

Xplore - Skin Deep

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Preacher: Steve Brown

- [0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 24th of August 2003. The preacher is Steve Brown. His sermon is entitled Explore Skin Deep and is based on Psalm 63.
- Well, I've seen many beautiful things lately and here's one of them. Mother and daughter. Brings new meaning to the phrase, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, I suppose. Thanks, Ash. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. That might be true, but I don't think it is always.
- There are some things that are just undeniably beautiful. Things that are breathtaking. Things that affect us emotionally when we look at them. Things that make us feel happy and grateful for seeing them.
- Things that are desirable to look at. In fact, I think our society is quite obsessed with beauty. Beauty is a big thing for us. Society is obsessed with the beauty of its homes.
- [1 : 21] That's why we make TV programs such as The Block. We make TV programs about renovating our homes. Now, a couple of years ago, I would have thought that was about as interesting as watching paint dry.
- Literally. You see, we're obsessed with beauty. We want our homes to be an oasis. Society is obsessed with the beauty of its holidays.
- Take Getaway, for instance. We even make TV shows about exotic destinations. And I love watching that show. It's fantastic. I can't wait to go to Mauritius one day.
- If they ever have the money. We're obsessed with beauty. We want our holidays to be a visit to paradise. Society is obsessed with the beauty of its bodies.
- Of our bodies. Take Search for a Supermodel as a TV show. Or even Strip Search as a TV show, for instance. We watch these shows and we sort of wish that we looked like them.
- [2 : 25] We're obsessed with beauty. We want our bodies to be the image of perfection. Why do we have a powerful need to own beautiful homes?
- Why do we have a powerful need to holiday in the most beautiful, exotic places? Why do we feel obsessed about our own personal beauty? Physical beauty, that is.
- Maybe we look. Maybe it's good for us to look for an answer at the beginning. In Genesis chapter 2, verse 8 and 9, it says this.
- And the Lord planted in a garden, planted a garden in Eden, in the east. And there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight.
- And good for food. The tree of life also in the midst of the garden. And the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Now I don't know about you. But when I read this passage, I wish I was there.
- [3 : 30] I wish I was there. I wish I could experience the garden of Eden. I wish I could walk through it and look at all the magnificent trees and the flowers.

I wish I could splash in the river that runs out of the garden. I wish I could pick up the gold and the precious stones that are found there. I wish I could eat the juicy, beautiful fruit from the trees.

I wish I could go and touch all the animals without any fear. I wish I could be there with my wife. Perhaps not naked. But enjoying the whole thing with her.

That would be great. When we read this passage, we're supposed to have a strong feeling of wanting to be there. Because it must have been so beautiful.

It must have been so perfect. It must have been so good. In fact, that's what God thinks of it as well. Even he's impressed by it as well.

[4 : 40] If you look in Genesis 1.31, it says, God saw everything that he had made and indeed, it was very good. God's even impressed by his creation, by the beauty that's come forth from him.

You see, you and I want beautiful things. Because deep down, we wish we were in the garden. We were in the garden of Eden again.

Deep down, we wish that things were perfect again. Deep down, we wish that things were beautiful always. You see, God created us to enjoy beauty.

To enjoy his creation. God created us to have pleasure at the sight of beautiful things like trees and fruit. and animals and a woman and a man.

God created us to appreciate beauty. In order for us to appreciate his creation and ultimately to appreciate him. That's why I think we sort of long for beautiful houses and holidays and bodies.

[5 : 48] We want to experience God's good and perfect and beautiful creation again. Beauty is good.

Some news, those want to come up? For the first song. This is a new song, actually. But it's a great song. Many beautiful things in our world.

Thanks, Ash. That's nice. Good. There are many beautiful things in our world. And Ashley's going to show you what this is. This is a rather stunning creature.

This is a monarch butterfly. It's all found throughout Australia. And if you're a Richmond supporter, Paul, you'll be happy with this butterfly. It comes in yellow and black.

And they're quite stunning and beautiful to look at, actually. But when the monarch butterfly was a caterpillar, it fed on the leaves of a milkweed plant.

[6 : 55] And proceeded to store up enough toxin in its body tissue to kill large birds if eaten. And those colours, the red and black ones, are to warn birds about its deadly potential.

The monarch butterfly is beautiful but deadly. And beauty is dangerous.

Especially if you're a hungry Australian bird. There are many beautiful things in this world. Including this cute little guy. Can't quite see him there.

He's a little frog. He's red and yellow. Thanks, Ash. Now I can't see my nose. Thanks, mate. This is a poison dart frog.

The name gives him away pretty quickly, doesn't it? Poor guy. It has poisonous skin or secretions. And basically it sweats poison.

[7 : 57] And so if you eat this frog, you die. Simple as that. Some are so deadly that even if you touch them, you will die eventually if you don't get treated.

So if you're in the middle of a forest and you touch one of these frogs, you're in trouble. Run quickly. Tribes in the forests of South America use them. They rub the tips of their darts and spears on these frogs when they're fighting with other tribes.

They're so dangerous. They're so dangerous. They're so dangerous. They're so dangerous. The poison dart frog is beautiful but deadly. Beauty is dangerous.

And if you're in a South American tribal feud, you're in real trouble. There are many beautiful things in this world, including this rather stunning creature.

This is a woman. They are beautiful. But they can also be very, very dangerous. That sounds a little bit sexist but you just ask Samson.

[9 : 04] Thanks, Ash. There's lights back up. Samson had a real problem with beauty. Take a listen to what he says to his dad and mum.

Once Samson went up to Timnah and at Timnah he saw a Philistine woman. Then he came up and told his father and mother, I saw a Philistine woman at Timnah.

