

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: Who is God/Who God Is Lesson 10

Scripture: Psalm 27:4; 1st Chronicles 16:29

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M., D.Min.

Date: November 12th, 2017

The God of Beauty

Psalm 27: (ESV) OF DAVID.

¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ² When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. ³ Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. ⁴ One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, **to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD** and to inquire in his temple. ⁵ For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. ⁶ And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD. ⁷ Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! ⁸ You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, LORD, do I seek.” ⁹ Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation! ¹⁰ For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in. ¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. ¹² Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. ¹³ I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! ¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Introduction On Veterans Day if you go to a parade that honors veterans of all American services, you will watch some veterans themselves march. Some will be in uniform, a thing that I always admired in my own father and Renée’s father (Army and Navy). Those uniforms might have campaign ribbons and the ribbons of medals on them. They might have the C.I.B. (Combat Infantry Badge). They might have pilot’s wings attached just above the left breast. They might have (as in our step-father-in-law’s case) jump wings, only worn by paratroopers. They might have marksmanship medals or unit-citation badges or a blue cord, which indicates service with an infantry unit. We honor people around us who have served our country faithfully, sincerely and sacrificially. I would even feel comfortable applying the word “beauty” to these people.

When you think of beauty I am guessing you will think of a glowing, colorful sunset or sunrise. I think you would think of a stunning piece of art or music. Or perhaps another person’s face or attire or the sum total package of how they carry themselves would strike you as “beautiful”.

Here is a definition: “the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or pleurably exalts the mind or spirit” (Merriam-Webster).

Here’s another one: “a combination of qualities, such as shape, color, or form, that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight.” (Google on-line dictionary).

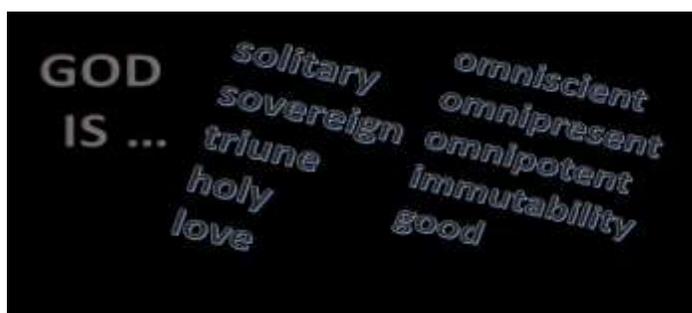
Here’s a good one: “It’s when someone walks in the door and you almost can’t breathe. It doesn’t happen often. You can feel it rather than see it... [it is] someone you literally can’t walk past in the street.”¹

On another level—more than only visual appeal--receiving a great job offer could bring from your lips, “beautiful” or a situation that came together so well—a family reunion, let’s say, or a great vacation experience and we might say “it came together so beautifully.” We might consider **a piece of music** to be beautiful or as I am observant of **architecture**, I actually love the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and even the “brutalist” style that is our own university here.

Now coming again TO THE QUESTION “WHAT IS THE REAL GOD LIKE?”

- We can grasp Him being a creator of *things* that are beautiful—sunsets, star-scapes, waterfalls, bioluminescent deep sea creatures, etc.
- We can grasp Him as the creator of other “creators” like people, who make beautiful things which we find appealing, and satisfying and even stunning (artists, musicians, architects, *naval* architects, chefs, designers, organizers, writers and poets and novelists and historians, and on and on.)

We have suggested thus far, that God, the only God (by the way) is a bunch of specifically identifiable things—and I have told you that what makes this so powerfully relevant to me personally is that we are no longer living in a culture which takes these things for granted. Many around us would hotly dispute if these things I am suggesting are true. I want you to know that they are, and that you can depend on God to BE these things. We have said thus far that



¹ Nancy Etcoff, *Survival of the Prettiest*, 1999, p. 8, quoting an unnamed male modelling agency.

But can we say that He, Himself, by Himself, is “beautiful?” Few theologians have sought to define or articulate “beauty” as a thing of God. Tim Challies does identify it and he approaches the idea by saying that: The beauty of God is that God is the possessor and sum of all desirable qualities.² In our reading today from Psalm 27, whatever the beauty of God is, David senses it and hungers after it, (as well as other places where we have his writing...)

In Psalm 27:4 David wrote ***One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.*** This is an interesting thing for David to say since there is really no temple yet. He wanted to build a temple and he imagined what that would be like. But it wouldn't happen in his life. And yet he longs for such a place—a place that is dedicated and whose only purpose is to display his God. And David imagines that in that place, he, David, would be privileged just to sit and “gaze upon the beauty of the Lord,” and to ask questions there too! This is the essence of both worship and discipleship (as says Psalms commentator Derek Kidner).

