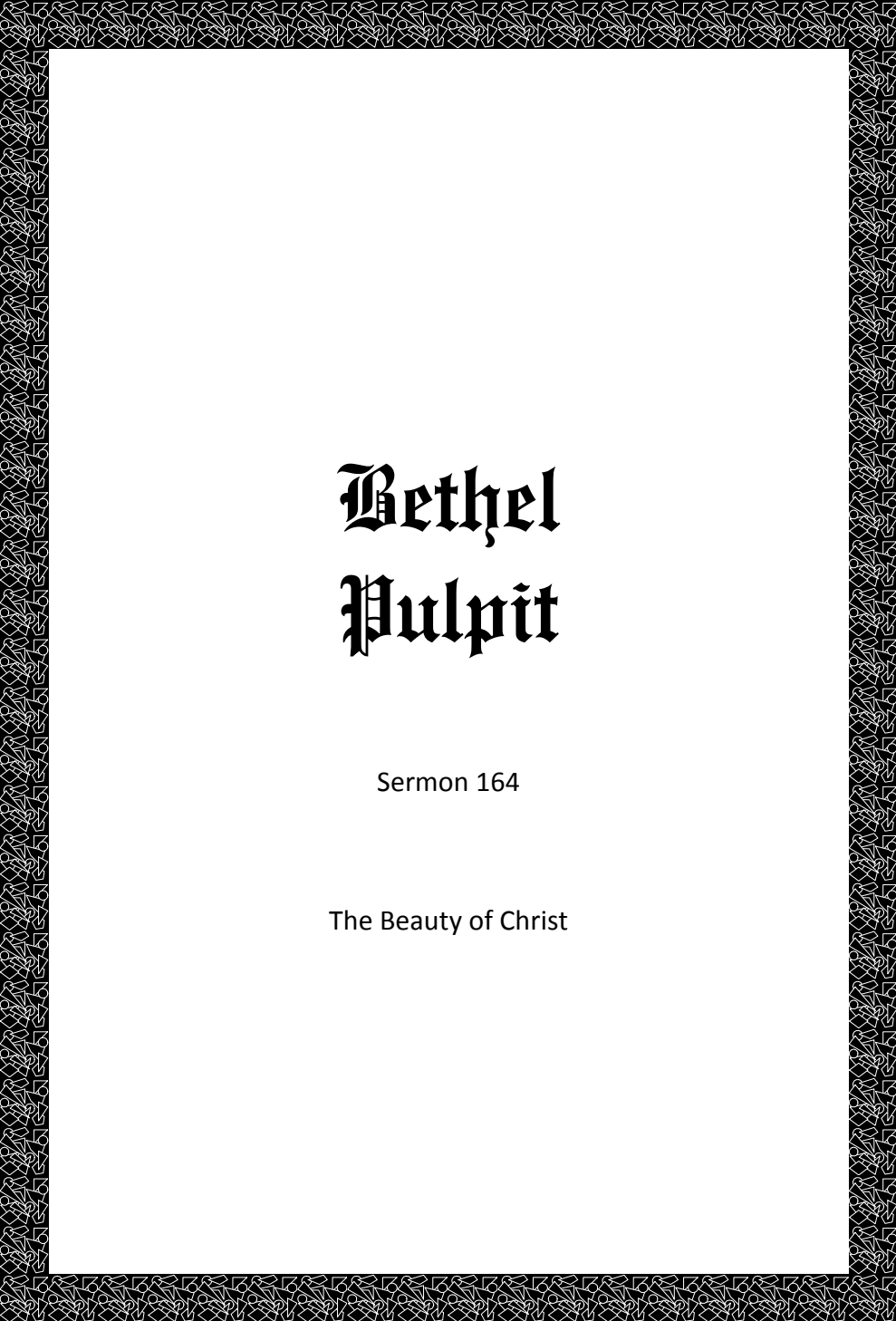




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 164

The Beauty of Christ

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 13th September, 1998**

Text: *"And when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53. 2).*

I wonder if there is a more solemn verse in all Scripture than this. This is the mark of the lost. This is the mark of those who will spend eternity in hell. I wonder with how many here this evening it is a mark that describes you: no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him. Of course, by nature every person, every fallen son and daughter of Adam, is in this condition. There is no beauty in Christ that we should desire Him. Of course, there *is* a beauty in Christ. There *is* a glory in Christ. There is a beauty, a glory, in His sacred humanity: "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." There is a beauty in all that He is, all that He has done. It is not because He has no beauty, He has no glory, that we do not see it. The reason is because we are spiritually blind. If there were a city and everyone who lived there was blind, and a person came and described to them some beautiful sight in the city, they would mock at him. They would say, "He is a visionary; he is an enthusiast." It is because of our spiritual blindness that we cannot see any beauty in Christ. The god of this world hath blinded our eyes that we believe not. And that truth, that solemn, separating truth will stand to the end of time: "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

I would seek to speak very affectionately to those of you here this evening, young or old, if this is true of you. You hear from this pulpit of the Lord Jesus, who He is, what He has done, and it means nothing to you. There is no attraction in Him. He is not something vital, something you really need, something you must have. I want to speak in much love and much affection, but I believe there are some in this chapel this evening, perhaps many in this chapel this evening, and this describes you. If you are made honest before God, it describes you, that there is no beauty in Christ to you that you should desire Him. He is not the chief concern. It does not matter to you that He came into this world to live and die. But, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." I believe this solemn

word separates the whole of this congregation into two: those of you who do see a beauty in Christ that you should desire Him and those of you who do not see a beauty in Christ that you should desire Him.

