

Eyes Fixed on Jesus: The Beauty That Calls us Home

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Date: 28 June 2026

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[0:00] So if my voice is kind of rough this morning, our whole family has a cold. I'm the only one that's here. We've identified patient zero, but I'm not going to call him out because I don't want to offend somebody.

But if you could pray for Kara in particular, it's been a rough few days. So just by way of highlighting something that you may have seen on the slides, you may have read in the bulletin, but I just want to bring your attention, if you consider yourself crafty, not crafty like a serpent, not that crafty.

You might think yourself that way too. But crafty as in you're good making things. You're a baker. You'd like to make things, quilts or shirts or whatever.

We've got a craft fair coming as, I can't believe I'm saying this in the last week of June, but in anticipation of Christmas, we're going to have a craft fair.

And part of that craft fair, the idea is to raise money for Operation Christmas Child that we do every year. We're sending boxes to needy kids all over the world. And so your crafts will go to, the sale of your crafts will go toward covering those shipping costs because it ain't cheap to send stuff through the mail.

[1:12] So if you are a crafter, start thinking right now about what you could make in bulk and what you would charge for that. And Dori Kelly is the person to talk to.

Like I said, the information is in the bulletin. And we'll continue to remind you as we go through and get closer. So we always want to find different ways that we can help cover those costs and be a blessing at the same time, which of course is the ultimate goal.

So the last six times I've preached, we've talked about becoming faster learners because I really got convicted that preachers get up on the stage and we just assume, well, of course, you're here to listen.

You want to learn. And I should know better. Not to say anything bad about y'all, but I know from working with teenagers, they're not particularly motivated to listen to me talk.

And maybe it's been a rough week or you're distracted or whatever and you're not ready. So we use this moment to pause and to get our hearts and minds ready to hear what God has for us.

[2:17] And the idea is to be faster learners. Remember, as you can see from the slide, I always gesture here. You can't see that up there. That's an acronym. We want to be forgetful.

That's the F. We want to forget what we think we know, not abandon it, but come with a fresh perspective to what God's Word says. We want to be active learners.

That's the A, meaning we're taking notes. We're thinking of questions that we want to bring back to the passage or you want to throw at me. You also are active in the sense you're taking what you've heard and putting it to work.

This is not a seminar to give you information that gets put in your Bible and forgotten until next Sunday and we cover something else. The goal of God's Word is action, is movement.

That's the A. S is to think about your state. Are you ready to learn? Are you ready? Are you expecting God to speak? So have that state ready.

[3:19] T is teach. Take what you've learned. Think of a way to summarize it and share it with somebody else. You don't have to do a five or six or 15 point sermon with the altar call and all that.

But just think of a way that you can share a truth that God gave you today with somebody else. Because when we teach something and the person we teach it to gets it, that closes the loop on mastery for us.

That means I really understand it. So teach it. And then last week we talked about enter. I talked about keeping a calendar and entering an appointment, ideally a daily appointment, that's in your calendar that you're going to meet God to go over what you've learned.

To pray about it, to think about it. But you've got to schedule time with the Lord. And also enter into what we're reading this morning. Put yourself in Paul's shoes as we talk about him.

Put yourself in the shoes of the Christians in Laodicea, in Colossae, as we talk about them. Put yourself there. So enter into the story.

[4 : 28] And then last, we're closing the loop on being faster learners, is review. Review, review, review. Now review has two different meanings that are parallel.

One is just to remember what we've learned. Review it. What did John talk about? Oh yeah, it's Colossians 1, 29 through 2, 5. What were the main points? What was something that stuck out in my mind?

But the other type of review is a type of review that the very best athletes do. The very best athletes will watch the game that they just played and look at it and say, okay, the coach said I was supposed to do this.

Did I do that? Why did that pass get picked off when I threw it? And the quarterback looks at the tape. Oh, because I telegraphed, I'm sending it right there. I got to change that.

And so they review their past behavior in order to change it to be better in the future. And so based on what you're learning today, review your life. Review what you're doing in response to God's word, and then make the necessary adjustments to follow.

[5 : 38] So we want to be faster learners. And I'll tell you what will happen. As we take action, as we become active learners, as we become faster learners, I don't have an acronym for active learners, but as we become faster learners, let me tell you what's going to happen.

You are going to discover the limitless beauty of the gospel, which we're going to talk about this morning. You're going to fall more deeply in love with God because you're going to see the riches that you have in Christ.

You are going to be moved to touch other people's lives, and you're going to fall in love with them, which will motivate you to take the gospel truth that you know and live it and give it into people's lives.

