

Something Beautiful for Jesus

Matthew 26:1-16

Dr. Phil Ryken

Well, it is Mother's Day, and if you can, you should visit your mother on Mother's Day. And this being kind of the mother church of our beloved PCA, it seems like the right place to be. We're so grateful for the ministry of this church. And I want to thank you not only for your faithfulness, but also for the way that you have shared the wider ministry of Frank Parker and Harry Reeder. My life has been touched by a personal friendship with them, and by the many times I've heard them preach and speak in various places. And that's really part of your church giving as a mother should, gifts to the wider church. So God bless you. Our thoughts turn very much towards you a year ago at this time, and our prayers continue to be with you as God comforts you and leads you into the future.

Well, it's my privilege this morning to proclaim the Word of God. Will you please stand as we read together? Matthew 26-- It's opening verses.

Jesus was drawing close to the last night of his life. He had spoken to his disciples about the final judgment. And Matthew tells us that when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, you know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified. Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people. Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, why this waste for this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor. But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me, for you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her and one of the 12 whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, what will you give me if I deliver him over to you? And they paid him 30 pieces of silver, and from that moment he saw an opportunity to betray him.

This is the Word of God. Please be seated.

Well, just about a week ago, as I was contemplating being with you this morning to talk about doing something beautiful for Jesus. Someone handed me this op ed from the Wall Street Journal by Peggy Noonan, former speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan. And you can understand why I was interested to see what she had to say, because it was called the uglification of everything.

And then began like this. I wish to protest the current ugliness. I see it as a continuing trend, the uglification of everything. It's coming out of our culture with picked up speed and from many media silos. And I don't like it. And then says she goes on to describe recent experiences at the movies going to Broadway, picking up a newspaper, turning to a television series someone had recommended to her, and every place it seemed to be as ugly as possible. Not beautiful and uplifting, but something ugly and mean spirited. And at the end of her op ed, she asks the question, why does this all bother me? And she said, because even though it isn't new, uglification is rising and spreading. It can't be good for us. A society that hates itself and hates life won't last. And it bothers me because it gives those who are young nothing to love and feel. And because we need beauty to lift our morale up. Now, do you agree with Peggy Noonan or not? Are things getting more and more beautiful or more and more ugly? And if they are getting ugly, what can anyone do about it? I have to confess, as I look at is what is happening around us socially, politically, racially, sexually as I see what's happening in the wider world. Warfare, displacement of tens of millions of people as refugees, just all of the things that are happening around us. It's hard to feel encouraged that things are getting more beautiful. But I believe that we have a king who has come and is now reigning the Lord Jesus Christ, and I believe he has a purpose for this world, which is beautiful. It goes beyond everything that's sick and tired and wounded and broken. It's a purpose of healing and reconciliation. It comes through the cross and out of the empty tomb. It's by virtue of the fact that Jesus has ascended to heaven and now has gifts to give to his church. He wants to bring new beauty into the world, and he is calling us to do it. And that is why I'm here this morning, on this Mother's Day and this Ascension Sunday, to invite you to do something beautiful for Jesus. And we can hardly have a better example of that than this woman with the alabaster flask, the woman that we meet in Matthew 26 and in the other Gospels. It's one of the most stunning examples, one of the most striking, specific instances of someone doing something beautiful for Jesus right at the end of his life, shortly before his crucifixion and burial.

It's another one of these scenes from the life of Jesus that you've been looking at this year at Briarwood. You may have noticed just outside of Jerusalem, in a little town of Bethany, a place that Jesus often frequented where he had many acquaintances. And on this particular day, it was time to share a meal. And according to the custom, Jesus was not sitting at a table but reclining at one, when suddenly a woman stepped forward and she took her flask of perfume, and she broke it and poured out the entire contents on the head of Jesus.

And no one who was there that day, who saw the sacred head of our Lord, anointed in this way, ever forgot what it looked like to see that perfume spreading down his hair and dripping onto his beard? And they never forgot what it smelled like either. In fact, I almost think if you inhale deeply as you read Matthew 26, you can almost still smell that scent today. It was beautiful. We know it was beautiful because Jesus said, now that's beautiful in so many words. I think this is one of the highest compliments that Jesus ever gave anyone or ever could. She has done a beautiful thing to me and I think the better we understand why Jesus said this, the better we will be able to follow this example and do something beautiful with our lives to wouldn't it be

wonderful and maybe surprising and certainly amazing if Jesus said about you and something that you have done now that's beautiful. What she did that was beautiful for me.

