

Before we get into the text this morning, I imagine you, like me, have seen so many pictures of the devastation and the fallout of the wildfires in Maui. So we wanted to spend a moment in prayer lifting up those impacted by the fires.

Lord, there is so much devastation and brokenness, and God, we in this area, are all too familiar with those scenes of areas, houses, and property where people's lives are torn apart by a natural disaster such as a wildfire. Lord, last we read, ninety-three lives were taken, and we pray for those ninety-three souls, those children of yours. We pray for the countless family members that are now impacted where this Sunday looks different from last Sunday. We pray for those first responders who are on the ground as they continue to work tirelessly around the clock to either search and rescue or continue to just rebuild. Lord, we pray that you would be with them, energize them, and give them the motivation to keep on. I pray for the churches in Maui that they will rise up and meet those needs. I pray for us that we would be provoked into action as well in how we see fit. And so, God, I pray for the state of Hawaii and the island of Maui. Our hearts break because this is not what was intended. Paul writes in Romans 8 that creation groans for the day when it's made new. And Lord, I can't help but think that creation is groaning for the day when there are no more wildfires. We pray alongside those loved ones that you encourage them, be with them. God, we offer this to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

You know, one of the reasons I think those moments stand out so starkly to us is it's an ugliness in the world. We are familiar a little bit with that obviously in this area in the recent past, seeing those fires rip through parts of our state as well. And I think we feel that response because death is an intrusion into life. It was never intended to go in that direction. But it also contrasts with what we intuitively know is the beauty of this world.

In the text today, we're going to look at essentially the contrast between ugliness and beauty. You see that line right in the middle of Mark 14 in which Jesus looks at this woman's act, this lavish act of worship, and says she has done a beautiful thing. I really want us to focus on this in some ways. The sermon this morning is much more a meditation on the beauty of this woman's act that enables us and provokes us into action.

Do you remember the first time you saw something so beautiful it provoked action or it caused you to stop? Do you remember that? Maybe for you, it was the first time you walked through Yosemite Valley, and your eyes were just transfixed on something

like El Capitan, and it enraptured your soul. Maybe for you, it was the birth of a child in which you saw them take that first breath. Maybe it was gazing upon an original piece of art or a movie. I don't know what it is, but do you remember that time, that sense in which you saw something that was beautiful that seemed to transcend the here and now?

I'll never forget; this was years ago now, and I can't remember how old my oldest daughter Madison was at the time, but we had gotten home late at night, and it was probably one of the first times that she was out past dark where she at least understood what was going on. You forget that with little ones, often they're just in bed before it gets dark. I remember we pulled up in our driveway, and I was getting her out of the car and carrying her in, and all of a sudden, she goes, "Daddy, stop!" And I go, "What, Madison? What is it?" She points to the sky and says, "What are those?" I looked at her and said, "What do you mean? Do you mean the stars?" She goes, "Oh, those are stars. Daddy, I like stars. Stars are beautiful."

I love that image because there's an innocence of a child, but there's also the reminder that, for her, it was a moment where beauty transcended the here and now. I had walked that driveway countless times and walked right past those stars and missed the beauty. There's something in the beauty that provokes us to action. There's something in beauty when we take it in for just what it is that stirs in us, that causes us to question the here and now. It moves us beyond viewing the world as sheer utility, something for us to survive in, to get through, to acquire for our own consumption.

In an article in *Comment* magazine not too long ago, the author Laura Cerbus writes this.

The beauty with which God endows creation is his own. All beautiful things share in some way with the beauty of God. This attribute of God is declared most perfectly in his Son, whose life and death reveal the shape of divine beauty through his incarnation, suffering, and resurrection. Jesus Christ redeemed the whole world, not just the souls of people, but also the entire cosmos. Cerbus, *Comment Magazine*

What Laura is getting at in this piece is how this beauty so draws our affections and our hearts upward toward God when we see it. And then later in the article, she talks about how, in the modern world, we've flattened things where we don't want to believe in something transcendent, so beauty is relegated to the

side. We tend to focus more on utility. We mechanize the world. The world is about creating widgets and things that enable us to acquire more, consume more, to feel more satisfaction.

