

Good, True & Beautiful

Opening Prayer:

Our Father and our God, thank You for the delight of spending time together with our sisters in Christ. May we stir up one another to love and good deeds. And Lord, thank You that you have prepared those good deeds in advance for us to walk in. We are so grateful that Jesus authors and perfects our faith, let us fix our eyes on Him this good day. For we begin this Lord's Day rejoicing in the reality that we join together in the heavenly city to gather around your throne. Let us behold our King pavilioned in splendor. We ask these things in His precious name. Amen.

Please open your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians.

Counseling issues as devotional inspirations...

Companion piece to yesterday...

Yesterday I talked about adorning the Gospel in everything, and how it is **God** who prepares those good works in advance for us to walk in. So, today I thought we'd look at a different aspect of personal adornment that I hope you find helpful.

- I. **We're going to consider our Affections as our adornment of the Gospel and how they are good, true, and beautiful.**
 - a. To do that, I'd like to invite you to think about how **you** naturally see the world, how **you** tend to fit in and interact with it. And to do this as an exercise in embracing the life of **Christ** in you.
 - b. After two decades of working closely with people, I've learned that our *individual affections* are usually linked to specific attributes of *Jesus*.
 - c. Because whether we realize it or not, there are certain things that *naturally* stir our affections – those things rooted in our stronger emotions and passions.
 - i. Like when I mentioned that a garden in the cool of the day stirs my affections for God and draws me nearer to Him.
 - ii. Affections refer to a kind of ardent devotion for God that's stirred up in particular moments, and creates a divine awareness and nearness of God. I'll unpack that more in just a second.
 - d. I think the best description of affections is in Exodus 35:4-5ff
 - i. Contributions of the Israelites to furnish the Tabernacle.
 - ii. "everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him"
 - iii. "All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD."

- e. But I also said that our individual affections are linked to specific attributes of Jesus. The specific attributes I'm talking about are His work in the **three-fold offices of Prophet, Priest, and King**.
- i. In the Old Testament those 3 mediating offices (or official roles meant to facilitate the relationship between God and His people) were held by separate individuals; in Christ all three offices are fulfilled and held perfectly in one Person.
 - ii. If these offices are new to you, here's what I hope is a helpful summary of Jesus in His three-fold office:
 1. As our Prophet, He guides us in the paths of righteousness through His Word.
 2. As our Priest, He guarantees the salvation of those who trust Him through His atonement and intercession.
 3. As our King, He leads us to final victory over sin, Satan, and death.
- f. **1 Peter 2:9** helps us understand how those offices apply to us:
But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- i. On this verse, Tim Keller writes gives this helpful explanation:
 The Spirit equips every believer to be a prophet who brings the truth, a priest who sympathetically serves, and a king who calls others into accountable love...This Spirit-equipped calling and gifting of every believer to be a prophet, priest, and king has been called the "general office." (<http://timmybrister.com/2012/11/tim-keller-on-every-believer-as-prophet-priest-and-king/>)*
 - ii. And Dr. Baugh of Westminster Seminary writes this about the general office: "...Christ redeemed us...that we may all serve him now and forever in his royal service" as prophet, priest, and king.
 (<https://www.wscal.edu/resource-center/women-in-the-church.>)
- g. Okay, so with that really brief overview, now I want to share an observation:
 Whether it be in His office of Prophet, Priest, King, I have found that there are areas where **you** probably most resound with His person. That your God-given affections quicken *more* in relation to His activity in one of those areas.
- h. Let me explain it this way...
- i. Do you naturally see the need for truth to be spoken and applied in pretty much any given situation? And get distressed when that's overlooked or neglected, knowing that Truth is a person and His influence is the difference between right and wrong. (Prophet)
 OR...
 - ii. Do you naturally tend to weep freely over the pains and joys of this life? Are you acutely aware of how there's more to life's experiences than meet the eye and sense God's heart in those moments, longing for His tender mercies. (Priest)
 OR...

