

“The Glory of Redemption” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Epiphany 2 January 19, 2025

- I. **Isaiah 62:1-5** – previously read
- II. **Michele and I just returned from San Diego, California.**
 - a. We spent ten days visiting my dad and enjoying the sun for a little while.
 - b. It was nice to wander around different areas with shops and restaurants.
 - c. Something interesting I mentioned to Michele is how many people are trying to be beautiful down there.
 - i. Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but you can tell that many people in that part of California work hard to look beautiful.
 - ii. Part of that hard work goes into buying nice cars, nice clothing, expensive accessories like handbags and watches, and exercising at fancy studios and eating healthy foods.
 - iii. We walked by a couple of makeup stores, and they were easily three times larger than anything I’ve seen in Portland.
 - d. It’s not just in California, but all over the world, people are striving to appear beautiful, wealthy, and popular.
 - i. They make sure the outside is in perfect order and appear to have it all together – and yet so many of these people are just looking for acceptance and affirmation from the world around them.
 - ii. No amount of makeup, hairstyling, manicures... or fancy cars, muscles, and expensive clothing will ever be enough... because it’s all our effort and work.
 1. You see, our effort and work will always lead to loss, brokenness, and ugliness when it is not in alignment with God’s will.
 2. Looking and doing your best is not the problem, as long as it is doing everything for Christ.
 - a. Unfortunately, many people are full of pride and vanity when they try to meet the world’s beauty standards.
 - b. Others are full of fear that they will not be accepted or find a life partner.
 - e. None of us can live up to the unrealistic standards of the world, because no matter how hard we try, we are far from perfect.
 - III. **Isaiah is sharing God’s** own words with us today regarding what is beautiful.
 - a. Isaiah lived about 700 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and he was able to see the coming invasion of Israel – along with the destruction and horrible exile into Assyria.
 - b. Not only that, but he was looking ahead to the eventual destruction of Jerusalem and the temple more than a century later.

- c. God would allow the destruction of these kingdoms because His people had walked away from His word... they no longer cared what God wanted, they just followed the world's standards.
- d. It's interesting that throughout the Old Testament God calls His people anything but beautiful, worthy, and popular.
 - i. No, He calls them an adulterous woman (Ezekiel 16:32)
 - ii. He calls them a sister of Sodom and Gomorrah (Ezekiel 16:46-47)
 - iii. He says that they are stiff-necked – or they are stubborn and refuse to obey (Ex. 32:9; Deut. 9:6)
 - iv. He says they are a degenerate, wild vine (Jeremiah 2:21)
 - v. He even calls them, “Not My people” because they were constantly breaking His covenant (Hosea 1:9)
 - vi. And, He says that they are an unfaithful bride as they carouse around falling for false gods (Hosea 2:2-5)
- e. God makes the connection to marriage many times because it is language we can understand – when a loved one breaks a trust and the vows that were made on their wedding day.
 - i. In fact, you might say that God was using language for His people that was the exact opposite of beauty – they were ugly, deceitful, wicked, and rebellious.
 - ii. Even though God loved them and called them His own people, they walked away from their marriage vows to be faithful to Him.

IV. **It's easy to get down on the Israelites for not being faithful to God.**

- a. What were they thinking after all those years of God's favor and grace?
- b. Yet, we too are far from the perfect bride adorned for her husband.
 - i. We get so angry when someone breaks a trust or sins against us... as we think to ourselves how could they betray me like that?
 - 1. When was the last time we betrayed God by seeking comfort in the world's standards... trusting in its power to help us more than we looked to God?
 - ii. Maybe you will understand this, but as a parent, I would always see my kids about to make a mistake from a mile away... it was so obvious to me, but they were not aware of all the things I knew as an adult.
 - 1. How many times has God in heaven looked at us in the same way, just knowing that we are about to blow it... as He sees the things that trip us up from a mile away?
 - iii. Sometimes our behavior is just ugly – and no matter how hard we work on the outside to look good (like all those people who try to live up to the world's standards) – the underlying problem is sin that distorts, spoils, and ruins everything – especially our relationship with God.

V. **Isaiah prophesies about a day** when all this ugliness and rebellion changes.

- a. Israel, or God's people, will not be stuck in these times of exile and destruction... but they will be raised up in glory and righteousness one day.
 - i. God says all the nations will see the righteousness of His people... that the kings of the earth will see their glory... and His people will be a crown of beauty. (vss 2-3)
 - ii. There would be a day coming that all people would see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of His people – because the relationship would be restored.
 - iii. No longer would Israel be adulterers and unfaithful – but they would be called by a new name and shine forth in righteousness and beauty.
- b. What could possibly happen that would change the relationship between God, who called these people unfaithful, to righteous, beautiful, and filled with glory?
 - i. The answer is that Jesus came into the world to reveal God's redemption through a human being.
 - ii. Not that Jesus was only a human being – but Jesus was God in the flesh... a baby born to be the King of kings... and yet crown us with glory.
 - iii. In speaking of us as the Church, Ephesians says, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that He might [make her holy], having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27)
 - 1. In other words, Jesus cleanses us by His sacrifice on the cross, so that we are holy, beautiful, and without sin.
 - 2. Jesus cleanses us by baptism as He washes us clean from anything that might separate us from Him and places His name on us so that we are always His.
- c. Our Isaiah reading looks forward to a time when God undoes the sin and ugliness that separate us from Him.
 - i. We could never possibly make these things right by ourselves... but only through the all-availing sacrifice of our Lord Jesus can we be truly beautiful – no matter what we look like, as a believer in Jesus, you are beautiful and holy in God's eyes.
- d. God sees beauty differently... He does not measure us by our efforts or how we try to meet standards of the world... He sees us by the righteousness and glory that come from being redeemed in Christ.
 - i. Through Jesus, God takes what is broken by sin and makes it holy and beautiful... restoring our relationship with Him and crowning us with His love.

- ii. Much more than beauty by the world's standards, we are adorned with the glory of redemption through the saving work of Jesus our Lord. Amen.