Later in the article, she says,

“But beauty continues to be powerful. The poets and the artists among us attest to this. And regardless of the prior assumptions about the nature of the world, their attentiveness to aesthetics allows transcendence to break through. The beauty of the world does not exist to gratify us, but to glorify God.” Cerbus, Comment Magazine

When was the last time you saw something beautiful that provoked you to glorify God? The example in this text is you see the ugliness of the chief priests, scribes, and Judas. You see Mark contrasting their character—caught in this dark underworld of utilization or trying to mechanize Jesus—what can Jesus give us, contrasted with this beautiful example of a woman who’s so transfixed on the beauty of Jesus and the beauty of the person of Jesus that she ends up pouring out all she had in worship to Jesus.

Mark is writing in a way where he wants us to contrast these two stories. We’ve talked about this. He loves to tell two stories in the shape of a sandwich where he says there’s a piece of bread, if you will, on this side that’s telling a part of the story. In the middle, there’s a different narrative that’s meant to elaborate the outside of the sandwich, and the outside is supposed to highlight the inside. And so in verses 10 and 11, you see Judas’s betrayal, and it’s supposed to mirror the story of the chief priest and the scribes, all of which elevate this unnamed woman who comes in and does this beautiful thing for Jesus.

I want us to meditate on that because most of us if you are like me, tend to approach the world in a mechanical way. We tend to just survive the world. But beauty confounds us in a world like this. In a world that’s obsessed with utility and economic output, there’s nothing that beauty can “do” for us; beauty just is. Jesus, in some way, by his very presence, this beautiful savior, the very expression of God on earth, just “is,” and we have to do something with that, the embodiment of love.

Mark is turning that corner. We’re close to the end of the story, and in just a week or so, we’re going to see Jesus having his last supper with the disciples. We’re towards the last few days and hours of Jesus’ life.

Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. “But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.” Mark 14:1-2

Hold that image of the sandwich. This is the first slice of bread if you will. Mark is drawing out this dark underbelly that he’s been tracing for quite a while now, where the chief priest and

the religious leaders at the time are quite upset with Jesus, so much so that they’re trying to secretly kill him. How do we eliminate this Jesus who’s challenging our very authority? But they’re posed with a problem here because what’s happening in Jerusalem is the Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

At this point, Jerusalem’s population was probably around 30,000 people, but during Passover, the estimates of those that would come to Jerusalem from all over the Mediterranean world were anywhere from a couple hundred thousand to multiple millions traveling from everywhere to come to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was that celebration of the great act of God through the book of Exodus, in which God liberated the people from slavery in Egypt. It was a festival, a reminder of God’s liberating work in their history.

So the chief priests were trying to scheme how to kill him, but they’re actually quite wise because they say, “Hey, let’s not do this during the festival, or the people may riot.” It makes sense when you consider hundreds of thousands of people in the city; there’s a very real threat to which they have to be careful as to how they navigate this particular scene. Now remember, Jesus had just been condemning them earlier for two chapters in which he’s challenging the religious authorities over and over. Tensions are high. Jesus is provoking them into action. But you get the sense that there’s a dark cloud over this moment. There’s a tension, a weight they’re experiencing. Notice the way Mark contrasts this with the next scene.

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly. vv. 3-5

We’re in the middle of the sandwich now. Bethany was just a few miles outside of the city of Jerusalem, and the scene shifts. You move from the tense, chaotic, dark cloud of what’s happening in the city to a scene in which Jesus is reclining at a table at the house of someone named Simon the Leper. I love that Mark adds that little tiny note of Simon the Leper. It’s a reminder that lepers at that time would never have been touched. You wouldn’t recline with a leper, but Jesus tends to spend time with those on the fringes of society. He loved them. He sat with them; he ate with them. He broke all of those kinds of social norms.