You will become more like Jesus. And in becoming more like Jesus, you will be changed. And what's interesting, I remember years ago at camp, there was a girl who was at camp, there was a high school camp, and she understood the gospel.

She saw that it was a good thing. She understood the process. But I like who I am. I don't want to give up who I am. You know what she didn't understand? When you submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, when you accept him as your Lord and Savior, you don't become less of you.

[7 : 03] You become the you that God intended you to be. You don't become less than. You become unbelievably more than. More than you could ever think or imagine.

When Paul wrote that promise in Philippians 3 that God gives us more than we can possibly think or imagine, more than we can dream, it starts within ourselves and the transformation that God does in us.

And that happens as you're a faster learner. So make that your goal today. So you should be in Colossians chapter 1. We're going to read just six verses today, and then we will plunge in.

So read along with me. We've got a slide up as well if you don't have your Bible handy. I haven't said this in a while, so I'll emphasize it again. I'm a big believer in having a Bible that you carry.

I know a lot of you like to use your apps. It's not the end of the world. But having a Bible that you know, it's very interesting. I just saw a study this week where they wired people's brains while they read on an app, and then they read the exact same book on paper in a more tangible format, and their brain lit up far more.

[8 : 19] It was really interesting. The more senses we engage, the better off we'll be, and it will help you to remember. Where's that verse again? I don't know, but I know it's about this far into my Bible, and it's on the left-hand side, and you can find it quicker because you know your Bible.

You're becoming physically familiar with it. So there's your plug. If you need a Bible, talk to me. I'll get you one. So Philippians chapter 1, starting in verse 29. This is Paul speaking to the Colossian church.

For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, that's God's power, which mightily works within me, for I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, the believers in Colossae, and for those who are in Laodicea, and for all, check this out, and for all those who have not personally seen my face.

Paul's not just writing to old friends that he's seen over and over again, which would be a description of the Ephesian church. He spent well over a year in Ephesus, but he never even met the people in Laodicea, in Colossae.

Paul's disciple, Epaphras, carried the gospel to those cities. And yet Paul had a concern for them. How cool is that? For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that your hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[9 : 59] Now remember, Paul was writing the book of Colossians to refute a false teaching that was starting to show itself in that region of Asia, which was Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea, Heropolis, that area was all starting to be influenced by this new belief system called Gnosticism.

And Gnosticism taught that you needed to take on an ascetic life, you needed to give things up, you needed to be transported up into the heavenlies by spiritual battles, and only a select few got this secret knowledge of God.

And what Paul is writing in Colossians is saying, no, that's not true. You don't have to be a unique, singularly special person to access God.

You don't have to make huge sacrifices to access God. That work has been done by Jesus on the cross on your behalf. And you have access to God.

And he's reiterating that again here, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, because the Gnostics like to talk about, oh, it's a mystery, it's too hard for your little brain to understand.

[11 : 19] You need me to show you the way. And if you don't have me, you're never going to get there. And Paul's saying, no, that's not true. You can have a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I, Paul, am absent in the body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

That's the goal. That's why we want to be faster learners. is so that we can access all that's available to us in Christ. Truth of the matter is, you don't need me.

I'm a helpful guide along the way. I take time to study and pass on what I learn. I don't want to talk my way out of a job. But the truth is, you have the Holy Spirit, you have God's Word, you have this community.

God is revealing himself to you to the degree that you are receiving what he says. Amen? Let's pray together. Lord, we're thankful that the Gnostics were wrong.

[12 : 38] We're thankful that you, God sent your Son as a baby in a manger to grow up to be a man who would die on the cross for our sins.

That you tore away the veil that existed between us and you. That we now have access, that we can come boldly to the throne of grace, that we can come to you as a child comes to their father crying, Daddy, Father, we can have an intimate relationship with you.

Lord, this morning as we take a quick survey of the first chapter of Colossians and look at the beauty of all that we have in Christ and then look at what that should mean for us as we walk through our daily life.

God, I pray that we would be faster learners. I pray that we would take in your word and that by your spirit our eyes would be open to see where you're calling us to go. Just like Paul responded to your call.

God, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So I want you to pause with me for a minute and I want you to think of a time when you encountered beauty.

[14 : 05] Where was some place that your breath was taken away? that maybe words just weren't adequate? I'm going to give you a full minute.

It's going to feel like forever. It's worse up here if that makes you feel any better. But I'm going to give you a full minute to think about where have I encountered beauty? And then we're going to talk

about that.

