

Scripture: Psalm 27

Text: Psalm 27:4

Message: The Beauty of the Lord

April 19, 2020; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON

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Psalm 27 is a beautiful Psalm, reminding us of the trust we can have in our Lord. This morning I want to focus on a particular phrase that we find in verse 4: “to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.”

The psalmist is writing about his desire to be in the temple and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

Doesn't that sound exciting? To sit around looking at someone, non-stop, for hours? Is that what he means?

Like a young couple, newly in love with each other, that cannot get enough of looking at the beauty of the other person. They just sit across from the table, gazing into each other's loving eyes. Sounds dreamy, doesn't it?

Or weird.

What does it mean to gaze at the beauty of the Lord? What is the beauty of the Lord? Where can we see the beauty of the Lord?

I would like to offer some suggestions of where the Lord's beauty is evident.

I enjoy seeing the sunrise. Last week, the sunrise on Easter Sunday morning was a time to reflect on the gospel story of the resurrection. The story says it was early in the morning, at dawn on the first day of the week, when Jesus arose. The beauty of the Lord is evident in the sunrise and the reminder of the resurrection.



The sun around which our planet Earth orbits is large and bright and beautiful. Looking through the Hubble telescope, astronomers found an enormous galaxy cluster containing the mass of a staggering three million billion suns. It is the largest, hottest, and X-ray brightest galaxy cluster ever discovered in the distant universe.

If you're an early morning person, you will be able to see Jupiter in the southeastern sky in the hour before sunrise. It's a “bright star” compared to the other stars that are visible. That glowing bright dot in the sky looks a lot





different through the Hubble telescope. Then you see the myriad of colours, and what looks like swirling clouds, in this close-up of the planet Jupiter.

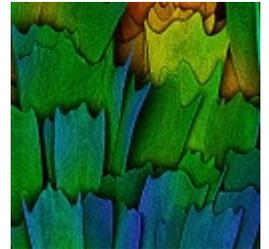
Spring flowers are starting to bloom, bringing beautiful colour and freshness after the winter snow and cold. There is an amazing variety of colour and shape and size in the different flowers, from snow drop to crocus to daffodil to tulip to the forsythia and soon the lilac.



If you would put a wildflower under a microscope, you would be able to see some amazing intricate detail, with tiny precision that is all part of the structure of the flower.



And when you see a butterfly floating from flower to flower later this summer, consider the astonishing beauty of scales on their wings, which is visible under a microscope.



We all know that cows produce milk, which is very good for you. Cows also produce natural fertilizer. Farmers will spread that fertilizer on their fields to build up the soil and to nourish the crops that will be planted there.



This natural fertilizer, or cow dung will usually sit in a pile or in a pit for a while before it is spread. Fungus will grow on it, which is all part of breaking down the dung to be useful as fertilizer. Under a microscope, that fungus looks amazing, like cartoon creatures from outer space.



Without a telescope or a microscope, we can see beauty all around us. Looking closer at the smaller details, we see another aspect to that beauty.

All these pictures are reminders that the beauty of the Lord is evident in creation all around us. In the Belgic Confession we testify that God reveals himself in two books. The first book of revelation is the creation we see and enjoy. We see the beauty of God in the majesty and complexity and intricacy of all that he has made.

We can hear and study the scientific explanations of these details in creation. The

scientific information does not deny the beauty of the Lord. It enhances our understanding of the wonder of a Creator God who has made a universe that works together with such beauty.

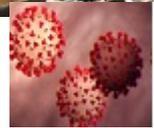
To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord is a reminder to “stop and smell the roses.” Take notice. Pause to see the beauty of creation. Read up on some science articles that talk about the details of this creation.

One of the suggestions for living in a time of physical distancing or isolation is to follow a regular daily routine. Maintain something normal by having a daily schedule of getting up and having meals and school work (if you have kids at home) to free time and going for a walk. Follow a routine for all the different things you do in a day. Watching the news might be part of that routine. But make that a *part* of your day. Don't have the news on all day because that can only raise anxiety and stress. If you miss a breaking headline, that's OK. You can find out about it soon enough.

Consider adding into that daily routine a regular time to pause and identify something as evidence of the beauty of the Lord. What do you see that reminds you of God's beauty being shown in the creation around you? Name it. Praise God for his beauty. Gaze at it. Marvel. Meditate and thank God for revealing his beauty. Write it down, so that list can be a reminder of seeing the beauty of the Lord.



But there is also brokenness in that beauty. It is not always obvious to see the beauty of the Lord when a hurricane lashes a coastline. Or forest fires decimate a region. Or floods devastate a countryside. Or a virus infects millions of people.



The effects of sin damage the beauty and make it hard to see. The destruction of beauty can lead to questions about whether or not there is a God. And if there is a God, why is he not doing anything? Does this God care? Or is he helpless, not so almighty as some claim him to be?

Is this idea of the beauty of the Lord that we think we see just a myth?

Then we also need to look at another way in which God reveals his beauty. We can also see the beauty of the Lord in a second book, alongside the book of creation. It's called the Bible.

In that book, God reveals his desire to be in a relationship with the people he created. He reveals his desire to restore the broken creation to



the beauty it had at the beginning. He reveals his plan to bring that restoration through the person of his Son, Jesus.

Last weekend we celebrated the beauty of God's victorious love in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus has defeated sin and death. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

God has entered the pain and suffering of this world in his Son, Jesus. The beauty of the Lord is seen in his grace and love and mercy, his wisdom and justice and truth. The beauty of the Lord is seen in his love shown in Jesus that our sins are forgiven and we are his children. When we look into a mirror and see a dearly loved child of God, we see the beauty of the Lord. When we look at our neighbour and talk to a friend and bring groceries to someone who is staying home for health reasons, we see the beauty of the Lord.

In the brokenness of this world, we see evidence of God's healing work and power. In the labs where vaccines are developed to fight a virus, we see the beauty of the Lord. In the lives of love and care and compassion in ourselves and in others, we see the beauty of the Lord. We see the Lord at work to restore this creation to what he intended.

Even in the face of the ugliness of death, we can see the hope of eternal life. We can lift our eyes to heaven and hear the words of promise: I am the resurrection and the life.

Psalms 27 begins with the confident testimony: "The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear."

Psalms 27 ends with the confident trust: "I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD."

That confidence is strengthened and affirmed when we gaze on the beauty of the Lord, in creation all around us, in the living Word of truth, in the victory of Jesus Christ, evident in the lives of his followers in this world.

To God be the glory!

Amen.