



Sermon Growth Guide

February 14, 2021

Here We Go! - Make Beauty

1 Peter 4:1-11

Key Verse: 1 Peter 4:11 “If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

Big Idea: Value #7 Make Beauty: Creativity reflects the goodness of God our Maker.

Foundations

Our sermon text this week calls us to be “faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms,” (4:10). Pastor Tim writes, “you get to be a vehicle for God’s grace to enter this broken, hurting world. God’s grace in all its various forms flows through you into culture when you use whatever gift you have received to serve, to bless.”

There is a clear parallel between stewarding God’s grace to serve others and our seventh value, “Make Beauty.” When we make beauty, we usher in God’s shalom into a fragmented world, shining God’s Light and Life into the crevasses of the broken culture around us, creating a new culture, a culture that more purely reflects the Kingdom of Heaven.

Gathered together with your circle, open your time of study in prayer. Ask the Spirit to guide and guard your spiritual formation, your growth in Christ. Pray to be given the eyes of the heart to see where and how you can make beauty for the glory of God.

Understanding God’s Word

What are we called to arm ourselves with in verse 1? And what ought the believer live for in verse 2?

Work your way through verses 7-11, discussing each imperative for the believer.

Applying God’s Word

Our seventh value challenges us to look at our surroundings through the lens of the inbreaking Kingdom of God and “make beauty.” We are called to create in such a way that those around us see God’s grace in their life. Creativity reflects the goodness of God our Maker. How can you even more so embody our seventh value of making beauty?

Witnessing God’s Word

Discern together how you can each do something this week to make the world around you shimmer a little more with God’s grace. Identify a yet-believer near you and discern together how you can offer something beautiful to them—a hello, a phone call, a meal. Making beauty comes in endless shapes and sizes. Pray together for this person that they would come to know Jesus.

It's Valentine's Day. Let me help you out. Just take this red construction paper, fold it in half, take the scissors like this... Got it! Make something beautiful. Well, this isn't beautiful, but there it is. I haven't trained on this exercise for a while. We want to talk today about our creative impulse, given to each one of us by God our Creator. We close out our series about the **First Pres Way: 7 Values in Our Pursuit of Jesus** with our seventh and final value statement, **Make Beauty: Creativity reflects the goodness of God our Maker.** Where do your spiritual gifts do good? So, if it helps, just make a card. No need to pull off into Walgreens, or risk COVID out at the chocolate shop! Just make one. You can even say Pastor Tim says handmade is better. And good luck.

Make Beauty. That's our seventh value. It's a little unique. It raises questions sometimes. "Why do I have to be artsy-craftsy to be like Jesus?" It's a little deeper than that. It's not about arts and crafts, necessarily. It's about using your God-given creativity to bless the world around you and change the culture. Culture is one of those words we have a hard time defining, but my favorite definition of culture is pretty simple: Culture is what we make of the world. "Well, I don't like today's culture," you say. Me neither. So, what are we doing to do about that? Christians take different tracks. You can critique culture; just stand aside in judgment. You can combat the culture; find a line to draw and start fighting about it. Boycott. Fight. Attack. You can copy culture; just make a watered-down Christian version of whatever it is. You can cut yourself off from culture. It's tempting to separate ourselves. I will climb a high mountain and build a high wall, and there I alone will be holiest of all. We choose another way. Create culture. Culture is what you make of the world. Not just fine arts either.

Every one of us makes something of the world. It's the thought you put into a hand-written note. It's the walk you take with your granddaughter every Tuesday. It's papa's famous pancakes on Saturday morning. There are all kinds of things you make of the world. Make them beautiful in Jesus' name to bless those around you. That's **Make Beauty.** Want to change the world? Make something beautiful.

Peter says, in a world of suffering and sin, in a world that doesn't understand you for being Christian, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10). You get to be a vehicle for God's grace to enter this broken, hurting world. God's grace in all its various forms flows through you into culture when you use whatever gift you have received to serve, to bless. But let's get there.

We have been wading through Peter's litany of suffering and submission. How does Peter want the church to sit in a hostile world? How does Peter want us to think about our lives as Christians? He wants us to follow in Jesus' steps. Remember, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority" (1 Peter 2:13). Jesus laid down His own life; we lay down our lives. We set aside our need to have it our way. That's how this litany of submission began. And He addressed the most sensitive of situations. What if I don't like the emperor? Submit yourself freely. What about a bad governor? Submission, like Jesus. What if my boss is domineering and nasty? What if my husband is a non-believer? What if my parents are wrong-headed about everything? What if my pastor thinks a handmade construction paper card is seriously enough to sustain a marriage through Valentine's Day? Real stuff. Hard stuff. Whatever oppressive



regime pushes you off your mark, makes demands and limitations on you, sets your teeth on edge, you get a choice—even when you are stuck in an inescapable tyranny—you have a choice and a difference to make. Lay down your privilege and entitlement and reflect the identity of Jesus. Lay down your life.

