

Jesus' resurrection **changes everything**. It enables you and me to be **transformed** from sinner to saint.

But how can we visualize that transformation by God's wonderful grace?

Many of the words we use to explain this spiritual transformation are concepts, and therefore difficult to visual. Words such as ...

- Repentance,
- Atonement,
- Satisfaction,
- Justification,
- Purity,
- Holy,
- Sanctification, and
- Redemption all have an **underlying word-pictures**, but they are difficult to understand.

There are some **concrete word-pictures** of our transformation in the Bible. For example, Biblical Word-pictures of Transformation ...

- Far / near (Ep 2:13). We were once far from God but are now brought near or we were ... but are now ...
- Dirty / clean (Ps 51:7).
- Slave / free (Ro 6:18).
- Darkness / light (Ep 5:8).
- Hungry / filled (Jn 4:14). **Today** we celebrate Jesus' resurrection, so we can add that we were once dead, but are now alive.
- Dead / alive (Ep 2:5).

But there is **another one that is tied deeply** to the Easter story that you may never have thought about before: the transformation from *ugliness to beauty*.

Today, the *Holy Spirit* has led me to highlight Beauty & Majesty in the Easter story so that **we can praise God** for his transforming grace.

I hope you are encouraged today – you are far more than you see in a mirror.

Beauty & Majesty *Transforming Grace*



Let's start with this passage: 'For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us *anew* in Christ Jesus (Ep 2:10 NLT).'

- Astounding, we have become 'God's masterpiece.' God views us as **an artistic design** that *brings him pleasure*.
- I have seen some **masterpieces** by Monet, van Gogh, Picasso, O'Keeffe, Chagall. I have seen the best of **Japanese art**, though I am not familiar with their names.
- To think, **I can be a masterpiece** is beyond belief.
- Yet Paul says, we are '*created anew*,' meaning that **we were once** *not* a masterpiece. But **under God's recreative work** we become an artful design.

What tools or cosmetic surgery does God the artist use to transform us from ugly to beautiful, to recreate us?

That brings us to **the Easter story**.

In the synagogue, Jesus connected himself with Isaiah's prophecy. He taught 'The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me ... ³ to bestow on them a *crown of beauty* instead of ashes, the *oil of joy* instead of mourning, and a *garment of praise* instead of a spirit of despair (Is 61:1, 3 NIV).'

- All of these are **beauty terms**: beautiful crown, aromatic perfume, and magnificent clothing.
- The prophesy **highlights a change** from ugly ashes, putrid smell of mourning, and clothing that signals, 'I'm hopeless.'

The crown of thorns and the triumphal crown of splendor is a **symbol of transformation**.

- **Jesus first wore** a crown of thorns – bearing our sin.
- **His victory over death** transformed the thorns into a crown of splendor – revealing God's love and rich grace.

Let's start with the basics.

1. Beauty Lost.

In the **beginning**, 'Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame (Ge 2:25 NIV).'

- They were innocent.
- That **transparency and innocence** before God was beautiful.
- **God was drawn to them** and enjoyed them.

For us today **beauty is subjective**. Our **ability to understand** beauty has been corrupted by the fall. For example, years ago, we went on a short vacation to North Adams, MA. We stayed in a delightful hotel, called The Porches.

- It overlooked the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art – mASS MoCA. We were appalled at the contemporary art; we hated it. **All the pieces screamed there is no objective truth, we are just random accidents.**
- Fortunately, the Clark Art Institute¹ was only 15 minutes down the road. It contained many originals from the **great masters**, such as Renoir, Winslow Homer, and Degas. **These artists saw the beauty and orderliness of God's creation.**

After they sinned, 'The Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife (Ge 3:21 NLT).' We pick up three things from this simple passage:

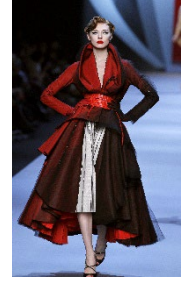
- Their **new knowledge** of good and evil brought shame, and that their **shame** needed covering.
- The **first death in creation** was the death of the animals God used to cover their ugly shame.
- **Only God can save; only God can cover our shame.**

They were **now spiritually ugly** – not just wearing shame as clothing – but being **rotten to the core**, sinful. Therefore, 'The Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:23 NLT).'

- **Sin separates us from what we love.**
- They **desired to be like God**, knowing good and evil, *but instead* they were separated from God.
- The Bible says, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Ro 3:23 NIV).'
- **We ourselves** are spiritually ugly and try to cover our shame. But **all our best efforts cannot restore innocence or beauty**.

