

## Crafted for His Glory

Exodus 31:1-11

### Introduction

**Beauty:** What is beauty? What makes something beautiful? Why is beauty?

- There is some conversation in the sciences about whether animals experience or appreciate beauty. Certainly, we find various animals more or less beautiful, but do *they*?
  - You won't find a deer painting *en plain air* (fr. "outdoors"). Most biologists argue that traits we find "beautiful" in animals are simply viewed as signs of genetic fitness and health, etc. (e.g., peacock feathers). Is that all beauty is? A useful survival mechanism?

**Gift of Beauty:** If there is no such thing as beauty, then all we're left with is efficiency. Many Christian leaders and churches are stuck in efficiency mode ("Industrial Revolution mindset"). They assume that mega churches, mega-church programs, and "bottom line" methods will advance the good news. As Makoto Fujimura, acclaimed contemporary artist and committed Christian, says, "Such utilitarian pragmatism dehumanizes us."

- "Beauty is a gratuitous gift of the creator God; it finds its source and its purpose in God's character. God, out of his [overflowing] love, created a world he did not need because he is an artist... Our sense of beauty and creativity are central to what it means to be made in the image of a creative God" (Makoto Fujimura).
- We are not here simply to "win" or "survive at all costs." We're here to enjoy the beautiful gift of God's love and share it with others.

**Without Beauty:** Without God, things like love, truth, justice, and beauty are simply survival mechanisms for advanced animals. But we know that these things flow from the giver of life himself. They are signposts that point us to God.

- So the eternal God put in us a desire for love, truth, justice, and beauty, and these desires lead us to worship him.
- Neuroscience confirms this: human beings are pre-programmed to appreciate beauty.<sup>1</sup> Even across cultures, beauty has a transcendent quality: brain scans show certain patterns, rhythms, symmetry, juxtapositions of colors, musical combinations, and elements arranged in certain ratios and geometries.

**Relativism:** Isn't beauty relative? "In the eye of the beholder"? **Yes, but.**

- **Finite:** Different cultures and different personalities see aspects of God's beautiful world that it is hard for others to see (why we need diverse expressions and perspectives to appreciate more fully all of God's beautiful artistry).
- **Sinful:** Sin distracts and blinds us to the beauty of God all around us. We become self-absorbed and fail to see beauty. We can't stop looking at the pain and brokenness of our sinful world, we can easily forget or fail to appreciate all the beautiful things God has (e.g., sunset blocked by the buildings, still peeking over, still there).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sciencefocus.com/science/the-neuroscience-of-beauty>

- **Transcendent:** Beauty still has the ability to break through our callous hearts and awaken us to our creator (e.g., Grand Canyon, ocean waves, etc.).

**Glory and Beauty:** One of the repeated phrases in Exodus 28 is that the priests' garments (like this tabernacle) are made for glory and for beauty. They are made skillfully with beauty. They convey "dignity and honor." "We are called to bring beauty into an ugly world" (Wilkin).

God calls us to glorify him with our gifts. The beautiful things you create with your life whisper the glory of God to a fallen world.

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, <sup>3</sup> and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, <sup>4</sup> to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, <sup>5</sup> in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. <sup>6</sup> And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: <sup>7</sup> the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, <sup>8</sup> the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, <sup>9</sup> and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, <sup>10</sup> and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, <sup>11</sup> and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do."<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Called <sup>2</sup> "See, I have called by name

**Forgotten:** Here, we see the story of two specific craftsmen. **Bezalel** is only mentioned in Exodus as the primary artisan of the Tabernacle, along with **Oholiab**, his deputy architect.

- *Most* of the people of the Bible are not specifically named and even those named, many are forgotten to history (cf., how many sermons on Bezalel and Oholiab have you heard? e.g., Keller, Greear, Piper, etc. Ex 31 is missing; the hole in the donut, but everyone loves donut holes!).
- These two characters represent the myriad of God's faithful people who do the work of the Lord. These are not priests or kings but laborers, artisans, and craftsmen.