- iii. Do you naturally seek right and good order; for things around you to be fitting for the circumstances? Does your spirit easily connect dots, able to make meaning of troublesome things, and dislike chaos because God is a God who governs and brings order. (King: covenant faithfulness)
- i. Hopefully you heard in those questions the loose application of the life of Jesus in operation, to and for us, in His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.
- j. And one of them probably resonated more for you than the others.

II. So what do these offices have to do with our affections?

- a. I'd like to suggest that they have *everything* to do with them and how they're stirred for God.
- b. In that list of questions I read, I specifically said, are you "*NATURALLY*" stirred in these ways? They were kind of trick questions though, because, here's what I'm getting at: what if those aren't "natural" traits, but rather, **supernatural expressions**?
- c. What if, as the Holy Spirit conforms you more and more in to the likeness of Jesus – which we all desperately need – your seemingly *natural* life is, in fact, the *supernatural* life of Christ manifest in your mortal flesh (**1 Cor 4:10-11**).
- d. Could there be a grander public display of the life of faith than that? Jesus displaying Himself...to you and to those around you.
- e. I want to pause to make an important note though...
 - i. We're meant to be conformed to the **whole** image of Christ, which means that if you are exceptionally strong in *one* of these expressions:
 - 1. First, you're not crazy. If you weep at the drop of a hat and everyone else around you tends toward the hammer of truth, you're not crazy...and neither are they. Just different expressions, but all of Christ.
 - 2. Second, being strong in one expression is in and of itself an invitation to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus in His other offices, and making Him known through those qualities as well.
 - ii. For example, speaking hard truths without the tenderness of a priest is not how we most faithfully bring God's Word.
 - iii. And mercy *alone* isn't always the answer to difficult situations, which is a tendency those strong in priestly characteristics can fall in to.
 - iv. And for sure nobody likes a bully, which is really a disordered display of kingly attributes.
 - v. In many reformed circles, it's popular now to talk about these offices and their attributes in God's people as a handy way to determine leadership roles. But I don't embrace that, because I think it suggests that we should remain in what is most comfortable to us, and just focus on developing *those* traits, rather than growing up in "in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (**Eph 4:15**).

III. With that clarification, let's talk about our affections *in action*

- a. As you attune yourself to God's active presence in the daily-ness of your life, as we noted yesterday – through abiding and walking – He's working **through** you.
- b. So, I want to tell you about three people whom God used in the most ordinary ways to make Jesus profoundly known to me.
 - i. First, [The park worker (the Beautiful)]
 1. I've told the story before about a park recreation worker I met when I was a little girl. At this park at the end of the street where I grew up, all the neighborhood kids used to spend their free time there. Well, one summer morning, I got to the park before anyone else and started talking to this young woman. I don't remember anything about that encounter except that she wore a khaki uniform and at one point in our conversation she turned her face upward and said, "Oh how I love You Jesus. Thank you Lord."
 2. She was someplace else, with Someone else. Utterly captivated with the Lord. If her face could've shone like Moses' did after encountering Yahweh, it would have.
 3. I was really, really young when I met her, but I was forever marked by that encounter. Reflecting back on that moment, I believe she spent her life in the presence of the Lord, that her walk with Jesus was a very priestly one, seeking His continual presence. She showed me what it is to behold His beauty in the ordinary milieu of life.
 4. She showed me Jesus the Beautiful (priest).
***Psalms 27:4** 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.*
 - ii. Next: Maria the aesthetician [the Truth]
 1. In my late teens and early 20's I was very busy making a shipwreck of my faith. If it was grievous to the Lord, I was probably involved in it.... I do not come from a squeaky-clean background. My life has been a journey through dark darks to glorious light.
 2. So, around 21 years old I'm getting a facial and the aesthetician was this woman I'd known in high school. Only since then, Jesus had gotten ahold of her and He was her Strong Tower! I've seen the same zeal in others since, they're a teensy bit scary.
 3. Well, my faithful Lord sent Maria in to my life at a pivotal moment. We talked and caught up. Eventually she started talking about Jesus, asked me some very pointed questions, and then did not flinch from confronting me on my sin; in no uncertain terms. Turns out, she had come out of some of the same things I was still involved in. So she laid down some unflinching truth for me.

