

“IMMEASURABLE RICHES”

Beauty - The true and exceeding riches of Christ for those in rags.

*We long for beauty. Some of you long to be beautiful. You long to be seen and treasured – not necessarily by the world, but definitely by one – You long to be seen and treasured by one as beautiful. So you work, spend, and give yourself to the hope, the longing that one will find us beautiful. Ladies, this is not altogether wrong – longing to be beautiful. God created you to uniquely reflect his beauty in a way men cannot. In I Peter 3, God says it is not wrong to long to be beautiful. He goes on to say - where you get things wrong - is **where you think you will find your beauty.***

Others of us long to find beauty. So you work and spend and give yourself to that beauty which draws you to it. That beautiful thing might be a woman – that you will do anything to be around. That beautiful thing might be a house or the idea of how happy your family will be in that house. And because your heart sees that as beautiful, you will go into great debt to have it. Beauty moves us – because something in our soul longs for beauty. Defining beauty is impossible. It is different to every person – in the eye of the beholder if you will - but we know it when we see it because of what it does.

Beauty – moves us to adore something or someone

Beauty moves us to spend a lot of money on surgeries and clothes in the hopes – we will be found beautiful. Beauty moves us to endure things we don't like (football games or musicals) so we can be with the one we are drawn to. Beauty moves us to spend great money and great time on a car we rarely drive because it is too beautiful to get dirty. Beauty moves us to give up everything – to have it. Let's don't fool ourselves – we long for beauty. Beauty allures, it attracts – it is a strong force that moves us. Yet – for some reason, most of the beautiful things we are moved toward – eventually stop satisfying us. The allure one day fades, but the longing for beauty does not.

What if ... the beauty you have longed for your whole life – is in Jesus – is Jesus? (repeat)

Riches to Rags – *this is the movement of God to us as we have seen so far in our Advent series.*

I- God breaks 400 years of quiet and reminds us: He never stops speaking and never will. *His message thru the angel was the promise he spoke for 2000 yrs: I am coming to make all things right – and, I'm coming now.*

II – Last week, Almighty God steps out of the majesty of who He is and enters the humiliating form of a baby. Riches became rags. He alone who is worthy of all - gave it all up - to come to make all things right.

III – This week: Jesus the rich became rags so we could know the riches of God. *What are the riches of God? What if the riches of God – is the beauty you have longed for – and what if this beauty is in Jesus – is Jesus?*

Would it change who you are and how you live? David, who God said was a man after His heart, said,

Psalms 27:4 (NIV) One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: 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 seek him in his temple.

How would the beauty of Jesus change who we are and how we live?

Ephesians is a letter in God's words to us that begins by detailing and describing the riches of God, the beauty of God - given to us who were longing for beauty. ***It is the very truth of the beauty of Jesus in us.***

01. The Beauty of Jesus in Us

Ephesians 1:3 (ESV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

Jesus is the means by which God gives us (*blessing*) the fullness of His beauty.

Jesus is the conduit for all God has for us in this life and the life to come. 15x's in this passage the phrase “in Christ or the equivalent is used. Why – all the beauty of Christ is given to us only by being “in Christ”.

How do we become “in Christ”? By trusting our soul to the person and work of Jesus as our only way to be right and acceptable before God. Are you in Christ? Let's make this personal.

- When we become “in Christ”, what are the immeasurable riches of Jesus' beauty that God gives you and I? *These gifts are not about what we do – these are who we ARE in Christ.*

Ephesians 1:4-5 (ESV) 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us

- In Christ, you are **God's chosen** based on His love.

God choosing you is not like some cosmic game of schoolyard kickball where you were chosen because you were good, or good for the team, or at least not as bad as others he could have chosen. No – you were chosen by God solely because of one thing - His love.

Ephesians 1:4 (ESV) even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him,

- In Christ, you are **holy and blameless** before God.

We have an account before God based on our thoughts and actions. And because of our rebellion – our account is unholy and full of blame. We are guilty before holy God and our judgment is God's just punishment. Yet, in Christ – because of Christ – our account only reads – holy and blameless. Our debt of guilt and punishment was fully paid by Christ. This is what God made us from eternity past through the person and work of Christ.

Ephesians 1:5 (ESV) he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

- In Christ, you are **His adopted daughter/son** – forever His.

Because of our rebellion, we were outcasts, orphans separated from God and his family. In Christ – because of Christ – we have been adopted into God's family as a son/daughter. In this culture, much like ours, adoption meant a change of identity (new name and new family), a change in position (not on the street, but in a home), and a change that was permanent (for life). We have a new identity – a new position – and we have a new future that is forever. Not because of anything we have done but simply because a good Father chose you in Christ.

