



Sermon Growth Guide

September 27, 2020

The Beautiful Story - Beautiful Savior

Hebrews 1:1-12

Key Verse: Hebrews 1:3

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

Big Idea: The beauty of Jesus compels belief.

Foundations

Welcome to week seven of The Beautiful Story. This week we celebrate that Jesus is utterly stunning. Consider these classic hymn lines: “Fair is the sunshine / fairer still the moonlight / and all the twinkling starry host / Jesus shines brighter / Jesus shines purer / than all the angels heaven can boast.” The writer of Hebrews declares these things about the majesty of Jesus:

- The Father speaks through Jesus
- Jesus is appointed heir of all things
- The universe is made through Jesus
- Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory
- Jesus is the exact representation of (the Father’s) being
- By Jesus’ powerful word all things are sustained
- Jesus provides purification for sins
- Jesus is seated at the right hand of the (Father) in heaven

This week we reaffirm the doctrine of the Trinity, that Jesus is distinct in His person, yet of one essence with the Father and the Spirit.

The aforementioned hymn concludes this way: “Beautiful Savior! Lord of all the nations! Son of God and Son of Man! Glory and honor, praise, adoration, now and forevermore be thine.”

Open and close your time of further study and application in prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to guide and guard your time in His Word.

Understanding God’s Word

In verse 2 we learn that “(God) has spoken to us by (Jesus).” What has been “spoken”?

Specifically, in what ways is Jesus “the radiance of God’s glory” in verse 3? What does the Son “provide” in verse 3?

What is the writer of Hebrews emphasizing in verses 5-2?

Applying God’s Word

We celebrate that Jesus is utterly stunning. The beauty of Jesus compels belief.

Lamentably, too often we hear of a testimony akin to Mahatma Ghandi who said, “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”

How can you more closely emanate the beauty of Jesus to those around you this week? Identify a situation you are facing into which you can bring, by the grace of God, the beauty of Jesus.

Witnessing God’s Word

Think of one person who has yet to grasp the true beauty of Jesus. Take a moment to close your time by praying for that person. Discern a beautiful action with which to step toward that person with the love and beauty of Jesus.

At this point in *The Beautiful Story*, we come to Jesus. The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. All that language and promise we have seen comes home to this—God has come in the flesh. In the fullness of time, God came down in Jesus. God is in the manger. It's Christmas. Christmas in September? You bet. Listen, it's 2020. At this point it feels like we can do just about whatever we want, right? If we want to do Christmas in September, let's do it! I might declare myself three birthdays this year. Why not? It's 2020 and all bets are off! Merry Christmas! Into the beautiful story comes Jesus the **Beautiful Savior**.

Jesus is beautiful. I'm not talking about looks. We don't know what He looked like, and since none of the Gospel writers remark on His physical appearance, we can only assume it was unremarkable. I'm talking about the person, the man Himself, His being, His character. Jesus is beautiful. But we are not very good at sharing the beautiful Jesus with the world. Somehow in our engagement with the lost world, the beauty of Jesus is lost in translation. This is what prompts people to say things like "I don't mind Jesus, but I don't like the church." Or what Mahatma Ghandi said, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." I really like your Jesus. It's His followers I can't much stand to be around.

Rich Stearns, former president of World Vision, was here a few years ago and told about recruiting a communications director. This guy came from a Christian organization that pushes some hard edges sometimes and winds up saying things the contemporary world doesn't like to hear. He said, "I'd love to come work for you. Are you kidding? I'm always defending Christianity after these hard things have been said and everybody is criticizing us. World Vision is easy. You guys feed hungry children and bring water to the starving and help families out of poverty. You have the Jesus everybody loves!" Where is the Jesus everybody loves?

Have we hidden Him? Sometimes we obscure the beauty of Jesus in our well-meaning efforts to defend the cause of Jesus. In *The Beautiful Story* there is a **Beautiful Savior**. His presence captured those around Him. He was beautiful to the core. Jesus Himself is the "radiance of the glory of God." Beauty disarms our defenses, surprises and captures us. Jesus did all these things in His ministry time and time again. He does them still. Recapture your vision of Jesus. He is the **Beautiful Savior**.



"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways" (Hebrews 1:1). Yes. That's just what we have been talking about the last two weeks. God spoke to ancestors like Abraham, with whom God made a **Beautiful Promise**. God spoke through prophets like Isaiah through whom God delivered **Beautiful Hope**. "But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe" (Hebrews 1:2). The promise pointed toward one who would come and seal the promise with His blood. The hope sustained expectation that God would send a Savior, in fact, that God Himself would come and save. Now we see. It all resolves to this. Jesus. The Word of God who was with God at creation—through whom and for whom all things were made. The Light of God who breaks down the darkness when all hope is lost. Jesus, Son of God, Savior. Now it is time, in *The Beautiful Story*, to see the coming of the **Beautiful Savior**.