So Jesus is reclining at the table, and this woman wanders into the dinner; she wasn’t there originally. She’s unnamed, which should remind us of the widow from a chapter earlier who gave the two coins. She, too, was an unnamed woman and yet was also highlighted as the exemplary disciple, the follower of Jesus. You see that with this woman here. This unnamed woman walks

into the dinner, and it says she's carrying an alabaster jar. Now, alabaster would've been an expensive material. Probably this was a family heirloom. It could have been potentially even her dowry that would've been given if she were to marry. It was, in a lot of ways, her life savings. It was everything she had. Those who were indignant with her act here will say it was worth a year's salary. Consider a year's salary of oil or nard!

Most likely, the jar was sealed in such a way that if you were to take the top off, you could pour out just a little bit and give it to Jesus. This was probably used in that fashion in which you could take a little bit, and they'd take some of the oil, and as they're going out or whatnot for the night, they put just a little bit on. It was meant to last for a lifetime. But this woman breaks the jar. The moment in which the jar is broken, it is no longer being passed to the next generation. It's emblematic of her doing everything with full abandon. It's taking the whole jar of oil and saying, this is the gift to Jesus.

So in the midst of this, she breaks the jar and pours the perfume on his head. All of this, by the way, is the imagery of royal anointing, which is fascinating because this woman doesn't know that Jesus is about to die and be buried, yet she's anointing him as king, not having even realized what she's doing.

Actually, we resonate with what happens next. Those who are there, particularly as I think of our culture today, we'd probably respond the same way. We would look at this act and say that it was a year's wages. We could have sold that, used the money, and given that to the poor. It's something I think you and I, or our culture, would also respond to. What a waste. Couldn't we do something better with that? Wouldn't Jesus want you to do something better with that? So she breaks the jar and pours it on his head. There's all this indignant language going on around her. They rebuke her strongly, and Jesus is sitting there, and he's experiencing this scene.

"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." vv. 6-9

(Quick side note: here we are telling that story in memory of her as the gospel's being proclaimed). At this moment, Jesus is contrasted with the people there. He immediately comes to her defense and says, leave her alone; she has done a beautiful thing. I think this moment confounds those disciples. And honestly, it confounds us a bit because, as I mentioned in the beginning, beauty just is; it doesn't necessarily feel like it accomplishes something. We are so wired to think through how we accomplish

things. We mechanize the world. We want to progress in logical, rational ways. So, this act of beauty seems to confound us. And Jesus goes so strong as to say, "Listen, you will always have the poor with you."

This is one of those verses you don't often see plastered on shirts, right? It's interesting because, quite honestly, this isn't the Jesus that our culture really likes. We're big on Jesus as the social justice guy who goes out and cares for the marginalized and the poor, but here Jesus seems to be in a different realm in which he says, "Listen, the poor you will always have with you. But me, you won't always have, and what she has done is a good thing."

Now a few words on this because I've heard this verse often used to justify, not said explicitly this way, but to justify complacency towards action and justice and working for the marginalized that Jesus is quoting in Deuteronomy 15:11. I want to read you a little bit of that section because I think it's important to understand that Jesus is in no way down on caring for the poor. He's literally pulling from this section of scripture that's talking about the Old Testament, God's law towards economic justice for both Israel and the neighboring nations around them. We'll get to verse 11 in a second, but I want to read it, starting in verse 1.

At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite. They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because the Lord's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you. However, there need be no poor people among you... Deut. 15:1-4a

It's interesting that at the beginning of this section, it says there doesn't need to be poor people from among you. But ten verses later, in verse 11, Deuteronomy and Jesus will say, the poor will always be with you. So which is it? Should the poor be with us? Will they not be with us? I think that's the point. The point is there is an ideal we are called to live in which Jesus or God is calling the Israelite nation to say there need not be poor people among you.

However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.

If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. Be careful not to

harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land. vv. 4b-11

Okay, what's the point? When Jesus quotes this particular verse, he's evoking this whole section of scripture. So if we read this verse and think it leads towards complacency for care or complacency towards care for the marginalized and the poor, I would caution us that we've missed the forest for the trees.

What Jesus is saying is there's a unique moment in this time in which this woman has rightly identified who he is as the very Messiah, the coming King of the universe, and therefore this act of beauty is appropriate in that time. But to use this text to justify that complacency is to miss the greater picture of what Jesus is offering, and this woman, for the first time, gets it.

