

Word and picture

John 1:14

January 3, 2010

http://www.firstcongucc.org/Movies/word_and_picture.mov (Navigate your browser to the link to view the slideshow that opens the sermon.)

Word and picture. Pictures and words. Those are the pictures. What is the word?

Beauty. Beauty is the word. Something more than “pretty.” Something more than “attractive.” Something deeper, more substantial, more intense, more enduring. Beauty is something luminous, something full of light.

Beauty draws us. Beauty captures our attention and makes us want to draw closer, but not too close. Beauty makes us pause and keeps us at a distance, distant enough to see able to see and appreciate, distant enough not to disturb or disrupt.

Beauty holds our gaze, but sometimes it's almost too much, too overwhelming, too much to hold, too much to take in and hold on to, and we have to look away, but only for a moment, only for a moment until beauty draws us back to look again.

Once we do turn away, beauty does not leave us. It is something we want to take with us, something we want to remember, to bring to mind again and again. That's why we take photographs and make paintings and write poems and songs! We want to bring beauty to mind again, not just to delight our senses, but to fill our souls.

Because beauty is substantial, weighty, profound. Beauty is goodness. It is grace. It is glory.

Beauty is powerful. It can change your mind. It can change your direction. It can change your life. It can lift you up. It can settle you down. It can empty you out and fill you back up again.

Beauty leaves you quiet and grateful. Beauty leaves you blessed, blessed for the seeing.

And what is the source of beauty? God is! Of course! This is what God does -- make beauty!

And God looked at all God had made and God saw that is was ... tov.

God saw that it was “tov” -- good, beautiful, glorious. This is what God does. God makes beautiful things. God makes things beautiful, for his own delight and ours. And as creatures made in God’s image this is what we are meant to do, too.

It’s what I do when I plan a worship service or write a sermon -- try to make something beautiful.

It’s what musicians do when they practice and perform a piece of music -- make beauty.

It’s what artists do and gardeners and homeowners -- make beauty.

It’s what mothers and fathers do -- do what they can to help a child grow to be a beautiful person.

It’s what teachers do -- show students how to look for beauty and to appreciate it when they find it and to learn to make it for themselves.

Beauty is the word. God is the source of the word. God is the word. The word is God. The word by which everything is made. The word that is the source of life and light. The word that shines in the darkness and the dullness on all people. The word that bears grace and truth.

That is the word. What is the picture?

Jesus! The picture is Jesus!

The word became a human being and lived among us ... and we saw his glory.

We saw his glory! We weren’t just told about it. We were not merely given a message, a secret, a new law. We were not merely pointed in the right direction, shown a new way.

We saw it! Glory, beauty, God. We saw God! We saw -- we see -- a physical, visible manifestation of God in all his beauty, in all his glory.

Seeing is believing. So look! Look at Jesus! What do you see?

That’s what we will be doing the next six Sundays in the season of Epiphany, the season of light -- looking at Jesus, contemplating his glory, fixing our attention on his beauty so that we may hold it in our minds and hearts, so that it may fill our souls and change us ...