Well, it is a terrible condition, an awful condition, a solemn condition, to live and die and you never feeling any desire after Christ, never viewing that real attraction in Him. Perhaps you attend the services and sing the hymns and listen to the preaching, but see no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him. The Word of God sets out the evil of this, the sin, and calls to solemn repentance. O may those of you who see no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him realise something of the awfulness of your case, the wickedness of your case, the danger of your case, and may you tonight, even before you leave this chapel, begin to pray that the Lord will open your eyes, open your blind eyes, so that you will see that beauty in Christ, so that you do desire Him. The Lord bless you with repentance. The Lord bless you with faith. And may it be before you come to die, each one of you, every one of you, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty."

"When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Isaiah 53 is one of the great prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who He is, and the reason why He came, that He might die for His people to put away their sins and in love and mercy open up a way to heaven for them. It is a very wonderful prophecy, and it was fulfilled when He came to earth. "He is despised and rejected of men." Why did they despise Him and reject Him? When He came to this world, why did they reject Him? Because they saw no beauty, no glory, that they should desire Him. That is why people today still reject Him. If you see no beauty in Christ, then you will reject Him, but that is not because there is no beauty in Christ. It is because of your blindness. Let us be clear, the Word of God does not treat blindness as if it were some kind of innocent infirmity. It treats it as a guilty infirmity, an infirmity through sin. The people of the world are wilfully blind. So when the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came, that little word was fulfilled. We read it this evening (John 1. 10, 11), how He came in all His glory and beauty. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him. He is the world's Creator. But the world knew Him not, Jew or Gentile. When the Lord Jesus came into this world, though the angels came from heaven to sing His praises, there were just a few humble

shepherds who went to Bethlehem to worship Him. Really, it has been so ever since. “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own” people, the Jews. They had heard of Him, the prophecies. He was the Messiah. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” “And when we” – the Jewish nation, when we, the Gentiles – “shall see Him,” – at the time of His first coming – “there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” But through the ages to the end of time, with the ungodly, “when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.”