Ephesians 1:6 (ESV) to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

- In Christ, you are **living praise** to the overwhelming greatness/glory of God.

There is the behind the scenes movie piece that focused on a dog and his part in the movie. What made this piece interesting is that the dog had never been in a movie. He was a rescue dog who had been adopted and developed by his trainer. In the piece, there is a moment when the dog comes into a room where much of the cast and crew are and everyone in the room applauds. Behind the dog was his trainer, his master & when the applause started the dog turned to face his trainer. As he did, all eyes and applause went from the dog to the trainer. Everyone in the room, realized the real star was the trainer. The dog was a mut who had a life and now a career as an actor because of his master. Without Christ, we are hopelessly broken and under punishment for our sin. In Christ, we are alive and have a purpose because of our Master. And rightly so – we, our lives, become living praise to the overwhelming greatness of God.

Ephesians 1:7-8 (ESV) 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

- In Christ, you are **free from the power of sin and death** to be loved by your Father God.

With money, Amy Beam redeems young Yazidi girls who have been captured by ISIS soldiers when they stormed through Iraq. She loves and hates her job. Loves it because she is freeing sex slaves. Hates it because she knows in one sense she is funding ISIS. But, she believes it is worth it every time she sees the look in the young girl she frees. She knows it is worth it every time she gets to unite a young girl with their father and she sees the father's eyes. You and I were redeemed by the cost of Christ's life. This is now part of our new identity in Christ – we are free from rebellion and death, and free to be loved by a perfect Father. Jesus is saying – worth it, worth it!

Eph 1:9-10 / 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

- In Christ, you are **being restored** through the finished work of Christ.

In Christ, we get to know God's ultimate will for this world – those in Christ and this world are being restored to how we were meant to be. We know this current state of the world is not how things are meant to be. This is a powerful and beautiful truth to hold onto in a world where tragedy and brokenness are the norm.

- In Christ, you are an **heir of a restored nature and life** with God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Ephesians 1:11-14 (ESV) In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

All through this passage, we see the work of God the Father (planning), God the Son (coming to earth to redeem), and God the Spirit (moving into us). The are two parts of our inheritance. 1st – Our nature is being restored to reflect the perfect image of Christ. 2nd – We are being to the life we were meant to have – an eternal life in the powerful and beautiful presence of God the Father, Son, and Spirit. Prodigal Son illus. as an opposite picture of this. And the deposit of the Spirit is God's way of saying – your inheritance begins now.

\$10,000 gift from a lady I barely knew who had just come into money in the last year of her life. 1) It selfishly made me want more – how to get more. 2) Made me want to know her – how, why did she give so extravagantly.

When we receive an amazing and beautiful gift that is beyond words from someone we don't know – we want to meet the giver because we want to know who gives this amazingly and beautifully.

So, I pursued her before I moved – and she was very nice, but very average. Her gift was far more amazing than her if I am honest. That is who we are as people. But God gives amazing gifts and listen – he is even more amazing. Every gift, every blessing we have received in Christ, because of Christ – is not just a gift that stands alone. At salvation, you didn't receive 10,000 individual gifts like one uber great Christmas for you. Rather, you received one Great gift in Christ that who has 10,000 + aspects to Him.

Jesus is the means by which God gives us (blessing) the fullness of His beauty. Yes.

But, Jesus IS the fullness (the Blessing) of God's beauty – and his Spirit lives in you!

Every gift – every bit of the riches of Christ's beauty – is simply a reflection of the beauty of Christ in you!

02. The Beauty of Christ

- Jesus is The Blessing / The fullness of God's beauty in one gift.

Genesis 12:1, 3 (ESV) 1 Now the Lord said to Abram ... 3 in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Ephesians 1:3 (ESV) Blessed be the God ... who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing

The blessing God promised for all people through Abraham – is Jesus. He is the fullness of all God longs to give us. He is the fullness of ALL God's beauty. Notice all beauty of Christ – we have received.

- Jesus is the Chosen One. / We are God's chosen one because ...

Eph 1:4 (ESV) even as he chose us *in him* before the foundation of the world **He is the Chosen One.** Chosen from before time, before our rebellion, so we could become His **chosen ones.**

It is part of the mystery and **beauty of Jesus** that he chose to come and make all things right before God created the world. Before God did anything – The chosen one had made a choice.

Look at Jesus – the beautiful Chosen One is in you!

- Jesus is the Holy and Blameless One. / We are holy and blameless because ...

Ephesians 1:4 (ESV) even as he chose us in him ... that we should be holy and blameless before him.