Over and over in the Gospel of Mark, we've watched Mark place these characters, the ones who we think are supposed to get it—the religious leaders, the disciples, those who we think have it figured out, but they can't quite see who Jesus is in the context of the entire scriptures. But this woman sees it. She sees the beauty of Jesus and responds in such a way that Jesus says it is beautiful.

See, it's not about this dichotomy of do we give to the poor or do we worship? But rather, it's that tension of both that says there are times in which we lavish and pour out all that we have to Jesus because, in some ways, the same could have been said about the woman who gave the two coins. She, too, gave everything she had, but couldn't that have been given to the poor? But Jesus affirms her act of worship as well. What we're noticing with these two women is this lavish giving of everything we have to Jesus.

Jesus, in his rebuke of those frustrated with him here in Mark 14, says she did what she could. She gave everything she had. I think of the widow with the two coins. It wasn't much if the world is viewed through the lens of utility and not beauty, but for this woman, the dollar value is exorbitant. It's still the proper act to give that in worship to Jesus.

Where do you see beauty? Is Jesus beautiful to you, or is he only useful? I think it's a question we need to sit with because many of us, like the chief priests and the elders and Judas, view Jesus as useful. We look at him, and we ask what Jesus could give us. But have you pondered the beauty of Jesus in such a way that this woman says, “I will bring everything I have because the only

proper response to the beauty of Jesus is a beautiful act?” It's to sit and be with Jesus in such a way that says; I will pour out everything I have. Jesus says, “Leave her alone; she has done a beautiful thing.”

Starting in verse 10, we see the last piece of the sandwich, and we go back to the bread. You watch this in contrast to what we just saw. We return to that dark cloud. *“Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over” (vv. 10-11).*

Isn't that a stark contrast to what we just witnessed at the dinner table? It pans out, and you watch Judas, who we assume is there with Jesus seeing this action take place. And the beauty of Jesus at this moment doesn't turn Judas towards Jesus in worship but actually towards the worship of the self. And for whatever reason, it was a costly act that he had witnessed with this woman, and that action doesn't propel worship. It propels him to go to the chief priest and say; I'll turn him over. I, too, am sick of this.

It's sad because there are two things in those two verses that I think stand out. First, the chief priests were delighted. They were delighted that they were going to get what they had been longing for. They'd find a way to secretly turn Jesus over to kill him without inciting that riot. And the second thing is it says, they promised to give him money. What an interesting response. The text doesn't say that Judas was one of those indignant that wanted that money to be spent on the poor, but I can't help but think he was. Yet, at the same time, in the next scene, he's taking the money for his own good.

What we'll recognize is that both Judas and this woman gave their entire life in this scene, but what we find later is that for Judas, it cost his life out of regret and shame, because after betraying Jesus, he throws himself off a cliff in guilt. Both were costly acts. One was in the direction of Jesus; the other was in the direction of self.

Church, do you view Jesus as beautiful, or do you view Jesus as useful? For Judas, Jesus was just useful. It was a means to his own end. It was a means to satiate his anger, his rage, his own pride, and his own ego to get those 30 pieces of gold. To get that small amount, Jesus was useful, but he was not beautiful. For this woman, Jesus was beautiful. It swelled up in her this desire to worship, to respond back, and the only way she knew how was to pour out her very life savings, everything she had before Jesus.

In closing, my question is, what is it that enabled this woman's response? How do we take up this example? Because it's clear that this is the example of apprenticeship to Jesus, of what it means to follow Jesus. We have this example of the woman, so how do we then get our hearts into a position in which we, too, respond to the beauty of Jesus? And I think it comes back to what

Jesus said in verse 6, which I've quoted a few times here. "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "*Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.*"

The word "beautiful," here is this Greek word *kalos*, which means both beautiful or your Bible might have translated it as good, but it's even more than just a good thing. It has the connotation of a good or beautiful thing that inspires. It's meant to not just be like a good stamp but a good that provokes us to do something more. I think Mark uses this word, and Jesus uses this to describe the woman's act because he wants those around to be inspired by this woman's example.