But you see, the Lord has ever had a people, and the great mark of the people of God is this: that they *do* see a beauty in Christ that they should desire Him. In other words, their world, their little world, is turned upside down. That is what repentance is. Repentance is a complete turning round. Repentance is a complete being turned upside down. In the Acts of the Apostles, they said of those first disciples, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither.” When the new birth takes place, when the Lord graciously works in your heart, it will turn your world upside down, and it will turn this verse upside down in your heart. Once there was no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him, but when the new birth takes place, you are no longer under this condemnation. O the beauty the awakened soul sees in the Saviour! What a longing for Him! “I must have Christ as All in all, or sink in ruin, guilt, and thrall.” So this word is no longer true of a new-born soul. Right at the beginning, whatever stage of experience, whether your desires have been met or not, whether you have found Christ or not found Him, when the new birth takes place, when you are savingly converted to God, blessed with repentance, then you are no longer embraced in this awful text: “There is no beauty” – in Christ – “that we should desire Him.”

Which side of the text do you stand? Are you in it or out of it? I believe there are some of you and this evening you can appeal to Almighty God who sees your heart and say, “Lord, whatever I am or am not, whatever I possess or do not possess, whether it is going to be heaven or whether it is going to be hell, I can honestly say before Thee this evening that this is not true of me, that when I see Christ in the Scriptures and in the gospel, there is no beauty that I should desire Him.” Rather, you say, “Thou, O Christ, art all I want; all in all in Thee I find.” What is the secret? “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath

shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” And so now, when you see Him, O the beauty that there is in Christ that you should desire Him.

Now I wish I could really speak to you about the beauty which dwells in Christ, because there are some here who believe that by faith they have had a glimpse of the King in His beauty. But perhaps with some of you, it is a little lower than that, like David (do not forget it is David, a great man, a godly man): “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord.” That is what David wanted and he said, that is the one thing. Of course, there were many things in David’s life, in his religion, in his experience, but he brought it down to that one thing. This is the vital thing. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, *to behold the beauty of the Lord*, and to inquire in his temple.”

Well, there is the beauty of His suitability to meet your need. You know what it usually is that makes a sinner see that beauty in Christ that he should desire Him: when you see the opposite in your own heart, when you see the opposite in the world. You look in your own heart and see the ugliness in your own heart, your own sin, and you see the ugliness of the world you once loved. You can see no beauty in your own heart or in the world. It is when you see the ugliness in your own heart and in the world that you begin to see that beauty in Christ that you should desire Him. It is the beauty of His suitability, His suitability to do for you everything you need, His suitability to deal with your sin and guilt and shame, His suitability to make you ready for heaven, His suitability to save you with an everlasting salvation. Really you see a suitable Saviour. In other words, just what you need, just what you want. And so instead of there being no beauty in Christ that you should desire Him, you can say this: “The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee.” O the beauty of His suitability!

And if the desire of your soul is to His name, there is such a beauty in His name. Tell me, how many of you here this evening see a beauty in that name, Jesus, that worthy name by which you are called, the beauty of the name of Jesus? “For He shall save His people from their sins.” Now it is a beautiful name, isn’t it? The name of Jesus, our only hope, our only

foundation, our only plea. I would encourage you this evening. Sometimes I wonder, perhaps in the beginning of a work of grace, or perhaps when you are tried and tempted, or when you are walking in darkness and you feel you cannot lay claim to much, and you hear the name of Jesus, and there is a beauty in it, there is an attraction in it. You feel something inside you going out towards this dear Saviour of sinners. "Thou, O Christ, art all I want." O the beauty of the Lord Jesus, that beauty of how suitable He is, a Saviour. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."

O but you see a beauty in the atonement, a beauty in the work of redemption. O to see the Lord Jesus "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and to see the beauty of it. And it is contrary to nature. To nature there is not anything beautiful in a man being put to death, in a man dying, but there is a beauty in the sufferings of Christ. We are solemnly told that many were astonished at Him, "because His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." Yet as the godly Puritans used to say, Christ is never more beautiful *to* His people than when His visage was so deformed *for* them, marred more than that of any man. You think of the crown of thorns and the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and the agonies of Gethsemane and the judgment hall, the scourging, the cruel scourging. And then you think of Calvary, the nails, the spear, the crown of thorns, and then you think of that agony when He endured divine wrath in the place of His people.

