

November 16, 2025

“Gentle and Lowly: The Beauty of the Heart of Christ”

[Psalms 113, Philippians 2:5-11](#)

This Chapter’s Focus: The Beauty of the Heart of Christ.

Read Philippians 2:5-11

PRAY: “Captivate us, our Father, with a glimpse of who You are. Show us, by Your Holy Spirit, what is good and beautiful in Your Son Jesus. May we fall more deeply in love with You in such a way that our lives are forever changed; for Your glory and the blessing of those You connect us with. In the name of the One who is Gentle and Humble. Amen.

When was the last time you’ve been captivated by beauty?

Probably not too long ago, we live in Colorado after all! I think we can all relate to being captivated by the beauty all around us in the mountains and canyons and colors and forests. But we can also get so used to the beauty that we yawn our way through another incredible vista, which is probably why God will sometimes gift us with an Aurora Borealis! **Northern Lights**

Then there is the beauty we encounter in the many forms of art, theatre and music; whether in great cathedrals and museums or main street studios; concert halls, giant stadiums or backyard patios; movie festivals or theaters or on our screens at home.

Sometimes, it’s the beauty of a person that attracts us – and I don’t mean that in the narrow definition of beauty within our culture. Beauty can be seen in the way a person carries him/herself; smiles; laughs; dresses up or is totally casual; you name it. As we say, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

But, more than a person’s appearance or superficial attractiveness, there can also be beauty in a person’s behavior, action or decision. We are attracted to bravery and courage, generosity and kindness, sacrifice and sincerity. We are drawn, at times, to special moments shared between people. Seeing people love each other well catches our eye, as does seeing people serve one another. Our hearts are drawn to all sorts of beautiful things and people.

As you may have read in this week’s chapter, Jonathan Edwards’ approach to evangelism was to woo people to Christ by drawing attention to His beauty. In the summer of 1740, Edwards decided to focus on the children of his congregation and impress upon them why they should love Christ EVEN MORE THAN their parents.

And what did he tell them?

Edwards said, “There is no love so great and so wonderful as that which is in the heart of Christ.” He then went on to compare the love of Christ to that of their moms and dads by helping them think about the greatness of the sun’s brightness compared to that of a candle. And then he said, “Parents are often full of kindness towards their children, but that is no kindness like Jesus Christ’s.” (from Jonathan Edwards’ sermon, quoted on Page 96)

What is it for you and me that is utterly **beautiful** about the heart of Jesus?

Does the word beautiful trip you up?

[How about Awe-Inspiring, Wonderful, Jaw-Dropping, Attractive, Alluring?]

Ortlund writes, **READ FROM BOOK:** “Let Jesus draw you in through the loveliness of His heart . . . It is a heart that walks us into the bright meadow of the felt love of God. It is a heart that drew the despised and forsaken to His feet in self-abandoning hope. It is a heart of perfect balance and proportion, never overreacting, never excusing, never lashing out. It is a heart that throbs with desire for the destitute. It is a heart that floods the suffering with the deep solace of shared solidarity in that suffering. It is a heart that is gentle and lowly. Let the heart of Jesus be something that is not only gentle toward you but lovely to you.” (Page 99)

We may not think of Biblical Truth/Sound Doctrine in terms of beauty because, in many ways, we have relegated truth to the confines of our heads; kept it from penetrating our hearts or flooding our imaginations. Ortlund reminds us that doctrine is meant to reveal God’s beauty just as a focal lens is meant to reveal the beauty of the object being photographed. (See Page 99)

God’s word is and can become more and more attractive to us; not only our favorite parables and stories or the verses we love and put on bumper stickers, bookmarks and the eye-black of football players, but the whole of scripture – which leaves us with plenty of tension and unanswered questions but is mostly a coherent and connected story from Creation, to Fall, to Calling, to Law and Prophets, to Redemption and – finally – to Restoration and Consummation.

Friday’s (November 14) Daily Psalm in Tim Keller’s 365-day devotional looked at part of Psalm 119 – the longest chapter in the Bible focused solely on God’s Word. This was the prayer at the end of the day’s passage & comments: “Lord, take me into the infinities and immensities of Your Word. Give me a strong sense of its divine origin. Let it take my breath away as do the dawn and sunset. Let it break my heart with its beauty as do the mountains and the sea. For then I’m only a moment from seeing Your face.” (in Tim and Kathy Keller’s *Songs of Jesus*)

Theological truths and the scriptures can be beautiful, but only in that they point us more clearly to who God is. And to keep repeating what Ortlund says in this chapter, “Human beings are created with a built-in pull toward beauty. We are arrested by it.” (Page 96) The he declares that “What most deeply attracts us to Christ is His gentle, tender, **humble** heart.” (Page 97)

So let's talk for a moment about the beauty of Jesus' humility.