*That account we had that was full on blame because of our unholy rebellion toward God – is now holy and blameless because Jesus was deposited in our account – not some actions – Jesus. The **beauty of this**, we will never be holy & blameless by our actions. But we will always be beautifully holy & blameless because of Jesus. This is who He is! **Look at Jesus – the beautiful Holy and Blameless One is in you!***

- Jesus is God the Father's "Beloved" Son. / We are God's adopted daughter /son because ...

Ephesians 1:5-6 (ESV) 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, ... 6 with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

*We are sons and daughters because Jesus is the beloved Son who was given up for us. And, because He was given up, we share the share the **beauty of the Father's love** for His one and only Son.*

Beauty moved God to give up everything he had with His only Son Jesus, so we could have all His beauty, all of Him. Look at Jesus – the beautiful Beloved Son is in you!

- Jesus is Redeemer. / We are freed, redeemed from sin and death because ...

Ephesians 1:7 (ESV) In him we have redemption through his blood, ...

We are redeemed because HE IS REDEEMER. Like those Yazidi girls – we were hopelessly bound to be slaves forever. They couldn't free themselves & we couldn't free ourselves. Only Jesus, by His life, could set us free.

The **beauty of this** - God doesn't free you through His power or riches. God freed you through the ugliness of His humble Son's death. **Look at Jesus – the beautiful Redeemer is in you!**

- Jesus is Restorer. / *We are heirs of a restored nature and life because ...*

Ephesians 1:9-10 (ESV) 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

We know God's will to restore all things in Christ – because Christ the Restorer is in us restoring now.

God is transforming us to reflect the beauty of Christ now. *We aren't just given gifts to make us better people. We aren't just given gifts to make us happy. We are given the riches of Christ's beauty – because God is changing us into the beautiful image of Christ through these gifts.*

Christ in us, the Beauty of God in us, changes us – transforms us into His glorious beautiful image.

As we are changed - it changes our standard of beauty and the beauty we run after in this life. How?

Men when you were first attracted to your wife or if you're single, when you were first attracted to your girlfriend – you were moved to do all sorts of crazy things to be around her. Her beauty moved you to adore her. Then over time – something happen. You grew familiar with her beauty and it stopped wowing you or even worse, in your eyes her beauty faded. If this has happened to you - why does this happen?

Your standard of beauty is wrong.

When your standard of beauty is only the things that please our senses – we will constantly be on the look – we will constantly be longing for beautiful things and never satisfied because what is pleasing to you changes and everything we find pleasing to our senses eventually gets old and fades – whether a woman or a car.

Your standard of beauty must change to the person of Christ, who is the ultimate beauty.

**** This changes as the beauty of Christ grows in us. The beauty of Christ grows because we ask God, beg God to help us believe Christ alone is standard of beauty and the ultimate beauty.** As your standard of beauty changes to Jesus - you will start to see the inner beauty of Christ.

Peter 1:3-4 (NLT) 3 Don't be concerned about the outward beauty ... 4 You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, ... which is so precious to God.

And every year she will get more and more stunning to you internally and physically. In Christ – her beauty will never fade and in Christ it will only grow.

As your standard of beauty changes to Jesus: *You will see beautiful things in this world: a car, your new baby, or a mountain for what they are: reflections of beauty that point us to the ultimate beauty in Jesus.*

You will enjoy them and they will begin to make you see Jesus as even more beautiful.

Ladies – if one of your biggest fears is to one day stop turning heads, if one of your biggest fears is to stop turning his head, if you long to found beautiful by one –

Your standard of beauty must change to the person of Christ – who is the ultimate beauty.

This changes as the beauty of Christ grows in us. The beauty of Christ grows because we ask God, beg God to help us believe Christ alone is standard of beauty and the ultimate beauty.

As it does, you will stop looking to the mirror hoping to find beauty but you will look to Christ who lives within – and you will see the beauty you have always longed to have – in you – in Christ.

What if the beauty you have longed for all your life – is in Jesus – is Jesus?

The beauty of Jesus in us changes who we are. *(We have a beautiful new identity in Christ.)*

The beauty of Jesus in us changes our standard of beauty. *(We long to know the beauty of Christ.)*

Maybe wanting to know Christ has always seemed like a chore or a boring biographical study. Maybe trying to know him has never moved from your head to your heart. *Here is the power of the beauty of Christ.* Beauty has a way of sneaking past our defenses – and getting right to our heart.

The truth of Christ is needed but it can often just be cold – but beauty that is true, that is real - allures. And everything about Jesus is beautiful – *His birth, his life of serving, his miracles, his teachings – even his death and most certainly his resurrection is unquestionably beautiful – because all this gives us the Beautiful One.*

Make this your prayer today...

I repent for longing for ultimate beauty in everything and anything but you Jesus. *(salvation)*

I long for your beauty Jesus. I long for it to change me into your image.

Psalms 27:4 (NIV) One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: 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 seek him in his temple.