Why does it say God "appointed" Jesus heir? If He's the Son, isn't He the heir? Later through the passage, and in other places in Scripture, it sounds like Jesus is becoming the Son. "You are my son, I have become your Father," verse 2. Or "I will be his Father and he will be my Son," verse 5. This

is the unfolding story. Jesus is taking His place in the story. Jesus is ever the Son, God ever the Father. But God is unfolding His truth and telling **The Beautiful Story**. A story is told with mystery and unresolved questions that hold us in suspense until the right time, just the right moment, to let us in on what's really going on. So it is with **The Beautiful Story**. Today, in the fullness of time, we get to know how God intends to save, who the **Beautiful Savior** is—it's Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior and Lord.

Hebrews jumps right into who Jesus truly is. Jesus is not just some extra-special angel. "For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'?" [Psalm 2:7] Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'? [2 Samuel 7:14] And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (Hebrews 1:5-6). This is God's firstborn, His only-begotten. He's not an angel; angels worship Him. He brings an everlasting Kingdom: "But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom' [Psalm 45]" (Hebrews 1:8). About the Son it says this. We have wondered at the beauty of creation, but the beauty of creation is nothing compared to Jesus the Son. "He also says, 'In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end' [Psalm 102]" (Hebrews 1:10-12). The beauty of the Son of God surpasses the beauty of creation. Jesus, more beautiful than sunsets. Jesus, more beautiful than ocean waves reflecting moonlight. Jesus,

more beautiful than mountains' grandeur and amber waves of grain. Jesus. Beautiful Savior. We don't even know what He looks like, though.

We've been at this a while. Let's recall why we are talking about beauty. Beauty captures. Beauty stops you in your tracks, arrests the soul, and makes you say, "Wow!" Remember, Thomas Aquinas defined beauty as "That which when seen pleases." God made us to love and respond to true beauty. Beauty breaks down barriers. It penetrates the heart in ways that reasoned discourse and teaching just can't do. It gains direct access to our souls. Miguel de Cervantes said, "It is the prerogative and charm of beauty to win hearts." In terms of winning hearts toward God, the beauty of God, the beauty of Jesus, it has a gravity and a pull. Everybody wanted to be around Jesus, even those who were trying to destroy Him! Beauty has a charm and a draw, like moths around a flame. It grabs our souls and pulls. Jesus, **Beautiful Savior**. Just release the beauty of Jesus. Let the world see the beauty of Jesus. Watch what happens then. Jesus, more beautiful than the beauty we know.

Who is Jesus again? "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Hebrews 1:3). It's difficult to express the importance of this verse. For about 200 years the church vigorously debated its meaning. Is Jesus God or an image of God?

Jesus is so much God that He is exact in His imaging of God. He is the exact representation of the being, the essence, the core of what it is to be God. Exact. You can't be that and not be God. That's the truth of it. Jesus is God showing



us who He is. “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). If you want to know who God is, look to Jesus. The **Beautiful Savior**.

Jesus is “the radiance of God’s glory,” the bright expression of the very beauty of God. God’s glory. The glory of God. The glory that filled the temple in Isaiah 6. The glory that will fill all the earth. The glory Ezekiel witnessed, “and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory ... and the glory of the Lord filled the temple” (Ezekiel 43:2, 5). The glory of the Lord. If all that glory was distilled and focused in, like refractions of light getting condensed and sharpened into a laser and fired off into a single point of light—that’s Jesus! “The radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being.” “Sustaining all things by His powerful word.” Jesus bears all creation toward its end, He carries it along, by the power of His Word. Then, as we profess and believe, “After he had provided purification for sins,” after He died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice to provide cleansing, purification, removal of the stain of sin from you and me, after that, He rose again and “He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” **Beautiful Savior**. Just show the world Jesus.

The beauty of Jesus. We don’t even know what He looked like. You could talk about the way He dealt with people, the things He taught, the stories, the impact on history. H. G. Wells said, “More than 1900 years later a historian like myself, who doesn’t even call himself a Christian, finds the picture centering irresistibly around the life and character of this most significant man.” If Jesus didn’t exist, we never could have made Him up. He sits dead center in the beautiful story. His own beauty as a person is disarming, compelling, alluring, captivating. Show them Jesus. Nobody knows who wrote this song, but for

hundreds of years the church has sung: “Fairest Lord Jesus, ruler of all nature, O thou of God and man the Son, Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor, thou, my soul’s glory, joy, and crown. Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands, robed in the blooming garb of spring: Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer, who makes the woeful heart to sing. Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight, and all the twinkling starry host: Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer than all the angels heaven can boast.” Finally, “Beautiful Savior! Lord of all the nations! Son of God and Son of Man! Glory and honor, praise, adoration, now and forevermore be thine.”

Next time you speak of Jesus, can you speak of His beauty? Let the beauty of Jesus shine. Even when you say His name, His beauty should, I don’t know, put a glimmer in your eye. Raise the corners of your mouth a bit. Jesus. It if doesn’t, you don’t know Him. If it doesn’t make you smile, you haven’t met Him. You haven’t seen His beauty. You’re still stuck on the Jesus nobody loves, the shrunken, deformed picture of Jesus. **Beautiful Savior**. We watched. We waited for the beautiful promise to come. We endured in beautiful hope longing for the arm of the Lord to be revealed. “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4 ESV). God came down in Jesus, the **Beautiful Savior**. “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord’” (Luke 2:8-11).