¹ [The Clark - Home](#)

Have you ever seen the fashion news? I always thought such fashion was weird. I reasoned, 'who would wear such clothes?' Only later in life did I realize that haute couture is not about making clothes that one would wear shopping; it is art. Like this vintage Dior, it is a walking piece of art with no function other than to be beautiful.



We have hope to be spiritually transformed, so that we no longer wear the garments of shame.

Isaiah prophesied 'I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding or a bride with her jewels (Is 61:10 NLT).'

- We can **be clothed** in His purity, a robe His righteousness.
- He will **again delight** in us, like a bride being adored by her groom.

Let's go a little deeper and see this theme throughout God's story.

2. Beginning & Finale.

This **theme of beauty** is there at the start of God's story in the garden. God created mankind and said **it was 'very good'** (Ge 1:31) - perfect and idyllic.

Then came **the turning point**: 'When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and *pleasing to the eye*, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it (Ge 3:6 NIV).'

- **Not only** knowledge, **but beauty played** a part in the fall from innocence.
- **Purity and innocence** were lost, and death came to the world.
- God had to **distance Himself** because **His eyes are 'too pure to look on evil'** (Hab 1:13 NIV). He turns away from us in horror.

There is something in us that **desires beauty**. When our eyes see beauty we are drawn to it. When doing marriage counseling, I always ask 'what first attracted you to your spouse.' It is always, 'I thought they were good looking.' Something in us was attracted to their appearance or personality.

Beauty is **at the end of God's story**, too. Its **finale** is in another garden where **beauty is restored**. 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... ²And I saw the holy city, the *new Jerusalem*, coming down from God out of heaven *like a bride beautifully dressed* for her husband (Re 21:1-2 NLT).'

- God's children are citizens of the new Jerusalem.

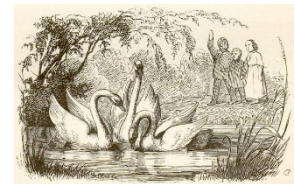
- We are like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband, God will **again be drawn** to us and enjoy us.
- Then, **we will be God's masterpiece**, like a piece of art, clothed in His righteousness.
- God Himself will **live with us**, and we will **have joy** in each other's presence.

In between the beginning and end of God's story, there is Golgotha and the tomb. This is where **God made a way for transformation**.

3. Transformation.

Stories of transformation make it sound so easy.

- Hans Christian Andersen's *Ugly Duckling* just needed time to grow into his natural beauty of being a swan.
- *Cinderella's* fairy godmother just had to wave a magic wand and sing 'bibbidi-bobbidi-boo.'
- Mr. Hyde just needed to drink a potion to turn back into **Dr. Jekyll**.
- And **Belle** just needed love to turn the Beast into a handsome prince. [The Beast Turns Into A Prince - Beauty And The Beast](#)



Our **transformation is expensive**.

- There is **no magic wand or potion** that can transform us.
- We **do not grow out of** sin's ugliness with time. In fact, it is the opposite - sin, 'when it is full-grown' results in death (Ja 1:15 NIV), writes James.
- **God does love us**, but *its not* the romantic kind of love as in *Beauty and the Beast*. **God's love** for us was selfless and generous: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son (Jn 3:16 NIV).'
- **God's love** is the Creator loving His creation, *not* a creature desiring another creature.

God showed us **His love for us on the cross**. **The cross is the cosmetic surgery that transforms; it is the means of our spiritual makeover**.

4. Jesus & the Cross.

Jesus **paid a great price** for our transformation.

- I think people pay way too much money for a Coco Channel or Christian Dior dresses these days.
- But **our robe of righteousness** was purchased 'with the precious blood of Christ (1Pe 1:19NIV),' which was worth far more than gold or silver.
- Jesus was **overwhelmed** with 'sorrow to the point of death (Mt 26:38 NIV).' He even **prayed** for there to be another way - the cost was so expensive.

How does the cross and empty tomb make this transformation *possible*?

First, let's go **back to Isaiah** and his prophecies: 'The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to ... ³ bestow on them a *crown of beauty* instead of ashes, the *oil of joy* instead of mourning, and a *garment of praise* instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor (Is 61:1-3 NIV).'

Jesus was anointed (v. 1) especially sent to do the work of beautification – salvation (Lk 19:10). **God's Spirit was necessary, because only God can save**; only God can cover our sin and shame (Ps 32:1, 5).

Praise the lord for ...