Well, let's see what else we can learn from this woman's example. It was beautiful. What she did was simple. Nothing complicated about it. You don't have to do something complex to do something beautiful for Jesus. Here is something that only took a moment. All she did was break open this flask, pour it out. And it was. It was so beautiful. I was thinking about some of the simple things that I've seen somebody do that are beautiful. Just think of a child who knows that you're in distress and comes up just to give you a hug. How beautiful that is. I'm thinking of something beautiful I saw at the gravesite of one of my friends – a beautiful woman, killed at the age of 23 or so. Her father was there at the graveside. He had a fistful of rose petals, and as after her casket had been lowered into the ground, he scattered them in the air. And they fell on the casket. It was so beautiful, so simple. A beautiful tribute to a beautiful life.

It's something you see and you remember. It doesn't have to be complicated. It can be simple to do something beautiful for Jesus. What this woman did also was extravagant. She carried her perfume in an alabaster flask that was an object of beauty in and of itself. In the gospel of Mark, the evangelist tells us that the perfume was pure nard and herbal incense extracted from the spikenard plant.

And when some of the members of the dinner party on that day saw what had been done, they did some quick calculations. According to Mark, they estimated it's street value is 300 denarii, which corresponds to a full year's wages for a common laborer be about maybe \$40,000 in today's economy, that's a lot of money for perfume, maybe more than you spent for Mother's Day this year. I would imagine. I tried to find out if I could, what the most expensive perfume in the world is. It might be a fragrance from Baccarat that if you read how they describe the extraction for this particular perfume, perfume, they go out into a particular field in France, they gather 11,000 flowers for just one bottle of their joy perfume. They call it a master masterpiece. Hopefully it is. And they offer it for the low, low price of \$2,000, roughly equivalent to what this perfume cost in biblical times. I mean, when you pour this out, it is a small fortune, extravagant and also especially for this woman, sacrificial with overflowing love. She gave away something she could never regain. Once the perfume was poured out, it was gone forever. This truly was a one and done. The aroma would linger for a while, but soon only that would be a sweet memory. This gift was a sacrifice, and beauty usually calls for sacrifice. Think of the people that make beautiful things. It takes them hours and hours and hours to produce even a single work of art.

Many of us are not willing to make such sacrifices even for beauty. The I mentioned earlier, Peggy Noonan, wrestling with this question of uglification and trying to figure out why beauty has vanished from the world. The late philosopher Roger Scruton offered a really good explanation. He said, beauty is vanishing from our world because we live as though it did not matter, and we live that way because we have lost the habit of sacrifice and are always trying to avoid it.

It takes a sacrifice, often to make something beautiful. I think of the testimony of the Christian artist Makoto Fujimura. He was in his younger days as an artist. He and his wife were struggling to make ends meet, as artists sometimes do, and his wife came home from the store with a bunch of flowers for their home, and he was angry about it. He said, we can't afford that. But she said, yes, we need to make some of these sacrifices to produce beauty, which of course, as an artist he should have known. But beauty requires sacrifice. It's not surprising, then, that when you have this incident in the gospel, something that Jesus identifies as beautiful, it's something that involves a personal sacrifice.

And this gift was also memorable, so memorable, so memorable, in fact, that we're still talking about it today. This little dinner party which took place 2000 years ago. People are still talking about it right here today in Birmingham. And Jesus said, wherever the gospel is preached, this story is going to be remembered. This woman's work is going to be honored.

It really is true what the poet said. A thing of beauty is a joy forever. And that certainly was true of this thing of beauty this morning, as we call it to mind once again, we are fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus, and we are also honoring one of our mothers in the faith. How fitting on Mother's Day that we should be celebrating this woman and her simple yet extravagant, costly sacrifice, something we still remember today.

And I think this story, this little scene from the life of Jesus, ought to awaken in us a deeper desire to do things that are beautiful for Jesus, something he would say is beautiful. And I also think this story helps us believe that this is possible even for us. There is something that we can do. You know, it's characteristic of beauty that it always desires to be shared.

Maybe you've noticed this when you've encountered beauty for yourself. You've seen a beautiful sunset. You have caught a glimpse of something that is a masterpiece, and immediately you want to invite somebody else to see it with you. We had a little example of this just this week with the Northern Lights. I don't know if anybody sent you any images from their phone, but some of my children were in a driveway near Chicago. They saw these beautiful pink lights. The first thing they did was take a picture. They texted the rest of the family. Then people started sending us pictures from Minnesota and from Montana. These beautiful images were not enough for people just to see them. They also wanted to share them. And that is what beauty does. It calls for replication. I think it's one of the clear signs that we were made for beauty.