**Called:** <sup>2</sup> "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah... <sup>6</sup> And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

- Even the craftsmen who built the tabernacle and sewed the priests garments are called and known by God.
- That's why Israel is not a nation simply *led* by priests but is itself a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). The church is similarly called a kingdom of priests (Rev. 5:10). In fact, the Greek word for church (*ekklesia*) comes from the word "called out" or "called together."

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<sup>2</sup> cf. 35:30-36:7

- You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you (Jn 15:16).
- Every Christian has a calling on his or her life. We were designed before the foundation of the world to be His workmanship, glorifying Him as we bring forth the fruit He desires. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Eph 2:10).
- Every person who belongs to God has been chosen by him and called for his purposes.

**Diversity:** It's not just the Levites who called and set apart, Bezalel and Oholiab are from the tribes of **Judah** and **Dan**. <sup>5b</sup> to work in every craft... <sup>6b</sup> And I have given to all able men ability...

- God doesn't just need priests, prophets, and kings. He needs craftsmen and artisans, shepherds, and farmers.
- God doesn't just need pastors. He needs all of us to use our callings and gifts to bear on our mission of sharing the good news of God's glory to the whole world. He calls teachers, caregivers, customer service professionals, healthcare workers, students, and whatever vocation, gifting, stage of life you find yourself.
  - Pastors are important but so is everyone else. Good pastors are worthy of honor, but they are not more important to God than the rest of the body. The work of ministry can only occur if the body, made up of its unique and varied parts, does the work.<sup>3</sup>
- In our unique and diverse callings, God is working to display his creativity and beauty. We need gospel **unity** not forced **uniformity**. We need unity of mission, vision, and doctrine not uniformity of gifts, method, and calling.
  - You will frustrate yourself and the work God has called you to if you try to be someone else, or wish you had the gifts someone else had. God gives as he wills.<sup>4</sup>
  - **Uniformity is great for efficiency but not for beauty.** But diverse unity, with lots of different gifts working together produce something beautiful that reflects the diverse creativity of God (e.g., like the many notes, instruments, melodies, and harmonies combine to make a beautiful song).
- The unity and diversity of the triune God is evidenced in the unity and diversity of the gifts he gives his church.<sup>5</sup> There are a variety of gifts (χαρισμάτων, "charismatic"), but the same Spirit (πνεῦμα). There are a variety of types of service or ministries (διακονιών, "deacon"), but the same Lord (κύριος). There are a variety of activities (ἐνεργημάτων; in + work; "energy"), but the same God (θεός).

## 2. Filled <sup>3</sup> and I have filled him with the Spirit of God

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<sup>3</sup> Eph 4:12, 16

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor 12:11

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor 12:4-6, note the triune shape.

**First Time:** This is the **first time** anyone in Scripture is described as being **filled** with the Spirit of God.<sup>6</sup> It's not *Aaron* the high priest or *Moses* the great prophet-leader or *Joshua* the warrior, but these craftsmen who are filled with the Holy Spirit, entrusted with crafting the Tabernacle, the priestly garments, the Ark of the Covenant, and the mercy seat to which the priest will come every year to sacrifice. The atoning sacrifice God commands for the people could not happen without these craftsmen (e.g., basketball players with no court, basket, arena, etc.).

**Spirit-Filled:** At salvation, we are indwelt and sealed by the HS (Eph 1:7) but in the Bible there is a description of the “filling of the Spirit” (10x in Acts) that is not a one-time event. To be filled with the HS is to experience his empowering presence.

- Filled with the Spirit = Biblical idiom for “having from God the ability to do or say exactly what God wants done or said” (Stuart)
- It is only by the power of God we are able to accomplish the call of God.
  - “Give what you command, and then command whatever you will” (Augustine). It is God who will finish what he started. It is God who works in us to accomplish his purposes.<sup>7</sup>
- “The fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:23). Christ is full and is filling. Christ is the source that supplies us: [He is] the vine; [we] are the branches. Whoever abides in [him] ... bears much fruit... apart from [him] you can do nothing (Jn 14:5). By empowering us, he is demonstrating that he is working here and now and that work is wholly dependent on him.
- God created by means of the Spirit, we create by means of the Spirit

**Natural vs. Supernatural:**<sup>3</sup> and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, These are clearly “spiritual gifts.” It seems to describe natural ability (and that is not wholly out of view), but it is all from God. The grammar doesn't indicate that God gave Bezalel four things (e.g., Spirit, ability, intelligence, knowledge) as much as he gave him one main thing (Spirit), which then **sanctified** his ability, intelligence, and knowledge.