So ready, set, go. Go. Go. Go. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. And so I hadn't seen Kara.

[16:03] I'd seen her during the day, but I had not seen her in her bridal gown. When that door opened, I was speechless.

This is the moment I'd waited for my whole life. And that woman was going to be my wife. That came to mind. I remember holding my newborn children.

It's a funny part of it. We had picked all four of their names in advance, and I looked at each one and thought, Oh my gosh, you don't look like a Josiah. You don't look like a Luke or a Micah or a Kayla.

And then the saner part of my brain said, What does a Josiah or Luke or Micah or Kayla look like? Stick with what you decided beforehand. Don't change your name at the last minute.

But, and they grew into their names, by the way. But I remember looking at those children and just being in awe. Wonder that this child carried a piece of me.

[17:10] And seeing their beauty. Looking at their fingers and their toes. I'm fascinated by baby pinky fingernails. They're so little.

But that was a moment of beauty for me. I remember one morning when I was in high school. Our family was camping up in the mountains of Colorado. Imagine this scene.

We're up on the, near the top of a hillside. And below us is this valley called the Bardi Ranch. That's several thousand acres. And there's another ridge on the other side.

To the east. I got up first. I like to get the fire going in the morning. And so, everything about that morning was beautiful. The air was crisp and cold.

The sun was just cresting. The hill to the east. There was fog in the valley. And I heard the bugling of a herd of elk.

[18:18] Echoing off the hillside. It was, it struck me with awe. There were no words. You can see the emotional reaction.

It was God saying, look, I made this. That was a moment of beauty. There's a song that I particularly love called Holy is the Lord.

Someday I'm going to play it. I always think of it too late to navigate through YouTube and Spotify to figure out what permission I need to be able to play it here. But Holy is the Lord is a musical rendition of Isaiah 6.

That we're going to talk about at the end of the sermon. In Isaiah 6, Isaiah sees the Lord. And he is undone. He says, woe is me.

I'm a man of unclean lips. From a line of people of unclean lips. I don't deserve to be here. And he receives the forgiveness of God. And then he is, he makes the decision to follow the Lord to be God's mouthpiece to the people of Israel.

[19:26] He responds to God's call. And the way that particular artist conveys that song, you can hear the angels. You can hear the voice of God.

You can feel the torment in Isaiah's voice as he recognizes his unworthiness to be in the presence of God. And the wonder, the wonder of being chosen and sent by God.

Of having his sins forgiven. That's beauty. And the last one is a painting. Eliana, you can give me this next slide. Okay. It should be the picture of the storm of the Sea of Galilee.

While you're working on it, I'm going to talk about it. Don't worry, sweetheart. We'll get it. So the storm of the Sea of Galilee is my favorite painting. It's by Rembrandt. It's just so powerful.

And it really has helped expand my understanding of the story of the storm of the Sea of Galilee. Because you see every one of the disciples.

[20:49] Rembrandt did a great job of thinking through the story. And this is a discipline I want you to learn. You can tell that Rembrandt was thinking about every disciple and placed them very precisely on the boat.

So you've got this, that the ship is upright into the wave. And you can see the sails are blown. One of the sails is actually coming free of the mast. And there you can see Peter, James, John, Philip, and Andrew trying to trim the sails.

By the way, someone pointed out that I should explain to the landlubbers what trimming our sails means. There it is. Thank you. She was right. He wasn't there.

Okay. Guess who put together the slides this morning? So I want to point some things out to you. So here is... Is that... It dimmed it.

I'm just going to give it to you verbally. Sometimes technology is more trouble than it's worth. So you can see the slot... That line is coming loose. You can see the different disciples.

[21 : 53] So the five fishermen are up trying to fix the sails. Trimming the sails means adjusting them to the wind. And they're trying to get themselves positioned so they don't lose their sails.

In a storm, it's a very real danger that those sails will be ripped right off of the mast. And then you're in serious trouble. So they're trying to fix it. If you look closely, there's a man in yellow down sitting stoically.

I'm pretty sure that's Thomas. Because what's Thomas always say? Oh, let's just follow the Lord and we're going to die. I don't believe it.

I'm doubting Thomas. If you look down at the corner, there's somebody throwing up over the side of the boat. I'm pretty sure that's Judas. There's several guys who are probably doing the closest thing to the right response.

They're trying to wake Jesus up. They're saying, Jesus, Jesus, we're going to die. Why are you sleeping? And I didn't notice this until I was working through the picture again this morning.

[22 : 53] I do work during the week too to prepare for my sermons, by the way. I review in the morning. There's a guy who grabs the tiller. Is this you?