But first, let's note that we see this humility in the God praised and prayed to in the Old Testament. Our reading from Psalm 113 tells us that, long before Jesus arrives to reveal the heart of God, God's "glory above the heavens" descends to the earth in a most humble way. "Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who [also] stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?" (Psalm 113:5-6 in the NIV)

And what does the "Lord our God" do when He gets down on our level?

God "raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap." (Psalm 113:7) He "settles the childless woman into her home as a happy mother of children." (Psalm 113:9) Tim Keller reminds us we should "Praise God because there is nothing too great for Him . . . But also [we should] praise Him because there's nothing too small for Him." Humility is SO beautiful, glorious and worthy of praise!

We think Philippians 2:6-11 was actually a hymn in the Early Church. Verses 6-8 describe with poetic intentionality the depths of Jesus' Humility and His jaw-dropping descent. Paul is using the hymn to paint a picture of this descending movement of Christ, **from completely exalted to completely humiliated**. "In very nature God" . . . Christ chooses NOT to hang onto the rights and privileges of His Godness . . . "and makes Himself nothing" (word means "emptied Himself") . . . He becomes a "servant." He takes on one of these limited and finite bodies and "humbles Himself" . . . "becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross." From the highest to the lowest; the most exalted to the most humble, which ends on a cruel and ugly cross.

What a minute! Didn't you say Jesus' humility is beautiful?

This is a strange understanding of beauty. To be sure, there can be an initial **ugliness** connected to a humble act. Oftentimes, the beauty of humility needs a little time to bloom and grow.

Adi's illustration last week from C.S. Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" was a perfect example. Aslan's humility – his choice to give his life as an advocate for Edmund led to a horrible, ugly moment; death at the hands of the White Witch and her minions on the Stone Table. Susan and Lucy would have to stay and stare at that ugliness through the night before dawn arrived and Aslan came back to life. And what a beautiful sight that was!

We have to admit, we much prefer a good 'Rags to Riches' story. But we aren't very fond of the kind of humility that takes someone from 'Riches to Rags.'

[Joan Walker's notes and sermon title in her Bible.]

But the Early Hymn in Philippians 2 doesn't end with verse 8. It goes on in what we know as Philippians 2:9-11. Apparently, the Early Church sang about how the 'Riches to Rags' story of Jesus will one day draw everyone to bow in awe and worship and confess that "He is Lord to the Glory (Beauty) of God the Father."

Someday, everyone will see and acknowledge the Beauty of Christ's Humble Heart. We will lose our breath for a moment. Our jaws will drop. We will be attracted and allured and romanced like never before. Moreso than by a sunset or Aurora Borealis. Moreso than a beautiful person or song or piece of art. Moreso than anything or anyone else we've ever seen. The full beauty of Jesus' Gentle and Humble heart will ravage our hearts and change us completely and finally and forever.

But do we have to wait until we see Jesus face-to-face for those changes to start?

Can't we get started now?

Might we consider how we, too, can empty ourselves and become humble servants?

Might our lives better reflect the humble heart of Jesus?

This is what Paul is getting at with the **Philippian** Church in **2:1-4**, before he inserts the familiar hymn about Jesus' humility.

[Read in the NIV and The Message]

The Gospel is beautiful, and what makes it more attractive to others is when the people who claim to believe it and share it – in word and deed – [when we] are gentle and humble in heart. When we share the Good News of Jesus with humility (including being humble about our own struggle to be faithful to Jesus) we are much more likely to get a hearing. Let's face it honestly – all of us – the ugliness that people often choose to turn away from is the ugliness of pride more than the beauty of Jesus' humility. How often do you hear this: "Those Christians are so dang humble!" We may not always (or often) be very humble but the One we worship and claim to be the Lord of our lives is infinitely humble. Gentle and Humble.

The Hymn in Philippians 2 tells us "every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Why not live life with the kind of humility that might attract people to consider bowing and worshipping and confessing He is Lord right now?

And if you've never yet bowed and worshipped and confessed Jesus is Lord, can you feel the beauty of His heart attracting you now?