He said it again in Psalm 29:2 ***Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*** There is something attractive and pleasant in having a moment or two of being un-sinning, and being clean for a bit! In that moment, there is beauty. We shall experience countless such moments when we are finally with the Lord!

In Psalm 48:1 and 2 (KJV) he also wrote ***Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*** Here David sees God as always relevant, always ready, always appropriate, always “on target”. As such, isn't He beautiful? ***Beautiful for situation.*** The whole planet loves that, instinctively.

In 1st Chronicles 16:29 we read also from David, ***Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*** He is holy completely. There is nothing dark in Him. He is permanently that way and always will be. In this perfect cleanness and wholeness, He is utterly, to David, beautiful.

What are we going to say ABOUT His beauty? Well, we are saying that

- He never disappoints.
- He doesn't age or LOSE His beauty.

² Tim Challies *Visual Theology* chart on the Attributes of God, 2017

- It must have been a challenge for the Son of God to come down, out of a state of total beauty and become a normal male human being. We don't know how Jesus looked physically (despite two thousand years of artists imagining His appearance.) I do not imagine Him to be gorgeous. I think of Jesus of Nazareth as being normal looking for the time. ISAIAH foresaw Him (53:2) as unremarkable: ***For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.***
- He is perfectly in balance and whole and His attributes are all excellent and all dovetail with each other perfectly. I love to look at Challies' chart just because it focuses my thinking on the beauty and wonder of who our God is!
- He engenders love, because when really seen for Who He is, He is one who can be adored.
- His beauty is displayed in the perfect management of creation, which He personally sees to, times things as they should be, unveils His own matchless wisdom in the dispensations of His plan.
- His beauty, as envisioned by John was an awesome thing, almost too hard to look at with just a human eye: ***The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*** (Revelation 1:14-16). Much later in the book John again describes what he saw (19:11-13): ***Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.***
 - I think the English writer J.R.R. Tolkien was aiming to capture some of the feeling that John felt when he fictionalized the Elf-Queen Galadriel, unveiled momentarily to Frodo when he offers her the One Ring and she says to him: "You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair! ...She stood before Frodo seeming now

tall beyond measurement, and beautiful beyond enduring, terrible and worshipful...³

And the beauty of God is a thing uniquely His. We will behold Him somehow in glory and it will be stunningly wonderful. I don't have any idea of course how the senses will work in a glorified body. But we have this statement, also from the apostle John:

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1st John 3:2).

My friends, as He is will be uniquely wonderful. We will gaze at Him and be fascinated. We will study Him, and love what we see. We will hear Him speak and we will say, "Yes, Lord." We will watch Him summon angels to do His commands and we will look at each other, in amazement that each OTHER are there, and say quietly, "He is Lord." We will see Him do things, and be enchanted I think at His wisdom and grace. His beauty will not be garish or gaudy. It will be elegant and emanate from Him like nothing we ever did or could experience on this side of glory.

I have seen beauty in this world and loved it in a this-world kind of way. But I long to see Him who died for me. He is the Lamb. He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the ***bright morning star*** (Revelation 22:16).

What song would be worthy to hear, to close today?

<https://youtu.be/1gbBrlAVm20>

Natalie Grant doing *Your Great Name* (by Michael Neale) 2008

Some of my Powerpoint slides follow...

³ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book 2, 1954. George Allen & Unwin.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

COMMUNICABLE

- BEING
- PURPOSE
- MENTAL
- MORAL
- SUMMARY

INCOMMUNICABLE

To study God's attributes is to study His character, to answer questions like, Who is God? and What is God like? A typical classification of God's attributes divides them into those that are communicable (those that He does not share or "communicate" to anyone or anything else) and incommunicable (those that He shares with other beings). Like most theological classifications, this one is imperfect but still helpful as we seek to understand what is so far beyond ourselves.

God's communicable attributes can be further categorized into: attributes of God's being, mental attributes, moral attributes, attributes of purpose and "summary" attributes (attributes that, in a more particular way, modify each of the others).