Because this is me. Guy's grabbing the tiller. Now, I already counted off the names of the five fishermen who are disciples. So is that guy grabbing the tiller even qualified to be steering this thing?

Probably not. Is that you? That's me. We're going to die. I'm going to grab the wheel from the guy who's better qualified. But looking at this painting gave depth in my mind to understand what I was reading in Scripture.

And it's beautiful. It's a beautiful painting. It saddens and angers me. The greatest art history, the art heist of the last hundred years was a theft of five paintings out of a museum in New York City.

And this was one of them. We don't know where it is. It's probably in some drug dealer's den. And only he can enjoy it and he doesn't even appreciate it.

[24 : 09] Tragic. But here's the thing about all of the scenes of beauty that I've described for you this morning. They're only a taste. They don't give us everything.

So we're going to talk for a minute about C.S. Lewis and what he says about beauty. You know I'm a big C.S. Lewis fan. I strongly encourage you to read his book, *The Weight of Glory*.

I have to admit I was a little bit nervous since I failed in getting that picture into my slide deck. What else might be missing? But look, younger me isn't completely a failure. But C.S. Lewis in his sermon, *The Weight of Glory*, talks about beauty.

It talks about these scenes, the one that I had you get in your mind and the ones I described from my experience. These beautiful experiences that we have are actually a foretaste of something else.

Because deep down, the fact is they don't satisfy. Because they're a moment in time and then time goes on.

[25 : 23] And there's a sense of longing as we look back. There's a longing to live in that moment, but we can't.

And C.S. Lewis went deep into what does that tell us? What does our hunger for beauty tell us about ourselves? And he came up with a metaphor.

He said, you know, I know that we were made to eat food. Well, how do we know that? Because I get hungry. I get hungry.

And we instinctively know what's good for us. And what's bad for us. And what that indicates is that our bodies were made to require fuel.

And we know instinctively, this is something I need to eat. Now, sometimes you might look at something like sushi and go, why would anybody eat that? That's what I think.

[26 : 21] My children say, dad, you don't know what's good. That's debatable. But we're created for, not for food, but we are created to crave food.

Our longing for beauty. The fact that beauty can evoke such deep emotion is indicative that there's something beyond.

That there's something that we have not yet reached yet, that we've not reached, that calls to our souls. The true beauty. That's what we're going to look at this morning.

So, read with me this quote from C.S. Lewis. The books of the music, or the scenes of our lives, in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust them.

Listen carefully to what he says here. It was not in them. It only came through them. And what came through them was longing.

[27 : 28] This is what I, pay attention to the highlight. These things, the beauty, the memory of our own past, are good images of what we really desire.

Think about that. The beautiful scene that came to your mind is a longing for that which you are truly made for. But if they are mistaken for the thing itself, so if we make that, that beautiful moment, what we pursue.

For if they are mistaken for the thing that they turn into, sorry, I lost my place. But if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshipers.

For they are not the thing itself, they are only the scent of a flower. The flower we have not found. The echo of a tune we have not heard.

News from a country we have never yet visited. Never yet. The author of Hebrews, in Hebrews 11, talks about the fact that the great men and women of faith that he chronicles there are pursuing a country that's not their own.

[28 : 45] They're pursuing another country that actually is their own. I said it wrong. That that's where their true citizenship lies. And that's what we feel. When you're longing for beauty, you are longing for that far-off country.

And what I'm going to take the next few minutes to do is come back to Colossians 1 and show you the beauty of what we've talked about. Pastor Jack and I got together on Friday.

And I was, it's just good to talk. And we were talking this stuff through and I just talked about the beauty, the beauty, the beauty, the beauty. And I said, you know what? This is really frustrating to me because I've really had a hard time with sermon titles and now I've got them all for sermons I've already preached.

So I'm going to have to do them all over again. So we're going to be here until about four o'clock.

Are you okay with that? No, we're just going to do highlights. But what we're going to focus on is the true beauty. Because that's what we've been looking at.

Over the last weeks, as we've looked at Colossians 1, what we're seeing is that beauty that our souls at the very deepest, darkest places, the place we don't even share with people because we're kind of embarrassed.

[29 : 59] What I'm going to review for you, this is the beauty that we're created to long for. So the first one, if you recall, was the beauty of God's people.

That was right at the beginning of Colossians 1. Remember Paul wrote to the saints, the faithful brethren who are in Christ in Colossae? Remember we talked about the saints are not dead guys who did a miracle and were canonized.