I think for us; it's that our lives are to take the same shape as the woman. If I were to summarize what I think is happening with this woman, for us who would be like her, it's that our lives should be shaped by the beauty of Jesus. So often, as I mentioned, we approach Jesus about what he can give to us. Most of our discipleship, my own included, in its immature infancy state, approaches Jesus for the benefit of Jesus. But rarely do we arrive at that state of maturity and following Jesus where we recognize Jesus is the treasure all along, not what Jesus can give us, but Jesus himself! Amen!

Communion relationship with Jesus is the goods; that's what we're after. Of course, he offers salvation and forgiveness and all those sorts of things. Of course, part of what makes Jesus so beautiful is the act of love in which the embodiment of love is what he exemplifies. But never forget that we come to Jesus for Jesus. It is Jesus who is beautiful. This woman wanders into the meal, and she understands it. She sees the Messiah, the one who'd been spoken of over generation after generation, and she pours out her life on Jesus.

Is Jesus beautiful to you, or is he useful? Where do you land with Jesus? Where do you see him? There are so many responses to this story. You see, the chief priests are caught up in their own egos, worried about Jesus threatening their life. Maybe that's you. Maybe you recognize that Jesus will threaten everything that you hold dear. Not in a demeaning way, not in a bad way, but he will demand that we lay "that" before him. And so some of us here, we're threatened by that.

And I get that because it means you'll have to change the way you live. It means that career advancement might take a different trajectory. It means the idols that you harbor in your heart; it might look different. It means that you don't always get what you desire. Jesus will, in fact, threaten you. Do you respond like the chief priest?

Others of you are like those indignant at the dinner table in which you look at this act of worship and say, shouldn't that have been spent on the poor? And you look at Jesus as purely this social justice figure that can move throughout the world, bringing that

justice, which is a good thing, but you've missed it. He's also Lord worthy of your worship. Are you like those who were indignant?

Or maybe you're like Judas, and you see Jesus, and you say, "Jesus can get me a lot." So you use him, you mechanize him, you use him as a utility for your life, and maybe even you betray him to fulfill something as cheap as money in your life.

Or are you like this woman who looks at the profound beauty of Jesus and responds with a heart of worship and lavishness pouring out over his head? For Judas, Jesus was useful. Judas instrumentalized him to his own ends. For the woman, Jesus was beautiful. She was enraptured. Her relationship with him responds with the beauty that just is and provokes it to action. So how then do we get to that place like this woman? I want to throw three practical steps at you that I think you can take to move toward the heart of this woman.

Curate Your Input

The first is you need to curate your input. What I mean by that is we live in a world filled with ugliness. We can take in movies, media, headlines, friendships, and relationships, all this way that curates your mind towards the ugliness in the world. I think what's beautiful about this woman's example is that when she encountered Jesus, she was ready to see the beauty in Jesus. She'd filled her mind and imagination with the stories of old, of generation after generation, telling about this Jesus Messiah, so that when the moment arose, she recognized Jesus for who Jesus was.

So what are the inputs in your life? If each night you just watch three hours of Netflix that's filled with violence and revenge and things like that, is it a surprise that that's what comes out of our life? A heart and a mind bent towards that? In the Fall, we're launching our second practice and our rule of life, and we're going to spend a year looking at the idea of renewing your mind. We are going to talk about what it mean to fill our minds and imaginations in such a way that it bends our souls toward Jesus.

What are the inputs in your life? Are they shaping your mind towards the good, the true, and the beautiful? Or are they shaping your minds and your hearts away from the way of Jesus? Now, this doesn't mean that we disconnect and abandon the world and put our heads in the sand. That's why I use the word curate. Is there more negativity that you witness? Is there more negativity through the algorithms that hate sells that throws a ton at you, that is shaping your view of the world into the negative?

Or do you view this world the way God does? It's a beautiful place filled with his goodness. Think about Jesus teaching in Matthew when he's speaking on worry. And what does he say? He says, look at the birds and look at the flowers. Do they toil? Do they spin? This world is filled with beauty if we have eyes to see it. It's filled with goodness if we have eyes to see it.