We see a beauty and we want to share a beauty. It's because we were made for beauty. I like the way the philosopher Elaine Scarry talks about this. In her book on beauty. She says beauty brings copies of itself into being. It makes us dry it, take photographs of it, describe it to other people. It requires, she says, an act of replication. And I think that's why Mark included this story in his gospel. He wanted us to know about it, but he also wanted us to repeat it. And I think that's why Jesus said, this story is going to be told everywhere. People are always going to remember this story and they're going to honor this woman. It wasn't just so that we would

remember, but it was also so that we would replicate. Here's a beautiful thing. The woman takes her flask. She pours it out. And now the calling for us is for in our own way, to break open, pour out, repeat, break open, pour out, repeat out. We have seen this extravagant act of sacrificial beauty, and the challenge for us is to do something beautiful like that for Jesus. And I tell you, the world needs beauty now more than ever. It needs it not simply, as Peggy Noonan said, to lift her morale. The world needs it because it needs to see the beauty of Jesus. And beauty has a way of touching the inner heart of who we are. It's what people need when they are grieving. It's why we send people flowers. Yes. They're temporary. It's a gift that will soon be gone. But it's beautiful way of expressing an affection through its beauty. We are still living in a world where so many tears need to be wiped away. And that world is a world where we need to see beauty. And here's another reason. We need to see beauty. Because sometimes in the ugliness, we can't even really see God the way that he is calling us to see him. The ugliness gets in the way of seeing the beauty of God.

I like the way that Philip Yancey writes about this in his extraordinary memoir, Where the Light Fell. And in a way, Yancey is giving us an explanation of all of the ugliness of his childhood. So many dark secrets, death, poverty, hypocrisy, the angry arguments he could hear on the other side of the thin walls of the family trailer home. There was hardly any way to escape. But Yancey also testifies that he was touched by the beauty of God when he went out into the fields and woods around his home, and the beauty came through. Here's how he expresses it in his memoir. He realized nature could not save his soul, but it did awaken a desire in him.

And here's how he expressed the desire he wanted to meet whoever is responsible for the monarch butterfly. He had seen this beautiful thing in the world. It awakened a desire there needed to be a person, a beautiful person, behind that beautiful gift. And that desire led him to a relationship with the living God. The God of the birds and the butterflies is also the God who sent his only son to be our Savior.

To meet him is to experience beauty forever. People often talk about the problem of evil, and it's true. There are things that we have to answer if we want to give a reason for the hope that is within us. There are problems in the world that we have to explain. And by the way, the doctrine of sin does a lot of that explaining for us. But I think there are also some really good counter arguments. You may think that the problem of evil is a problem for Christians, but the problem of beauty is a real problem for non-Christians because you can't help it encounter the beauty in the world. And you have to ask yourself, where did this beauty come from? It compels a desire to know its source.

So marvelous example of this in the opening pages of a of a sort of autobiography of Whittaker Chambers, who in an earlier generation was a notable diplomat, statesman, public figure. He wanted nothing to do with God until he became a father and was spoon feeding his little baby girl. And he just happened to notice as she turned her head, her ear, how beautiful it was, how beautifully constructed and just came this unbidden recognition that there is a God who made this beautiful. It was obvious to him when he took a moment to look at this beauty. And I think

it's important for us to know, as believers who want to testify to our faith in God, that there is a question out there that is compelling people to ask themselves where did this beauty come from? As believers in Christ, we have we have an opportunity to give an answer, and we also have an opportunity to live a life that helps people see that beauty a little more clearly than they ever have.

God is calling us to live a beautiful life, and we don't have to change the world to do it. Even something simple, as simple as dinner with friends, can be an opportunity to bring more of God's beauty into the world. And I think what Jesus said to this beautiful woman ought to be a massive encouragement to us.

It's a phrase that Mark writes in his gospel in chapter 14. We don't see it here in Matthew 26, where the narratives a little more truncated, but you get the picture here. People are criticizing this woman. She offers a gift to Jesus of all things. What are the men in the room? Do they start criticizing her? They're critical of her financial judgment. Apparently, in offering this gift, they start thinking of other things she could have done that, in their view, could have been better.

