all the kings your glory ..

³ You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord ...

⁴ for the Lord delights in you.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me

Oh, How I love Jesus

Holy, Holy, Holy

Second reading: From the twenty-first chapter of the gospel of Luke:

As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich people putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² Jesus also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins.

³ "Truly I tell you," Jesus said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in all she had to live on."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

His Eye is on the Sparrow

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let's talk more about beauty.

- I wonder what things you consider *beautiful*? Call out anything at all that you think is beautiful.
 - Nature, children, spouses, partners, flowers ...
- Usually it's easy to *see* beauty, but let's think about all of our senses (*pause for each one of these to generate ideas*):
 - What are some things that *feel* beautiful? (silk, wool, cool water, sunshine, breeze...)
 - What are some things that *smell* beautiful? (fresh bread, flowers, a baby's head, rain...)
 - What are some things that *sound* beautiful? (music, specific instruments, birdsong, laughter, running water, ocean waves...)
 - What are some things that *taste* beautiful? (chocolate, peaches, fresh apples, wine ...)
- Even certain actions can be called beautiful. What kinds of actions could be called beautiful?
 - The righteousness of God's people, which Isaiah describes as "brightness," shining in the world.
 - The poor widow giving her last two coins to the temple treasury, commended by Jesus.
 - Generosity toward someone in need; giving food to the hungry.
 - Cuddling newborns in the hospital (that's an actual job!).
- *[optional]* What sorts of things can prevent us from seeing or appreciating something beautiful?
 - Being in a hurry
 - Not looking at "unusual" beauty; only seeing things we're used to
 - Clutter (things and tasks)
 - Routine; taking for granted what's around you
 - Cultural expectations (for example, in the Renaissance voluptuous women were considered beautiful; today, very thin women ...)
- What sorts of things are often *not* considered beautiful?
 - Ordinary objects like a worn-out table or bowl; broken things; wrinkles!
- The Japanese have a philosophy called *wabi-sabi* that centers on the beauty of things that are "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete" – often things

with a kind of roughness and natural simplicity, a “diamond in the rough.”

Examples could be:

- Driftwood or fading autumn leaves
- Pottery that’s not perfectly symmetrical
- An old wooden desk with carvings from schoolchildren
- A painting by a child or other “imperfect” artists
- Old quilts and linens
- I wonder what makes “ordinary” or imperfect or old things so beautiful?
 - Personal love and connection: “This was my grandfather’s... It’s not worth any money, but no amount could convince me to sell it!”
 - History and stories behind objects; *wisdom* and *experience*
 - An acceptance of imperfection in ourselves and others
 - An action of simplicity, sincerity, and love
 - And especially God’s touch as the Artist Creator! God’s fingerprints are upon every single thing and especially every single person. *You are beautiful* because God made you exactly who you are!
 - In German, the word “beautiful” is related to the word “shining” (*schön*, pronounced “shoon”) – and all of you shine with the beauty of God’s spirit in you.

Let’s silently thank God for the gift of beauty.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

Lord’s Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

**He’s Got the Whole World
In the Garden**

Third Reading: “Pied Beauty,” by Gerard Manley Hopkins¹

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

Hymns:

It is Well with My Soul

Amazing Grace

Fourth Reading: Quotes on Beauty²

Peace is the beauty of life. It is sunshine. It is the smile of a child, the love of a mother, the joy of a father, the togetherness of a family. It is the advancement of man, the victory of a just cause, the triumph of truth. –Menachem Begin, former prime minister of Israel

When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in the worship of the creator. –Mahatma Gandhi, Indian nonviolence activist

Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it. –ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius

In your 20s you can be pretty, but you don’t accomplish real beauty until you find wisdom and depth. –actress Evangeline Lilly

¹ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/44399>. This site includes an audio recording, which helps to understand the poem’s cadence.

² https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_beauty.html

People often say that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

But I say beauty is in the eye of the beer holder. –American comedian Kinky Friedman

Hymns:

When the Saints Go Marching In

How Great Thou Art

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymns: Doxology

This Little Light of Mine