But so often, when we look at the world through the lens of economics or utility, we see the ugliness. What would it look like for you to curate your inputs? What are the things in your life that are giving shape to your worldview? Can I challenge you to fill that with the beautiful? Is your mind ready to see Jesus as beautiful? Curate your input.

Contemplate the Life of Jesus

Second, if curating your inputs is about making sure you're eliminating those things that are bending your heart and your mind towards the negative, then we need to fill it with something. So the second thing you can do is contemplate the life of Jesus. I think we forget this often that it's historically incredible that you get to hold a Bible in your hand. It is rare in the history of the world that you have a Bible you can bring with you and sit with and spend time in the scripture, saturating your mind on the life of Jesus. I encourage you to contemplate the life of Jesus; saturate your mind. Seize that privilege that we have in the modern world to sit with Jesus. For the disciples, they spent every waking moment for three years with Jesus, and they still missed it, and they still didn't get it. How do we expect just a couple hours on a weekend or whatnot to actually shape our minds in the way where we are saturated with the life of Jesus?

I think we're called to contemplate the life of Jesus. The first task of any disciple of Jesus is to just be with him and spend time with him. If you were to see Jesus as beautiful, you just need to hold Jesus. You need to be in his presence, spend time with him. What does that look like for you? For me, it's the first thing in the morning. I wake up early before my family wakes up, and I spend time in the scriptures. I read a few Psalms in the morning. Usually, I read a part of the gospel, sometimes a New Testament letter, and I just sit with Jesus. I try to get familiar with his life. It doesn't mean you have to study. That's a good thing. It doesn't necessarily mean you have to study and break out all the commentaries. I just "be" with Jesus, contemplating the life of Jesus.

I think of Philippians, that other text where Paul is talking to the Philippians. He says, "*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things*" (Phil. 4:8). If Jesus is not the center of your attention, is there any reason that we would expect something different than a life that's not bent towards Jesus? Is Jesus useful to you, or is he beautiful? So we curate our inputs, and we contemplate the life of Jesus.

Cultivate a Rich Prayer Life

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

And then, lastly, we cultivate a rich life of prayer. This is where I find it such a beautiful thing because Jesus is not just something we behold from a distance, but you are invited into a relationship with Jesus. You were invited into a life of prayer in which you begin to speak with Jesus and respond to Jesus. You come to him in the scriptures and respond, "Jesus, I'm seeing this ugliness in the world, and I want to bring this before you." You begin to speak with him. You sit with him in a way that brings your longing, the deepness in your soul, before Jesus in prayer.

It's not just that we behold it from a distance. This woman moved closer to Jesus, and so can you and I. Prayer is that gift that doesn't have to be this magical thing. It doesn't mean you take three hours with incense burning candles and all that. It can be a simple prayer throughout your day of "Be still and know that I am God." That's been my prayer for the past couple of weeks. I don't know why, but I've just come back to that verse from Psalm 46:10. And throughout my day, before I go into meetings before I take calls, I'll say that prayer over and over, a simple breath prayer to remind myself that the person of Jesus is always before me, always available to me.

So we create our inputs, we contemplate the life of Jesus, and we cultivate a rich life of prayer. Because I believe it's in that our minds slowly shape towards the beauty of God. Because when you respond, when you see the beauty of God like this woman, the only natural response is to respond with a beautiful act. It's to respond in worship.

I'm reminded of Augustine's words he wrote so many centuries ago where he says, "beauty of all things beautiful." He's talking about God. He says, "God is beauty of all things beautiful." As you go about your day, when you see beauty, that beauty belongs to God. When you go about your day, and you encounter a loving act from someone somewhere, Jesus is in the midst of that because what we know of Jesus is that he is the true, the good, and the beautiful. So when you encounter the true, the good, and the beautiful, those things are meant to provoke us and turn our hearts and our minds back to Jesus. It's to bring us back to the very presence of God because God is "beauty of all things."

Beautiful. That is who God is. Church, do you see the beauty of Jesus? Do you see it like this woman? I want to leave you with the question that I asked earlier.

Is Jesus beautiful to you?

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