O the beauty, the beauty of His love, that He should love sinners so much that He was willing to endure all this for them. You read accounts of the beauty of love sometimes, especially in the first World War, where there was some wonderful act of bravery, a soldier showing such love for his comrade. But the beauty of Christ in His love, laying down His life! The Apostle puts it like this: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That is the beauty of the love, that unmerited, undeserved love, that love to sinners, love to rebels, the beauty of Christ's sufferings, the beauty of His love in so freely, willingly laying down His life a sacrifice. The beauty of His atonement that He takes away for ever the sins of His people and He opens up a way to heaven for them.

There is such a beauty, to look on a crucified Saviour. Tell me, did you ever by faith go to Gethsemane and Calvary and see such a beauty in the dear, dying Saviour?

“So fair a faced bedewed with tears;
What beauty e’en in grief appears!
He wept, He bled, He died for you;
What more, ye saints, could Jesus do?”

The beauty of His sufferings even unto death. When you look at the midday sun in all its glory, there is a beauty in it, but there is a greater beauty in a sunset. You have looked over the hills or over the sea and you have seen the sun going down and that almost awe-inspiring beauty of the sunset. There is the beauty of Christ’s everlasting Godhead as the Son of the Father, and the beauty of His spotless life, but the beauty of His death! Wesley says, “Lo! the sun’s eclipse is o’er; Lo! He sets in blood no more.” O that you might be led by faith to see the beauty of Christ in His sin-atoning sorrows and may you see it in your place, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring you to God.

The beauty, the glory of this Man, because it is the Person; it is not just what He did. It is this Person, this glorious Person, the Man Christ Jesus. When He came forth, Pilate looked on Him, and said, “Behold the Man!” What Pilate meant we can never really say, but I do know this, that faith does behold the Man, the Man Christ Jesus, and faith beholds Him in His beauty. And it is this: there is such an attraction in Him. I want to hold you on this. I believe this is the greatest evidence of being a child of God you can ever have, to see an attraction in Christ. You can have a repentance that needs to be repented of. You can have the sorrow of the world which worketh death. You can have an imaginary religion. Satan can quote words of Scripture to you, but Satan never made Christ attractive to a sinner. Hold it fast, if there is any attraction in Christ. He says, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Of course, there He is speaking of all His chosen, all His people. “I, if I be lifted up” on the cross to die. “I, if I be lifted up” in the resurrection. “I, if I be lifted up” in the preaching of the gospel, I will draw sinners unto Me. Have you ever felt yourself drawn to Christ? There is an attraction in Him. What an attraction there was in the serpent of brass to the bitten Israelite! What an attraction there was in that water that flowed forth from the rock in Horeb when Israel was almost dying of thirst! But this attraction in Christ.

I think I have often told you of an old friend. Some time before he died, he was so blessed, and then Satan began to work and tell him it was all deceit, it was not right, it was all Satan's confusion. But in the end he was able to hold fast to this point: when the Lord blessed him, Christ was so attractive, and he realised this, that Satan never, never makes Christ attractive to a sinner.

Hold it fast if you see a beauty in Christ that you should desire Him. Hold it fast if you see some sweet attraction in Christ, because there is a beauty in the gospel to those whose eyes have been opened. It is a good gospel (isn't it?) and there is such a beauty in it as it "speaks of pardon, full and free, through Christ, the Lamb once slain." Tell me, when you listen to the preaching of the gospel, do you ever see a beauty in it? You do not want another gospel, a different gospel. The sheep of Christ's fold have ever been feeding in the green pastures. They are still green. The sheep do not want any different pastures. O the beauty there is in the gospel and the beauty in the great Shepherd of the sheep, the Shepherd who laid down His life that sinners might live, that His little flock might live; the Shepherd who leads them in the green pastures of the gospel beside the still waters of His everlasting love and beneath the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; who loves them and defends them and protects them and supplies their every need. There is a beauty in this great Shepherd.

"Say, Thou Shepherd all divine,
Where I may my soul recline.
Where for refuge shall I fly,
While the burning sun is high?"

"Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside?" You want to be one of them.