Now, this is not doormat Christianity. I want to rescue Peter here from some sort of defeatist, walk-all-over-me, victimization kind of thing. There comes a time to escape the slavery, to resist the oppressor, to walk away from the abuse, and Scripture guides us in those moments too. This isn't doormat Christianity. In fact, Peter says this is a way to arm yourself in defense and even to strike a blow for something positive. This will change the world. "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin" (1 Peter 4:1). Arm yourself. The word is for a soldier in the Greek army with a round shield and spear, a hoplite. Arm yourself. With what? With the same attitude, the same mindset, the same way of thinking that you see in Jesus who suffered in His body. This will arm you. How? It arms you in at least two ways. First, it arms you against losing your faith in suffering. We tend to think "I'm suffering, there must be something wrong with my faith. I'm suffering, therefore I doubt God." Peter is very clear, the Bible is very clear: suffering is part of life, and it is part of life as a Christian. Arm yourself with this mindset of Jesus. Not, suffering means something is wrong with me or with God, but rather, when I suffer, and I will, I want it to reflect Jesus. I want it to bring me closer to Jesus, not drive me away. Arm yourself.

But it also arms you in a second way. You can see every hardship, every

inconvenience, as an opportunity to get yourself out of the center of your life. Know what I mean? Sin, our sin nature, is selfishness. The mindset of Christ is selflessness. Others first. And Jesus actually is the center of the universe! But He leads us into a lifegiving way of getting ourselves out of the middle of our universe and centering on God and blessing others. Eugene Peterson helps us here. Here's how *The Message* puts these first two verses: "Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want." Arm yourself with the mind of Christ and be free from the tyranny of self. Live with Jesus at the center, instead of your own useless desires.

"For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry" (1 Peter 4:3). It's enough of that. The world promises fun. But you've found another kind of fun, another brand of happy, in Jesus. Not the fleeting pleasures of a party night followed by a sick stomach and an empty feeling inside, or worse, a lifetime of guilt. There's been enough of that. There's a new kind of fun. Your friends don't get it. But you get it. It's a kind of fun that doesn't leave you sick and evacuated, but full and energized and hopeful. Then Peter talks about the "they." "They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you" (1 Peter 4:4). They don't get it. But arm yourself, put on the mindset of Christ, and you might just have an impact on the "they." You might shape them. Remember, "though they accuse you of doing



wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12). They might want a little of the life they see in you. And when they ask you about it, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Give “they” an answer. They deserve one. And they might just meet Jesus. Arm yourself in defense and prepare to strike a blow for the positive too.

“The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:7-9). It always feels like the end is near. Live alert, ready to pray, clearheaded. I can offer hospitality. It’s the without grumbling part I struggle with. Above all, love deeply, fully, in a way that builds up, not tears down. Then we get to our point today: “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10). What you have, use it to bless. What God gives you, put your hands to it to fashion a blessing, to serve others, to glorify God. **Make Beauty.** In fact, when you make something of the world, when you use whatever gift you have received to serve others, when you get yourself out of the middle and arm yourself with the mindset of Christ, when you **Make Beauty** in that sense, here’s what happens. You are actually, watch this now, you are “faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” God’s grace flows through you to others. This is an enormous thing to say, isn’t it? God’s grace, through warm cookies. God’s grace, through a knit blanket. God’s grace, through

whatever gift you have received and used to serve others. How can that be God’s grace? God’s grace comes in various forms. That’s **Make Beauty.**

My wife, Abigail, is Executive Director of TOLI, a microlending ministry. She traveled a few years ago to visit a mission site in Nicaragua where they sometimes work with clients who are coming out of prison having been sucked into the drug trade there. Anyway, they visited a prison. She says it’s the most horrible, hopeless place she has ever been in her life. But in that prison, even there, there was beauty. Prisoners received their food and drink in plastic bags. With nothing at all to do, these young men spin the bags into plastic thread, and make the most ornate, intricate, beautiful bracelets. What’s the point? Creativity is built into you by your Creator. Whatever you have to put your hands on, you can make it beautiful. And a beautiful gift is blessing.

Finally, “If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11). To Him be the glory. That’s our **First Pres Way.** That’s how we are growing, pursuing Jesus. It’s not just for us. We want to shine the light of Jesus; we want to share the life of Jesus; we want to be **Light and Life for the City** in Jesus’ name. It isn’t about us polishing ourselves up, or polishing our lives up; it’s about God shining us up to reflect His light a little brighter. Shine the light of Jesus. Make something beautiful. Beautiful blessings call hearts to heaven. In Jesus’ name, make beauty and bless.