And now we pray to them, no, the saints are you and I. The psalmist in Psalm 16 said that the saints are your magnificent ones in whom is all my delight.

Look around. Really, look around. Look at the people in this auditorium. That's who the psalmist was talking about. We are the magnificent ones in whom is God's delight because as we come into relationship with God, as we accept him as our Lord and Savior, we are made saints.

We become beautiful. We are the faithful brethren. Our response to God's love for us, demonstrated on the cross, is to say, here Lord, here's my life.

[31 : 17] Take it. Do with it what you will. I trust you. And we are, we become the faithful brethren in Christ.

That's beauty. But as we're talking about these elements of beauty, imagine climbing up into the mountains. Where I grew up in Colorado Springs, Colorado, there's, you live on the plains, and then there's, you climb up, and then there's a first level of foothills.

Pretty cool. Then you dip a little bit, and then you go up higher, and then finally you get to the top.

The front ranges, the really spectacular stuff. And that's what we're doing. So when we talk about, part of the beauty that we long for is to become all that we have been made in Christ.

To be saints. To actually live that out. To be worthy of the name faithful brethren, brothers and sisters. That's just the foothills. But that's what we long for.

Now if you recall, the next step is on our climb. We talked about the knowledge of the will of God. Do you remember that? We talked about trimming our sails, and now we know what that means. [32 : 27] To adjust our lives so we can catch the wind of God's will. And we fly across the water, or what God's will tells us. How to survive if we're in the storm.

Or how to stick with it if we're in the doldrums where the wind has stopped completely. But the beauty of God's will, when we're filled with it with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, we walk worthy of our calling.

In other words, we become faithful brothers and sisters. We become faithful men and women. We receive God's approval.

The Bible talks over and over again about us as believers, us having glory. Yes, our mission statement says we exist to bring glory to God without question.

That's really our primary focus as created beings. But God gives us glory. You know what that glory is? That glory is your Father, your Heavenly Father, looking at you and saying, well done.

[33 : 38] Well done, good and faithful servant. Jesse came up from his bedroom this morning, kind of foggy-eyed.

I picked him up and I sat him on the counter as I was making my breakfast. I just held him. And I whispered in his ear, I love you. Now we've been battling because he's a terrible two-year-old, if ever there was one.

But I just held him. I said, I love you. That's the longing of your soul.

And that's a promise from God. As we walk in the knowledge of his will, we will bear fruit in good work.

The things that we want to do that God puts in our hearts to touch people's lives, to change someone else for the good, to give them something that will bless them, we'll see fruit from that.

[34 : 40] And we will get to know God even better. That's the beauty of being filled with the knowledge of the will of God. But there's more.

And now we're coming to the heights. Because at the heights, the pinnacle is Jesus himself. the sermon I did on those verses about Jesus himself, I've gotten more feedback on that sermon than any sermon I've done in the years that I've been here, which is good.

Because the focus was on the Lord Jesus. And you remember? He is the image of the invisible God. Actually, put that up there.

So let's, next slide there, Eliana. Hebrews chapter 1. This is the Jesus that we're talking about. God, after he spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in his son.

And all this is out of, we talked about this when we did that sermon. In these last days he has spoken to us in his son whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the world.

[36 : 05] And he is a radiance of his glory, God's glory, and the exact representation of his nature. Jesus told the disciples, when you look at me, you see God. I am God, the Father's way of speaking to you in words of one syllable so you can understand at least a little bit.

He is a radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his nature, and upholds all things by the word of his power. When he had made purification of sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

And do not forget that purification of sins meant that this Jesus went through the humiliation of becoming a human being so that he could die on the cross taking the punishment that you deserved, that I deserved, unto himself, took our sin and gave us his righteousness in response. That is the pinnacle of beauty. We are going to spend all of eternity discovering layer upon layer upon layer upon layer of the person of Jesus Christ in heaven.

That, that person is who you long for when you feel pulled by beauty. That's who you long for. And then we're going to come down.

[37 : 29] One of the things that a lot of times in the mountains, you get up to the peak and you can see all around you, but you discover there's another peak that's only slightly lower.

And that's where we're headed next. Christ. Because the next sermon we looked at in Colossians was the beauty of the gospel. Do you remember all those things we talked about that we have in Christ?

Do you remember them all? There's like eight different things and in this short passage Paul elaborates, actually he doesn't elaborate, he just lists them, that we have in Christ. We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. We've been moved from darkness into light, from the domain of Satan, into the domain of God. We have been reconciled to God. We will be presented, ta-da! I'm going to do that every time, by Jesus to his Father, holy, blameless, beyond reproach.

