

The Third Sunday Of Advent

God's Take On Vogue

Isaiah 61:1-4

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion -
to give a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be like trees of righteousness, living long and always displaying God's glory.
They will rebuild ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities that have been empty for generations.*

Opening Video: Beauty Redefined – Dove Evolution

We started today with this: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U>

Ask Yourself "Am I Beautiful?"

I have a simple question for you.

Are you beautiful?

I'm asking you now.

Are you beautiful?

Because the truth is that beauty does matter.

Real beauty is the work of God – real beauty is evidence of God's hand in the world.

Real beauty has something to do with your worth.

This isn't such a stupid question.

It matters.

So are you beautiful?

Women – ask yourself 'am I beautiful?'

Men, I know this might be a bit un-blokey or weird, so ask the question with an Aussie bloke accent.

"Am I beautiful?"

And don't avoid this by getting all analytical.

Don't ask 'well what do you mean by beautiful?'

Don't ask 'do you mean physical or emotional or intellectual?'

Don't bother defining beautiful because beauty is a mystery like love.

Beauty has something to do with value.

Beauty is valuable.

So ask yourself "Am I beautiful?"

Just stop for a quiet moment.
Close your eyes.
Close your eyes and ask,
“Am I Beautiful?”

Am I beautiful?
Perhaps some of us need to go away this week.
Just turn off every possible distraction.
Sit for an hour in silence and just ask God, “Am I Beautiful?”

If you actually take the time to do this you might be surprised what happens.

This is one of the deep questions in every human’s heart.
We all want to know how if we are valuable.
We all want to know if we are worth something.
Deep down, one of the questions we need to deal with is “Am I Beautiful?”
In fact, our relationship with God is all to do with this question.
Am I Beautiful?

What does the world say?

Vogue - The World’s Culture Of False Perfection

What does the World say about beauty?
One of the best examples is Vogue Magazine.
This is a magazine that has changed the way we think about beauty.

Here’s Vogue Magazine in 1917



Vogue in 1940



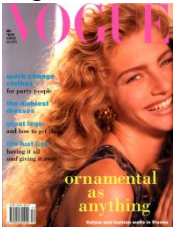
Vogue in 1950



Vogue in 1970



Vogue in 1990



And now let's go to 2011.

Most of the Vogue covers from 2011 feature too much flesh to show you in church. But here's the largest and most clothed person on a Vogue cover from 2011.



Sorry Natalie Portman fans, but this photo is seriously retouched.

And my real question would be to get down to her soul and ask, "Natalie are you beautiful?"

Are you beautiful, or are you trying so hard to keep your figure and your image so others will admire you?

What does the world say about beauty?

The world tries to tell us we're not beautiful.

The fashion marketing industry promotes ideas about beauty that are usually unreachable.

They want you to question your weight, your age, your hair colour, your body muscle mass.

But is that beauty?

We all know that our culture has oppressed women with false perfection and by turned them into objects.

But these days also hear from men how they are unhappy with their bodies and their image.

This is not just a problem for women anymore,

Our modern media turns women into objects but it does the same to men too.

The world tells us that to be beautiful we need to change ourselves.

I wrote a list of things we get told we need to change to be beautiful.

The world is saying that to be beautiful you might need:

- A tan (even if it's a fake one)
- To dye your hair
- New clothes
- More makeup
- Muscle building
- Manicuring
- A facial scrub
- Blackhead remover
- Pimple cream
- A beautiful partner
- Shaving parts of your body
- Tattoos
- Peircings
- Different soap
- The right shampoo
- A better conditioner
- A diet
- A diet
- A diet
- Jewelry
- Tighter clothes
- Bulkier clothes

To sell products advertisers have to convince us that we have a problem.

They have to convince us that hair that isn't bouncy enough is a problem.

They have to convince us that normal coloured skin is unattractive.

They have to convince us that skin should be covered with makeup or exposed more by less clothing.

The World constantly tells us we're NOT beautiful.

And the entire definition of beauty that's being pushed is about one thing:

Physical appearance.