All of that is coming down on her. And Jesus says, enough, leave her alone. He says. And then he says this remarkable thing. Mark chapter 14, verse seven, she has done what she could. She did what she could. That's the standard for Jesus. It's not what somebody else can do with the gifts that they have. It's what you can do with the gifts that you have.

And that is enough for him. That is all that he is asking of you to do what you can to do something beautiful for him. And I want to give you just a lot of examples of ways that you can do that. And some of them perhaps are things you're already doing, some of the things some of them are things that you could do more of.

Some of them perhaps, are things that you haven't considered or even recognize. Yes, I am doing something for beautiful for Jesus. I didn't just see it for what it was. What are some of the ways we live a beautiful life through what we make with our hands? This is God's special calling for artists. Of course. Do you think in terms of beauty you recognize being an artist that's not some kind of secondary marginal calling that's primary and important in the world because it's an opportunity to testify to truth and also beauty. Just to give one example, I think of the marvelous testimony that the famous luthier Antonio Stradivari gave in each of the amazing instrument that he created -- the violins, the violas, and all the rest of the stringed instruments. He would sign his initials on the inside of that instrument, and he would place his initials under the sign of a cross. It was his way of saying, as an artist, I am under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I am testifying to the beauty of my Savior. A simple way to give that testimony. And you don't have to know how to make a Stradivarius to do that. You can testify to Jesus in the things that you make, whatever they are.

J.R.R. Tolkien had a good expression for our work as makers in the world. He recognized that we are makers, made in the image of the maker. We are sub creators, he said, who do our creative work under the creative or under the creativity of the creator? We all have the capacity to make

things. Even the simple act of making a home wherever God calls us to make a home, we have an opportunity to make a space more beautiful and therefore more hospitable as a way of telling the beauty of God.

That should be a special encouragement, I believe, to mothers. Like most of us, as we reflect on our upbringing. It was our mothers, especially, who made our house wherever we lived. Truly a home that's beautiful. It's one of the most beautiful gifts you can ever give to another human being. And it's within our reach as we make our living spaces, places of beautiful hospitality.

We live a beautiful life by the music we make. And Philip Yancey writes about this as well because it was a hard area for him. He had an older brother who was a virtuoso at the piano, and he was taking lessons as hard as he could, and he wanted to be as good as he could be. But he knew he was never going to have the ability that his brother would have. It made him hate recitals and everything having to do with music. In fact, he put down his piano music for a season. He went off to university. He was starting to fall in love. He wanted to give a beautiful gift. He didn't have the money to do something extravagant. And so on his girlfriend's birthday, he said, I want to give to you something, and it's something you haven't heard before and probably didn't know about. I want to play the piano for you. And it was beautiful because he was, in his own way, a gifted musician. But the main thing is that he wanted to use his gift as a gift to bless another person. He describes in his memoir, *The Way They Were*, both there in that quiet evening, in that quiet place on campus, tears streaming down their faces because he was offering a gift he had never offered before. And she knew that she was receiving something absolutely precious.

Our trained musicians perhaps have the most to give in this area, but we should all recognize every one of us has been blessed with a voice for praise, which happens to be located in one of the most amazing musical instruments ever created the human body. With its resonance and its remarkable capacity and its range.

You are yourself a musical instrument for God's praise. That's why our men's and boys choir this morning was a thing of beauty. You hear a men's choir. It has a kind of strength to it, but it also has a beauty to it. There's a sacrifice of praise that is being offered bodily. When we sing God's praise. And all of us have the capacity to do this, we live a beautiful life by joining that broken and yet beautiful community that God calls the church, and not just joining it, but sticking with it when it's tough because sooner or later, the church also is a place of heartache, of conflict, of disappointment. The longer you go in life, the more that will be true for you. But it's also beautiful. It's designed to be beautiful. Jesus is preparing his church as a beautiful bride. It's his beautification work in the world going on in and through the church. Together. We're called to be the embodied presence of Jesus in the world, demonstrating his beauty. And this too, is something we can do even in our weakness in worship, evangelism, missionary outreach, in the ministry that we exercise for children. In all of these ways, we can, and we ought to be more beautiful together as a church than we could ever be alone.