[38 : 41] and he is going to carry us all the way to the finish line. Do you remember that? That difficult verse in verse 23, if indeed you continue, but we know it's since because God is doing the work, he's carrying us across the finish line.

We are living out what Jesus said at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. If we're in Christ, we are standing on his word and we're secure no matter what storms of life come across our path. No matter what hits us, we stand firm because we're standing on Christ the solid rock. That's our hope. That's the beauty of the gospel.

Give me the next slide, Eliana. Eliana. This is 1 Corinthians 2.9. But just as it is written, things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, but we instinctively long for them.

That's the point that C.S. Lewis made. Things which I has seen, no, things which I has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not entered the heart of man. We don't even, we can't even imagine what's in store for us.

[40 : 03] All that God has prepared for those who love him. God has prepared that for you. That's a promise that Jesus made in the upper room discourse in John 14 to the disciples.

Believe in God, believe also in me. I'm going to prepare a place for you. And this, Paul is echoing that thought here in 1 Corinthians 2.9.

And then the last part is the beauty of our calling. Paul describes his calling that's rooted in Jesus. It's rooted in God calling to him.

Remember, we looked at Acts chapter 26 and Paul, he was named Saul at that point, Saul hating believers, hating Christians and wanting to catch them, arrest them, bring them to the Sanhedrin and punish them to force them to convert back to Judaism.

and he was stopped on the road to Damascus. Jesus knocks him off his donkey and gives him a new direction in life to carry the mystery, the fact that God is going to enter into the Gentiles.

[41 : 20] Christ in you, the hope of glory. That mystery was going to be carried to the Gentiles and we are the beneficiaries of Paul's calling. But it was Jesus who called him and he responded.

the beauty of God's call is also in Isaiah. I talked a little bit about it before. We're going to wrap up with it at the end. I'm going to hit you with it yet again.

Isaiah saw the Lord, saw his own sinfulness, God forgave his sin and then called him and Isaiah said, hear him, I send me.

and he was sent. The beauty of the calling that we have in Christ, what Paul describes in Colossians 1, 23-28, is not just for him.

It's for all of us. It's what we were made for. He describes it in 1 Corinthians 3, verses 6-9. Go ahead and give me the next slide, Ileana.

[42 : 21] Paul says, I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So even as we're called, God is working through us to bless people. But don't miss this because this is really cool.

It's a picture of God's generosity and mercy toward us. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth so that neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything but God who causes the growth.

So we could rightfully say, I could rightfully say standing up here this morning, I really am totally irrelevant. I don't matter. What matters is God speaking to you by the power of the Holy Spirit as we unpack his word.

It's God who is going to do the work according to his design in your life because of this message. We could stop there. But here's the cool part. It doesn't.

Now he who plants and he who waters are one, equally important. So it's talking about, in this case, Paul and Apollos. Apollos was a fabulously gifted preacher who didn't have the whole gospel.

[43 : 29] So Priscilla and Aquila grabbed him and said, hey dude, you're getting this wrong. You have got incredible skill but you need some tweaking. So they helped him and then Apollos was a really effective teacher throughout the Mediterranean area.

Some people think he actually wrote the book of Hebrews. Don't know for sure, it's just a guess, but tremendously gifted man. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, check this out, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. So it goes back to the idea that God is working in us. But God includes us. We get to share in the glory.

We get to share in the credit. That's God's generosity. He doesn't have to put our name on there.

Years ago, when I was 25, my first ministry job, I worked for Littleton Bible Chapel.

You've heard me talk about this. And one of the elders wrote a book called Biblical Eldership and he asked me to write the first study guide for it. And I finished and turned it in and it was in that first edition.

[44 : 41] I said, do I get a byline? No. Apparently, my friend Alex is not as gracious as God because we get a byline.

Think about that. As you touch somebody's life, it doesn't have to be something major, but as you take a risk and touch somebody's life, the glory of the call is that God says, he helped me.

I did this work in your life. God has said to people, using myself as an example, God has said to them, God speaking, I did this in your life because John was faithful.

I don't deserve that and yet I get it because God is generous and the feeble efforts that I made, God lifted up and made it effective. And that's what he's doing for us.

That's the beauty of the call. Paul was so consumed by the beauty of the call. Check this out. I alluded to this last week.

[45 : 54] I'll make sure I'm at the right spot. Oh, I didn't put it in my notes. We'll see if there's a slide. We alluded to this last week. One of the themes of 2 Corinthians is suffering.