- Anyone can have talent (that's genetic), or skill (that's learned), but the things God requires must rely on his Spirit. God has called you to use all of your natural talent and hard-earned skill for his glory. But he's also calling you to rely on his Spirit to apply them to his purposes.

**Ordinary Sanctification:** If I were to ask you what being filled with the Spirit looks like in our day and age, you might say something rapturous like speaking in tongues or supernatural healing. But we miss the work of the Spirit when we limit it to the ecstatic. Here the Spirit of God catalyzes masonry, woodworking, needlework, and more. It is much more hands-on and mundane.

- The Spirit of God isn't just working when the band swells and the pastor shouts. God isn't just present in emotional worship moments but in everyday relationships, vocational opportunities, and creative endeavors.

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<sup>6</sup> Implied in creation account, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Phil 1:6, 2:13

- When we limit the Spirit of God to pre-programmed worship moments, we miss his presence in the majority of our lives.

### 3. Commissioned <sup>11b</sup> According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do.

**Obedience:** The purpose of God's empowerment is to fulfill his commands, to accomplish his mission, and proclaim his glory.

- "It's not how high you jump when the Spirit hits you but how straight you walk when your feet hit the ground."

**Glory:** God doesn't fill you with his Spirit and empower you with gifts for your own glory but for his. You know you're not walking in the power of the Spirit when you're seeking your glory and not God's. Sin makes us steal for ourselves what belongs to God. Sanctification allows us to see all we have as a gift to reflect the one who gave it.

**Built:** The instructions for the tabernacle are revealed from God but the building doesn't fall from heaven, it is built by the obedient actions of God's people.

- God has ordained not only the end but the means for his kingdom to come to earth ("The church is God's plan A"). We are the intended means he has ordained for the gospel to be proclaimed, his glory to be displayed, his people to be gathered.
- God is inviting you to build his kingdom with your specific gifts, with his church, in his world.
- How are you investing your time and talents, your life and gifts in building the kingdom of God?

## Conclusion

**1. God created us to create.** To make and build. We don't exist to just "fix" (e.g., plumbing) but to "create" (e.g., art).

- When we create, we are reflecting a creator God. When we make (e.g. churches, families, relationships, etc.) we are reflecting a God who brings something out of nothing.
- Participate!

**2. God created us to glorify him.** When we create with faith for his glory, what we make reverberates into the world, pointing others to God. God has created you so that you can point others to him through the things you create and the tasks you pursue. Do people see the glory of God by the way you live your life and do your work?

- We were created by God (we are an example of his beautiful craftsmanship). Hence "crafted for his glory" has a double meaning (we were crafted to glorify God and the things we craft are meant to glorify God).
- The "beauty and glory" of the tabernacle pointed to the beauty and glory of God. We, as his temple, are meant to point to God.
- The abuse of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14) is when people use such gifts to show themselves off rather than point to God and help others.

- Psalm 8 reminds us that God intends his glory to be spread through the earth by his people, and it's not just quantity but quality.

**3. God created us for beauty.** The beautiful things you create with your life whisper the character of God into a world stained by sin.

- We are not trying to make a more efficient, successful, franchisable, church but a more “beautiful” representation of God.
- Our world is both broken and beautiful at once. “We are people made for the garden wandering in the wilderness.” “We are exposed to so much brokenness in the city, we must constantly expose our hearts and minds to beauty” (Keller). In many ways, “beauty is a form of resistance” (Tyson).
- What would it look like not to aim for “bigger” but for more “beautiful.”
  - Ratatouille, Remy doesn't want to simply consume as much garbage as possible but to make and enjoy exquisite culinary creations (cf. also Golden Corral, OCB, etc.). Why do we fill up our lives with an abundance of garbage and miss out on the beautiful things of God?

#### **So What?**

- In what ways can you bring beauty into your vocation, hobbies, schedule, family, relationships, dreams, church, neighborhood (etc.) to reflect the glory of your creative God?