How else can we lead a beautiful life by seeking the shalom of our surrounding community? Not just being beautiful in here, but being beautiful out there? There was a beautiful testimony to this and a recognition of its importance in one of our ministry partners in Chicago, Wheaton College, sends its students into Chicago for ministry and for learning opportunities through a key partner -- Sunshine Gospel Ministries in the Woodlawn neighborhood. And the director there was just reflecting in one of his newsletters on how tough it is sometimes to do ministry. And he says, you can't do this work unless you have a love for beauty, because our community ought to be a place of beauty. But I look around, I see beauty unrecognized and undervalued in the development of buildings and blocks that lack creativity, that fail to inspire joy. He goes on to lament every window blocked by metal bars, what it's like to order food in his neighborhood through a bulletproof, scratched up Plexiglas window. It's not even face to face what it's like to sit in an ugly public service office, waiting hours on in for assistance and having nothing beautiful to look to look at. There are many places in this world that are much less beautiful than they ought to be.

That was his. That was his concern. And he said, the people of God are the ones who need to bring in the beauty. And it can happen here too, in Birmingham and all the places where life is ugly. There ought to be more beauty in our cities, especially. It helped me so much. When I was in seminary, I had tended to think of the countryside as the more beautiful place, with the more beautiful scenery, and I was caught up a little short by a chapel speaker who said, you know, the cities are the most beautiful places, because the most beautiful thing in all creation is human beings made in the image of God.

That's where the beauty is. It's in us. It's in God's people. That is the most beautiful thing, or at least it ought to be. And there's more of that in our urban communities than anywhere else. The beauty doesn't happen on its own. People need to make sacrifices to bring it. People like the woman with the alabaster flask, people who live with the beauty of Jesus and then share that beauty in their communities.

We live a beautiful life by doing justice in the wider world. Injustice is always ugly. It makes people less than they are. It's demeaning and diminishing. But when you do what is right in God's eyes, that brings more beauty into the world. I like the testimony that Philip Yancey gives about this, again referencing his book [Where the Light Fell](#).

He talks about what it's been like and what a privilege it's been for him as a writer and communicator, to travel to nearly 100 countries all over the world. And what is he found in the places where the church has gone before him? He says, wherever I have been, the missionaries have been there before me. You see a string of orphanages and clinics and hospitals and schools and people fighting against sex trafficking and people digging wells and people feeding the hungry. And if you ask the people in those communities who is doing this and ask them to define what a Christian is, they say a Christian is somebody who, when you're sick, they bring healing. When you're ignorant, they bring learning. When you're hungry, they bring food. And all of that is so beautiful. It's part of the beautiful work that God is doing in the world. And I'm

listing these examples just so you can see how many ways there are to bring beauty into the world. Here's another one. You can do something beautiful for Jesus by what you do with your money, and that's very important.

I love the poem that Brandon Sharfstein wrote about this. You know, we're often tempted to think that we've given as much as we can spare. It would hard be hard for us to give more than we can. And he relates his experience with his young son. He asked him to do some chores in the yard, and he gave him five crisp \$1 bills and He gave some advice. It was a stewardship opportunity. So now, if I were you, I'd put one of those in the offering plate and you can spend one, but then you should save the other three. And Justine was caught up a little short when his son said that he supposed there were some good reasons for him to give all five of those dollars in the offering plate, give it all for the kingdom. And that seems right, doesn't it? That we would do as much as we can, even more than we think we can afford. There's something beautiful about that kind of giving. And what a beautiful return you get on your investment when you give for Jesus and for the Kingdom. We can do something beautiful for Jesus by what we do with the natural world around us, the way that we care for, care for it.

I love the way John Calvin wrote about this in his commentary on Deuteronomy, how important it is for us to care for the created world, for the fields and flowers around us, to care for the animals around us. He saw this as an important part of our Christian discipleship. It goes all the way back to the very beginning to Genesis chapter one taking care of creation around us, bringing out its beauty as fully as we can.

This too can be part of the beauty that we bring into the world. For Jesus. Or what about? And this is a very different kind of category. What about the beauty of reconciliation when people have a relationship that has been broken, people can't even talk with one another anymore. But in some way, you have a role in bringing them back together. Or maybe if you didn't have a role, you at least saw them brought back together. And the beauty that you see in that situation. I think of a family that where there was conflict among the younger generation of the family because a cousin had persuaded his aunt and uncle to make a very substantial investment from their inheritance, which was squandered entirely. You can imagine how his kids felt about their cousin. So, the father dies. It's time for the funeral. I mean, you have to go. It's a family funeral. But people are wondering, is he going to show up? What's that going to be like? You know, there's a little chatter in the community. People know what's happened. My cousin does come the first thing the oldest son from the family does -- he goes right over, embraces him. I'm so glad you're here. I'm glad you came. It means so much to us. Once that had happened, nobody could say anything because the reconciliation had taken place, and it was so beautiful. People knew that that was the right thing to do.