Every chapter, Paul either states outright or alludes to the fact that he is suffering. The first chapter, he talks about we despaired even of life.

Chapter 4, he goes through a litany of things. He just lists about how they have overcome suffering. Chapter 11, he does it again and gives detail and specific detail.

I was shipwrecked. I was hungry. I was exposed to the elements. Does anybody feel weakness in the church that I don't feel the burden? But listen to what he says.

And you're going to have to turn. Well, let's see if I did a slide. Is there a slide for 2 Corinthians 4 something? Nope. Okay. Younger me is fired. Oh, look, I did mark the spot in my Bible though.

[46 : 57] 2 Corinthians 4.17. So you're just going to have to listen. Okay. Listen carefully. We just talked about Paul suffered, suffered, suffered, suffered, suffered for the gospel.

For momentary, for momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

He's not talking about a hangnail. He's not talking about a stubbed toe. He's talking about repeatedly being in despair for his life because he was committed to following the call of Jesus.

He saw the beauty. For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison while we look not at the things which are seen, this is what C.S. Lewis was talking about, but the things which are not seen.

For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. And we have to recognize that in everything. In that same sermon, one of the things that the Apostle Paul talks about is that if we were to see fellow believers in Jesus Christ as we are to be revealed in heaven, John wrote in 1 John 3 that we don't know what we will be like, but we do know that we will be like Jesus because we will see Him as He is.

[48 : 36] And we know He's glorious. We know that. C.S. Lewis said in The Weight of Glory that if we were to see each other as we will be revealed as the children of God, we would be moved to worship.

That's how glorious we will look. Did you think about that, about the people you look around at? That's the future for people who are in Christ.

Christ. We should treat each other that way because we have an intrinsic beauty because we're made in the image of God and that beauty is going to be fully restored and just polished to such a shine that it would be overwhelming to us if we were to see it.

That's our future. That's the future of the people whose paths we cross if they're in Christ. and we have been given the opportunity the calling to bridge the gap from where they are lost, dead in sin, following the path of the world and bringing them into relationship with God.

We're the means that God has ordained to move people from darkness to light. When it says in Colossians 1 that we've been moved from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, what Paul doesn't go into in great depth is that that movement is done by us, by you and me.

[50 : 18] That's the beauty of the call. That's 1 Corinthians chapter 3. We get to participate and oh by the way it does yield to cause some suffering. It is a hard, it can be a hardship but the worst it can be is nothing in comparison to what will be.

That's the beauty of the gospel. That's the beauty of what we have in Christ. So we see the beauty you know we're back in the lowlands if you will where we started.

We see the beauty of the saints, the faithful brethren. We see the beauty of knowing the will of God. We see the beauty at the pinnacle of Jesus Christ himself.

We step down to a slightly lower peak and see the beauty of the gospel that transforms us. We see the beauty of the call. And where does it lead?

This is the longest introduction I've ever done. And I'm only going to touch on our core passage this morning because your homework is to really think about what this means for you in your context at your workplace in your home in your neighborhood in your Facebook groups.

[51 : 41] You need to go into these things because I don't have time to cover it but we're going to touch on it. So back to Colossians chapter 1 Paul said verse 29 for this purpose also I labor.

Go ahead there is a slide for that. Oh it's right there. Good job Eliana. For this purpose also I labor. I'm striving according to his power which mightily works within me.

Have you ever seen the Olympics where they're running the race? Nobody's sauntering with their hands in their pockets. You see every muscle straining especially as they get toward the finish line. Everything they've got is focused on giving their all.

That's the image. that Paul is giving here. For this purpose what's the purpose? Look back a verse. Paul says we proclaim him when we preach Christ admonishing or correcting every man and teaching every man and woman with all wisdom.

Why? So that we may present every person complete in Christ. That's our mission statement. We exist to glorify God walking closely with him striving together to become more like Jesus every day.

[52 : 59] Paul is so dedicated that he has everything he's got. You could see the cords of his neck. He's straining to fulfill his calling.

For I want you to know how great a struggle. There's that word again. I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea and for all those who will not personally see my face.

And what's he want? That their hearts might be encouraged. That's built up. Encouraged is a very rich word. It's built up. It's being told you can do it.

You can endure. You can get to the end. God is good. Encouragement is something that we should be doing for each other. You've probably heard this illustration.

It's been used a billion times. You see it, the V of a flock of geese. And they're all honking. Why are they honking? Because they're telling each other keep going, keep going, keep going.

[53 : 56] You can do this. What we're going toward is worth the effort of flying across the United States to find a warmer place to avoid winter. They're telling each other that.