- ***A psychological study found that three minutes spent looking at a fashion magazine caused 70% of women to feel depressed, guilty, and shameful.***
- ***About 45% of Aussie males express unhappiness with their body.***
- ***At least 20% of Aussie women who are underweight think that they are overweight and are dieting to lose weight.***
- ***17% of Aussie men are dieting at any given time.***
- ***76% of Australian high school girls believe they are too fat.***
- ***68% of 15 year old girls are on a diet.***
- ***If Barbie was a real person she could not walk
(Her emaciation would mean she did not have adequate body strength)***

Source: Mission Australia (except the last one!)

Our world has a culture of false perfection.
It's false because it's based only on OUTWARD stuff like how you look.
And it's even more false because the outward images are LIES TOO!

The world is promoting two lies:

1. Beauty is physical.
2. We are not beautiful enough.

So what's God's answer to that?

God's Answer For Beauty

In today's Bible reading we are in the book of Isaiah.
This book, written around 500 years before Jesus
Contains many beautiful prophecies about the Saviour – about who Jesus would be.

And in today's prophecy about Christ,
We read what his purpose would be:

***To preach good news to the poor.
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion -
to give a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.***

That's what Christ came to bring.
Notice the end.
Read it with me:

Christ the Saviour came:

***to give a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.***

A Crown Of Beauty Instead Of Ashes

Our culture of false perfection destroys people.
It leaves 99.99% of us feeling unworthy ugly and inadequate.
It's a culture of ashes.
Ashes are a symbol of death and mourning.
Ashes are a symbol of hopelessness.
Our obsession with outward image is a culture of ashes because it destroys souls.

The message our world is one of ashes.
It says you're worthless, you don't look good enough and you aren't worth much.

But God has a different message.
He says, YOU ARE WORTH SOMETHING.
Jesus comes to cast of the ashes of anxiety about yourself,

Christ comes to bring us a "CROWN OF BEAUTY".

God looks at you and sees someone made by beauty – to be loved by him.
And he offers you a crown of beauty.

In Hebrew "Crown-of-beauty" is one word – and it means a headdress worn by a bride!

Christ comes to declare you beautiful, beautiful like a bride at the most important day of her life.
And this prophecy that Christ would bring a 'bridal crown of beauty' is amazing,
Because when Christ came, his followers, the church, were called 'The Bride'.

Jesus Christ sees you as so beautiful, so worthwhile, so valuable,
That he would die for you.

You're worth dying for.
You're beautiful.

The Real Secret To Beauty – Love Makes You Beautiful

Recently the most mentioned name in our news has been Kim Kardashian.
Until the recent storm of publicity about this supposedly beautiful model I had no idea who she was.
Apparently Kim Kardashian is so beautiful that her face is worth millions just to turn up at some races.
But Kim is not truly beautiful.
She is scarred with the ugliness of a desirable body turned into a commodity.
She is deformed with desire, greed, and materialism.
Pook Kim, she's deformed with sin.
She's so busy trying being sexy that she's lost the real beauty God gave her.

So do you know the real secret to beauty?

Many of us in this room are in danger of being as lost and deformed as Kim,
Because we're basing our lives on what we can see, taste, touch and buy.
We are trying to look younger or sexier or more buff or muscly.
But were missing the real secret to beauty because we are just messing with what's visible.

Do you know the real secret to beauty?
But real beauty is not physical – it's a deep thing in the soul that God made.

A while ago I was having a real hard time.
I was struggling physically and emotionally and spiritually.
So I went to see a close friend I trust.
And he just said, "You talk I'm just going to listen."
And he listened to me as we talked deeply.
At the end my mate said to me,
"Matthew you are beautiful."

And I looked at him as if he was mad.
Was he gay? Was this some sort of game? Was he playing with me?
And then I realized he was speaking the truth.

“No,” he said, “You are really beautiful.”

And as he said that Jesus spoke to me.

Jesus was in the room.

I realized that Jesus really loves me – I mean really loves me.

I realized again that I’m worth dying for – that I’m loved by the creator of the universe.

And I got it!

Everything changed, because I saw that I’m worth saving.

And you are too.

I’ve had the same experience where I listen to someone with all my being,
Through listening as servant God shows me they are beautiful and I tell them,
And Christ comes!

Christ wants to claim you for his own,

To tell you no matter how you look,

No matter how you struggle,

No matter what the world says,

You are worth dying for,

You are loved – and knowing that love reveals your beauty – they mystery of your infinite worth.

Stop everything, be known by Christ, and then you will know you are beautiful.

Christ came to give a crown of beauty instead of ashes,

Amen.