It is important to consider that God is not simply the sum of His attributes. His attributes are not separate from one another, but each one modifies or qualifies each of the others.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:
 Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem
 The Attributes of God by A. W. Pink

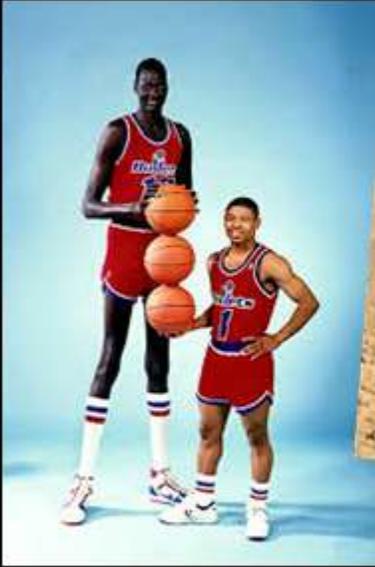
- TRANSCENDENCE** — GOD TRANSCENDS ALL CREATION AND IS UNKNOWABLE APART FROM HIS SELF-REVEALED REVELATION.
- IMMANENCE** — GOD IS WITHIN THE WORLD AND IN OUR DAILY LIVES. GOD CARES ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF OUR EXISTENCE AND INVITES US TO WELCOME HIS SACRIFICE, SERVICE, AND LOVE.
- ASEITY** — GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENT AND HAS NO NEED OF HUMAN BEINGS OR THE REST OF CREATION.
- OMNIPRESENCE** — GOD HAS NO SIZE OR SHAPE AND IS PRESENT IN ALL PLACES WITH HIS ENTIRE BEING.
- UNITY** — GOD'S WHOLE BEING ENJOYS ALL OF HIS ATTRIBUTES AT ALL TIMES. THESE ATTRIBUTES ARE NEVER IN CONFLICT.
- ETERNALITY** — GOD HAS ALWAYS EXISTED, HAVING NO BEGINNING AND NO END, AND EXPERIENCING NO SUCCESSION OF MOMENTS.
- IMMUTABILITY** — GOD CANNOT CHANGE IN HIS BEING, PERFECT PURPOSES, AND PROMISES.
- GLORY** — THE CREATED BRIGHTNESS THAT SURROUNDS GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF.
- BEAUTY** — GOD IS THE POSSESSOR AND THE SUM OF ALL DESIRABLE QUALITIES.
- BLESSEDNESS** — GOD DELIGHTS FULLY IN HIMSELF AND IN ALL THAT REFLECTS HIS CHARACTER.
- PERFECTION** — GOD FULLY POSSESSES ALL EXCELLENT QUALITIES AND LACKS NO QUALITIES THAT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR HIM.
- JEALOUSY** — GOD ALWAYS WANTS TO PROTECT HIS OWN HONOR.
- GOODNESS** — GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF ALL GOOD, AND ALL WE AS HUMAN BEINGS ARE WORTHY OF APPROVAL.
- PEACE** — GOD IN HIS BEING AND ACTING IS SEPARATE FROM ALL CONFLICT AND DISCORD.
- HOLINESS** — GOD IS SEPARATED FROM SIN AND HE IS COMMITTED TO DENYING HIS OWN HONOR.
- LOVE** — GOD ETERNALLY LOVES OF HIMSELF TO OTHERS.
- MERCY** — GOD IS GOOD TO THOSE IN PERIL AND OFFENSE, AND HE IS GOOD TO THOSE WHO DENY HIS PRESENCE.
- RIGHTEOUSNESS** — GOD IS THE FINAL STANDARD OF WHAT IS RIGHT, AND HE ALWAYS ACTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT IS RIGHT. (THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S JUSTICE)
- WRATH** — GOD INTENSELY HATES ALL SIN.
- TRUTHFULNESS** — GOD IS THE TRUTH GOD WHOSE KNOWLEDGE AND WORDS ARE BOTH TRUE AND THE FINAL STANDARD OF TRUTH.
- KNOWLEDGE** — GOD FULLY KNOWS HIMSELF AND ALL ACTUAL AND POSSIBLE THINGS. (THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS GOD'S OMNISCIENCE)
- WISDOM** — GOD ALWAYS CHOOSES THE BEST GOALS AND THE BEST MEANS TO THOSE GOALS.
- WILL** — GOD APPROVES AND DETERMINES TO BRING ABOUT EVERY ACTION NECESSARY FOR THE EXISTENCE AND ACTING OF ALL THAT EXISTS.
- FREEDOM** — GOD DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES.
- OMNIPOTENCE** — GOD IS ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS FULLY WILL. GOD EXERCISES COMPLETE POWER OVER HIS CREATION AND REACTS IN RESPONSE.
- INVISIBILITY** — GOD'S TOTAL BEING, ALL OF HIS BEING, WILL NEVER BE VISIBLE TO US.
- SPIRITUALITY** — GOD IS A BEING WHO CANNOT TAKE UP OF MATTER AND WHO CANNOT BE PERCEIVED BY OUR SENSES.





"Heroic Polonaise" in A-flat major, Op. 53 – by Chopin





7'7" or 5'3"



Isaiah 53:2

**The Ring of the Elf-Queen
Greg Hildebrandt
1978**