That's encouragement. That's what we do for each other. That's what Paul was doing for the saints that he'd never met by writing a letter in Colossae and Laodicea. That their hearts may be encouraged having been knit together in love.

He's encouraging them. We're going to be talking about a lot more and more and more about this, about love. How do we demonstrate love toward each other? What does that look like? And attaining to all the wealth, which we could substitute the word beauty, as we've been talking about this morning, and attaining to all the beauty that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery that is Christ himself.

Paul is echoing, or I was echoing Paul, let's be honest. Paul is telling you, Jesus is the pinnacle. That Jesus is the beauty that your heart longs for, to see him, to have a relationship with him, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. You know, there's a lot of false teaching. We've talked about it. We will talk about it. What keeps you from being seduced by false teaching?

[55 : 29] Listen to the call of beauty in your heart and keep your mind focused on Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews said, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

How? With our eyes fixed on Jesus. The author and perfecter of our faith.

That's how we do it. So now we're going to get for just a couple of minutes, let's get down to brass tacks. And I'm going to be a little bit stern because of what I've just shown you in terms of the beauty that we have that's calling out to us.

We need to do a better job of loving each other. Seriously. We are very friendly people. We're cordial. And some, now you might be offended and think, oh, what's he talking about?

Hear me out. We need to be loving each other like what I just read of how Paul lived.

[56 : 42] Putting others before us. He talks about that in Philippians 2. And his picture of what that looks like in Philippians 2 is Jesus himself.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Jesus laid aside everything.

Every claim, every right that he certainly deserved to serve you and to serve me. We need to purge from our hearts and our minds that little voice that says, I've given enough or I'm tired or I'm busy or I was saving that money for a rainy day or I already put in a 60-hour work week or whatever.

I'm too old. I'm too young. I'm too whatever. We need to turn our affection, turn our focus back to Jesus and really ask ourselves how then should I behave toward these people that I fellowship with every Sunday because it starts with this family group.

Do I know my brothers and sisters well enough that if someone, if you come up to them and say, how you doing? They say, fine. You could look them in the eye and say, uh, no.

[58 : 12] What's going on? And you've got enough of a relationship that they'll answer you honestly. And do you want to hear it?

We need to, we need to purge out of our heart what's resistant to that conversation. Every one of us has got a burden that we're carrying.

I've been doing ministry for 40 years or more. I have worked with people in different parts of the globe, all over the United States, of all different ages. And I'll tell you, one thing we have in common is what I've told you before, life is hard.

Every one of us is bearing a burden. That could be an excuse to say, I'm going to, I'm going to dial it in today. I'm going to phone it in.

But the fact of the matter is we have got to step up and be diligent to look around and be aware of the needs of the people around us and step into those needs and love each other.

[59 : 25] That's the distinctive that draws people to Christ. That's the distinctive that changed the world of the first century. because Christian people cared enough to get past the facade, get past the tough, fierce individualism that is part of the pride of, the sin of pride, and to care for each other.

Brothers and sisters, we have got to step it up. We've got to get over ourselves. We've got to say no to the fear that keeps us from speaking out about a sin in somebody's life or something they could do better.

We've got to be quick to write a check or send a Venmo. I've got to be current. Or take somebody to lunch to notice patterns of behavior.

Lift up your head and notice the people around you. Pray for each other. As you pray for each other, your eyes will be opened.

Trust me. As you pray for each other, you will become more aware because the Holy Spirit loves it when we pray and speaks along that conduit into our lives.

[60 : 50] We have got to be praying for each other, caring for each other, loving each other. Why? Because we have been given so much. That beauty leads us somewhere.

And where it leads us is on the path of following Jesus who died for us. this morning as you head out, go to lunch, I took us to Mount Everest and then all the way to the bottom of Death Valley in 45 minutes.

I don't want you to stay in Death Valley. Who wants to stay there? I want you to look in the mirror and then look up at Mount Everest.

Realize that's where you belong and climb by making it your determined will to follow and obey the Lord. And when you do, you will be changed.

You will begin to experience that beauty that you long for. And know for a certain that one day you will step into it. Into your glory.

[62 : 17] Which is your Father saying to you, well done, good and faithful servant. Let's pray. God, I pray that you would help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

God, help us to remember that old hymn to turn our eyes upon you because when we do, the things of earth grow strangely dim. Help us to see the beauty that we have in Christ and be so compelled by it that we want to share it with whoever will listen.
that we want to give away what we have because it was never ours to begin with. God, let us experience your beauty in all of its fullness. Pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.