Wherever, whatever broken relationship you're in, by the grace of God, there's a way for you to take a step towards reconciliation and then to pray and see what the Holy Spirit will do. It's beautiful when it happens. Preaching the gospel is beautiful to. In fact, the prophet Isaiah said that even the feet of someone who proclaims good news are beautiful and it's so beautiful.

What happens in somebody's life when the preaching of the gospel leads to repentance and forgiveness, and the freedom that comes in Jesus? I'll never forget the testimony of one international student. She had come to the United States from Japan. It was a public gathering. She wanted to give a testimony of what God had done in her life, and the young woman who had been most influential in her life was there. And she said to her, you built a bridge to me, a bridge of friendship. And then one day Jesus came walking over the bridge.

That's what happens when we build a relationship in which we testify to the gospel. And it's the beauty of Jesus walking into someone's life. There are so many ways to do something beautiful for Jesus. Where do you learn how to do it? That's what I want to end with this morning. I think we learn it from the same place that the woman with the alabaster flask learned it. She learned it from the beautiful life that Jesus lived and the beautiful death that he died.

I want you to see something about how Matthew tells the story. I want you to see the way that he frames it. I've mainly been focusing on what happens in verses 6-13, but something important happens before that and after it. There's an artful framing here. Matthew begins with the testimony of Jesus that Passover is coming. And Jesus says to his disciples again, something he had said to them before, that he soon would be delivered up to be crucified. And those are some ominous words. A dark shadow falls across the page, and then it gets even darker in the following verses, because the chief priests and the elders clearly are conspiring against Jesus, and they are intending to kill him. It's the foreshadowing in the gospel of the crucifixion, and there's framing at the end of the story as well, because as soon as Jesus has this dinner party, Judas slips out, goes to those scribes and Pharisees, and he offers to deliver Jesus up to them to betray him. That's the framing. The way a frame works is it puts an outline of a particular color to the story, so that something in the story emerges with sharp clarity. You have the right frame. Something in the picture pops. So what pops in the story that Jesus tell, in the story that Matthew tells in between? I think what pops is what Jesus says about this woman's act of beauty. Notice what he says. She has done it to prepare me for burial (verse 12). That's what pops. When you know the framing around this story. It's a declaration that the costly sacrifice the woman made for Jesus is emblematic of an even more costly sacrifice that is coming. It's the one that he is getting ready to make by dying on the cross for our sins. And what can I say about that act? I can tell you it was simple. All the ways that God the Father could have devised a way for the world to be saved. What about the simplicity of this one lamb? For all the sins, one man to stand in the place of Adam and take upon himself all of the suffering that sin deserves, and to offer full atonement.

The simplicity of the cross is amazing, as is its extravagance. It's costing us the very lifeblood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the very lifeblood of the Son of God, the most infinitely worthy sacrifice anyone has ever made and so memorable, so memorable. We're celebrating it as the church worldwide, every moment of every day, somewhere in the world we are praising Jesus for offering his life for our sins. It was so beautiful and so, so memorable. It's the costly, beautiful sacrifice that saved the world. And if you believe in what Jesus has done on the cross, your

calling, my calling is to do something beautiful for Jesus to reproduce its beauty. We are in the task of replication so that the world will see the Savior. The world will see the Savior in the cross shaped lives that we lay down for others.

And we do all of this in the hope that one day we ourselves will become beautiful. That's not enough. It's not enough for us to see something beautiful. We want to become part of it, to experience it for ourselves. And this is the promise of God. A beautiful transformation is coming. It will happen on the day of our glorification with the risen and ascended Christ.

When the Bible promises that God will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious, that is beautiful body, and that day is coming sooner than we even imagine. Until it does come, we're going to have to live in a world that has a lot of ugliness. But in it we are called, no matter the cost, to do what is beautiful for Jesus.

Father in heaven, we praise you for the beauty of our Savior. We come in his name to ask that even with all our limitations, we would be able to do things that are beautiful, beautiful for you, beautiful in your memory, beautiful in your honor, beautiful in ways that will point other people to see the beauty of Jesus. This is our prayer in his name. Amen.