4. Ultimately, she said, "Tricia, you are destroying your life and Jesus sees you, grieved by your rebellion."
5. Maria the aesthetician knew that truth was a Person. She unashamedly proclaimed biblical truth, the reality of my sin and called me to repentance.
6. She showed me Jesus the Truth (prophet).
***Matthew 4:17** From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

iii. And finally: Mae Burt – the senior saint [the Good]

1. A few years later, in my mid-20's I was at my first true church – God did use Maria to bring me to repentance!
2. At that church, I befriended a woman named Mae Burt. She was in her late 80's, strong in the Lord, strong in mind, strong in spirit. I was drawn to her. There was something so orderly, so right about her walk of faith that I wanted to know her better.
3. I'd heard that she knitted – balaclavas, for the military – so I asked her to teach me to knit, as a good way to spend some time alone with her. She gladly invited me to her home.
4. In our conversations, I learned that this good, kind, humble woman had served the Lord faithfully for a lifetime.
5. And she *tried* to teach me to knit. That was an abysmal failure. I'd been crocheting since I was 6 years old and that second needle, just wasn't gonna happen for me. None of that mattered though.
6. Because before I left, I asked Mae to pray with me. I thought we'd just sit in our chairs, bow our heads and say a little prayer. That's not how it went.
7. That woman's faith was one of authority; there was a kind of power to it. She stood up – because you stand in the presence of the Lord! – invited me to stand, faced me, and held out her mighty old hands. I placed my hands in hers, rattled off my own meager prayer; and then she began to pray.
8. She prayed **for** me. She prayed **over** me. She **prayed down heaven on** me. It was as if she knew I was at the beginning of my life of faith, and she was nearing the end of hers – approaching that time when her faith would become sight.
9. I'm going to say something and if you would please allow me to speak from my heart and not be too scrupulous, it was as if this woman was evoking and imparting covenant faithfulness right there in our midst. She was praying things in to right order over my life, even as a king declares proper rule and declares it good.
10. Mae Burt showed me Jesus the Good (king).

Psalm 27:13 *I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!*

IV. These three saints: displaying the good, the true and beautiful.

- a. Their individual affections reflected the offices of Christ as either prophet, priest, or king. And they did so in ordinary, unseen ways. Yet, Christ was made known in *untold* ways.
 - i. Those “super”-natural attributes were accomplishing eternal good work.
 - ii. Here’s something important though, not one of them knew the impact they had...the immeasurable meaning of their private, personal faith in action.
- b. Sometimes, you don’t get to know the *extent* of your good works this side of heaven.
- c. But here is what you can know: your individual affections stirred and offered *in Christ*, make Him known. Because **your affections FOR Jesus, REVEAL Jesus.**
- d. All that to say, Christ in you is somebody’s park worker, or somebody’s Maria...or Mae Burt.
- e. May He make Himself known as you display the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

V. To close, I’d like to share a reflection on Psalm 27 by Dr. Harry Reeder. He wrote this in TableTalk Magazine:

“David desired to continually abide in the house of the Lord because it is in His sanctuary that we meet the true, the beautiful, and the good. He is the Sanctuary, and now, amazingly, He makes us in to His sanctuary. We are the temple of the Lord. So, let’s expand our prayer: O Lord, allows us to behold the One who is true, beautiful, and good. Make us a sanctuary that others may see the truth, beauty, and good of the triune God in Your church. By Your spirit, through your Son, and for Your glory, may they see You, for there is none like You. True are You, O Lord. Beautiful are You, O Savior. Good are You, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.” (TableTalk Sept 2010, P. 25)