O what a beauty there is in the dear Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. "Behold," says John the Baptist, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Behold Him in His beauty and glory, all the attractions in Him, all His suitability, able to save your soul from eternal ruin. Faith sees such a beauty in the spotless Lamb of God, and the redeemed in heaven see that beauty in Christ the Lamb of God, and

they sing His praises to all eternity. “Worthy the Lamb that was slain,” and hast redeemed us to God by His blood.

There is such a beauty in His glorious righteousness. A holy God demands a perfect righteousness from you and me. We have none. And when the Lord begins with us and with rebukes rebukes us for our iniquity, our beauty consumes away like the moth and is gone. We can find no beauty in ourselves or our religion. It is a filthy rag. There is no beauty in a filthy rag, is there? O but that beautiful, pure, white spotless robe! He takes away the sinner’s sin and guilt and the filthy rags and covers him completely in the pure, white, spotless robe of His righteousness. There is a beauty in the righteousness of Christ – that I, a sinner, might be found in Him. “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” O the beauty there is in Christ’s righteousness and the beauty in that wonderful fulness of love and grace and mercy which ever abides, which ever abounds to supply all the needs of all God’s people in all ages. “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” Sometimes, perhaps oftentimes, you feel so completely, utterly empty, but to see the beauty and the fulness which dwells in Christ!

O but especially it is the beauty of His Person, God and Man in one glorious Christ. His beauty as the dear Mediator, His beauty, once crucified, but now risen, exalted, glorified. The beauty of a great and glorious High Priest. If you read through Exodus 28, you have the appointment of the high priest in ancient Israel and the garments, and of course all this was typical. It was a shadow of good things to come. You have all these gorgeous garments of the high priest, and the Holy Ghost emphasises this, that they were “for beauty and for glory.” Israel must look on the high priest as he wore the breastplate, as he went to make atonement, as he offered the sacrifice, as he interceded, as he brought sweet incense. It was beautiful and glorious. But all this was pointing to Christ, Christ exalted, our great High Priest. Now this is nature: “When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” But our hymnwriter says,

“Jesus, in Thee our eyes behold
A thousand glories more

Than the rich gems and polished gold
The sons of Aaron wore.”

O that transformation! To see the beauty of Christ, because you must have Him, you cannot do without Him, and to feel your heart going out in desire after Him. If you see this beauty in Christ, then you will desire Him. That simply means this: you will want Him to be your own. You will want Him to be your Saviour. You will want Him to do everything for you that you cannot do for yourself. You will want Him to prepare you for heaven, to wash you from your sin in His own precious blood. You will see this beauty in Him and you will desire Him, and that desire will be granted, because the Lord never opens a sinner’s eyes to see a beauty in Christ and then dashes him, disappoints him. If He does it with you, you will be the first, and God’s promise will be broken.

And then this beauty viewed eternally in heaven. “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”

“The King there, in His beauty,
Without a veil is seen
It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between;
The Lamb with His fair army
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land.”

“Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.” That is, those who have seen His beauty by faith here, His beauty in His Word, His beauty in the gospel. But if you live and die under this condemnation, “When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him,” then at last you will never, never, never see the King in His beauty and that glorious land that is very far off. O beloved friends, to know this transformation, blind eyes opened, to see our own defilement and deformity, to see that beauty in Christ that we should desire Him! May you each be concerned about it. May you each pray for it. One of our hymns very beautifully speaks of this transformation, a hymn on the coming of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“In Him the world no beauty sees,
No form nor comeliness;
Rejected and despised He is,
And plunged in deep distress.

“But there’s a people taught by grace” – and the great thing
is, are you and I among them? –

“But there’s a people taught by grace
To know His matchless worth;
They own Him, though accounted base,
And show His praises forth.

“They own Him as the Lord of all,
Their Saviour and their God.”

Never forget that, that He is true, Almighty God; this wondrous Man is
true, Almighty God.

“They own Him as the Lord of all,
Their Saviour and their God;
Before His feet they prostrate fall –
The purchase of His blood.”