- A **crown of beauty** *instead* of the ugliness of our own lives.
- The **aroma of joy** and purity *instead* of the putrid smell of death.
- And a **beautiful garment of grace** that causes us to praise.

Second, the **oaks of righteousness** is throwback to **an earlier word-picture**: 'You will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks ... you will be disgraced *because of the gardens that you have chosen*.³⁰ You will be like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water (Is 1:29-31 NIV).'

- **We once were like** *are withered, dry oak trees*.
- The shame and disgrace was **because of our sinful choices**.

Third, we will be transformed 'For the display of his splendor (Is 61:3 NIV).'

- **As God's masterpiece**, people will honor the artist and his work on us. Salvation's beauty reveals His glory, His praise, and His honor.
- **We will look at each other** and see His garments of grace and righteousness.

What did Jesus look like? Was he handsome or homely? Scholars don't know.

Isaiah wrote: 'There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. ³He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way (Is 53:2-3 NLT).'

Could this passage mean Jesus was ugly?

On the **one hand** we answer, **no**. Isaiah is just shocking his audience.

- They **expected** a majestic Messiah who *triumphs* through battle.
- Isaiah is saying **that the difference between the expected Messiah's method and Jesus' way is shocking**, as if 'the ugliest man in a group (was) chosen "best-looking."' ²

On the **other hand**, we could answer **yes**. Paul wrote, 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2Co 5:21 NIV).'

- God took **all our ugly sin** and put it on the man Jesus. **Only a second Adam, fully obedient could reverse sin's curse.**
- *Have you noticed that the effects of sin can sometimes be seen physically on people? Maybe you have seen the before and after pictures of methamphetamine users.*
- When Jesus was on the cross, God **the Father turned away in disgust**. Jesus cried out from the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far away when I groan for help (Ps 22:1 NLT)?' Because Jesus wore our sin, God the Father had to turn away.
- Jesus **took all our sins on him** - all our selfishness, all the shame, and all those embarrassing things we have done. **God made him to be our sin bearer** and he took our punishment.



The **cross** was an ugly thing.

- **Spiritually**, it represents the horror of our sin. 'He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed (Is 53:5 NIV).'
- **Physically**, the *brutality of the cross* was a necessary punishment for our rebellion.

But there is hope; the crown of thorns precedes the crown of glory.

5. Jesus & the Empty Tomb.

'The place of crucifixion was near a garden, where there was a new tomb ⁴²... since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. ¹ Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance (Jn 19:41-20:1 NLT).'

² John N. Oswalt, *NICOT The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), p. 382.

As *ugly* as the cross was, the empty tomb was **beautiful**.

Mary came to the garden tomb that morning to mourn and **she confused Jesus** with the gardener.

- Jesus simply **called her name**, 'Mary.'
- Instant **recognition**. She turned around, and **grabbed** him (Jn 20:16, 17).
- Her heart desired her savior.

Jesus earlier had taught 'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶ Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this (Jn 11:25-26 NLT)?'

- **Transformation** is *possible*, it **just requires belief**.
- **If you believe**, **God's grace will cover you with robes of righteousness**.
- *Not your own* righteousness, but **His righteousness**, Jesus' beauty cover's us.

Jesus is beautiful and majestic, and he is the very definition of splendor ...

- David - 'One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I ... gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple (Ps 27:4 NLT).'
- Peter - 'We were eyewitnesses of his majesty (2Pe 1:16 NIV).'
- Unknown Psalmist - 'My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendor all day long (Ps 71:8 NIV).'

If this mirror here reflected what was in your heart, what would your spiritual reflection be?

- **Would it reflect the beauty of Jesus' garment of grace, the robe of righteousness?**
- **Or would it reflect animal skins, the ugliness of sin and shame?**

I encourage you to **put your faith in Jesus**, to believe, to repent of your sin. Paul says we are to 'Clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ro 13:14 NLT).'

Salvation plea & Prayer.

We are being transformed into spiritually beautiful people because of the *transforming* power of God's grace. That is worth singing and praising God about.

Jesus is Risen – Madeline and Worship Team.

Our **photo booth** this year will play off of this idea of beauty this year. It can only hold 2 or 3 people at the most. I know you love the large group pictures, but this year, let's remember the masterpiece we are becoming.

Isn't that a beautiful story? Isn't that a great word-picture of salvation.



- Beauty lost in the garden.
- Beauty reimagined on the cross.
- Beauty in our future home.

[I don't need Disney or Hans Christian Andersen to give me hope of transformation.](#)

What the apostle John wrote about our future is sufficient: 'Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1Jn 3:2 NIV).'

Prayer