Now get her for me as my wife. But his father and mother said to him, Is there not a woman among your kin or among all our people that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?

But Samson said to his father, Go get her for me because she pleases me. You know, he's got bad manners.

He's quite a bad-mannered young boy. But Samson has a problem with beauty. To Samson, beauty was something to possess.

[10 : 07] It was something to grasp at and take. And he treated beautiful things as mere objects for his own pleasure. And the Bible is at pains in this passage to mention that Samson had a problem with beautiful women.

Because in the very next chapter it quite explicitly tells us that he sleeps with a prostitute. And then immediately after that he starts sleeping with the enemy, Delilah.

Great judge he is, I suppose. Not really. And his enemies, the Philistines, who can't defeat him, realise his big weakness.

Beauty. And because of his weakness when it comes to beautiful women he ends up getting his eyes gouged out. That's irony because he'll never have a problem with beauty again.

God sort of has a strong sense of irony in these stories in Judges. Beauty was a problem for Samson. For Samson, beauty was dangerous.

[11 : 21] Beauty can be dangerous for us today as well. Guys, here, the men and the boys, beauty can be dangerous for us too. when we start to treat it as something to grasp at and take, when we start to treat beautiful things as just mere objects for our own pleasure, when we just start desiring things like houses the wrong way or beautiful cars or especially beautiful women, then we're in danger.

we're in danger of forgetting God, in danger of becoming obsessed with beauty. You see, beauty can be a problem for us today just as much as it was for Samson.

And girls, beauty can be a problem for you as well. Just as dangerous when you start to treat beauty as just a mere object for your own pleasure.

Maybe you unhealthily desire beautiful possessions or a beautiful boyfriend or even a beautiful body.

If you start doing that then you're in danger. In danger of forgetting God, in danger of becoming obsessed with beauty. But the funny thing about obsession with beauty is that you never get satisfied.

[12 : 45] It never actually satisfies in the end. And just like Samson, you go from bad to worse if you obsess over beauty. Because the first beautiful woman that he saw, he married.

But she was a Philistine so it wasn't that great. He married her. The second one, he just hired for sex. And the third one took his life.

It went from bad to worse. You see, he was never satisfied and his obsession with beauty ended up killing him. Beauty can be good but beauty is dangerous.

Some users would like to come up again. Ourselves tonight or we need answering to is how can we appreciate and enjoy beauty without being in danger? We need to know how to enjoy beauty without treating it like something to grasp at and take.

How we can enjoy beauty without treating it like just a mere object for us to possess for our own pleasure. So how do we enjoy it but treat it rightly?

[14 : 03] King David gives us a great clue in this in verse 4 there. One thing I asked of the Lord that will I seek after to live 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.

You see all of us have a favourite place. Mine is Cradle Mountain in Tasmania on a cold rainy day. That's my favourite place.

There's a picture of it up there. It's beautiful isn't it? I think it's just perfect. If the air is so fresh it's the freshest air in the world being scientifically proven the trees would be so green because of the rain coming down.

Dove Lake looks so calm and dreamlike. The mountains stand all around like grey giants right around this lake and the dark clouds pass over the top just out of my reach and there isn't a sound except the pitter-patter of raindrops.

That's perfect for me. I love that place because it's just so beautiful. it reminds me of perfection because I think that's as close to the garden that I'm going to get in this world.

[15 : 34] Now you guys you must have a favourite place because I think everyone's got a favourite place. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes. So go for it.

Bow your heads and close your eyes and think of that place which is your favourite place. Imagine what does it look like?

What can you hear? What can you hear? Sorry for making me want to go on holidays. But the point is we all have a favourite place.

A favourite place that is so beautiful and precious to us that reminds us of perfection that even possibly reminds us of the garden that we all yearn for down deep.

You see in the psalm we see King David's favourite place the house of the Lord. A place that is beautiful a place that is perfection that is in fact as close to the garden as you can get.

[16 : 52] Because in the house of the Lord David got to be in the presence of God. He got to be in the presence of beauty itself.

He got to be in the presence of the one that beauty actually originated from. In the presence in God's presence he experienced beauty and perfection.

He experienced the garden again. Safe and secure. Experiencing beauty undefiled and perfect.

And that's where he wants to be forever. The strange thing is though that David had everything. He was a great king so he enjoyed all the beautiful things that the world had to offer.

He had palaces, he had beautiful clothes, he had servants, he could go anywhere he wanted to to experience nature. He had beautiful women, he had many wives. He had it all.

[17 : 57] Beauty was all around him. But when it all boiled down, his favourite place was with God in God's house.

Because that's where he found the source of all beauty. You know, today we can experience that. We can experience that same beauty that David speaks about.

we can go into God's house, into God's presence. We can experience the garden again. We can experience the beauty of God, the one who created Cradle Mountain, the one who created your favourite place.

We can experience that through trusting in his son. Because his son died and rose again for us so that we could go into the house.

We could enter God's beautiful presence, enter the house of the Lord. We could experience beauty without danger, safe and secure in God's house.

[19 : 08] You see, that's how we gain access to the perfect place through Jesus. That perfect place where our sins are forgiven. The perfect place where we can talk to God about all the issues in our lives.

The perfect place where our enemies no longer can scare us and rob us and take that beauty away. A perfect place where we're accepted no matter what we look like physically.

A perfect place where we're called son and daughter of God himself. a perfect place where Jesus himself presents us beautiful to God.

You see, we can experience what David longed for because Jesus has opened the door for us to enter God's house to experience perfect beauty forever and ever.

God's desire. For us tonight, we need to remember that beauty is good. God designed us to desire beauty, ultimately to desire him.

[20 : 25] We've got to remember that beauty is dangerous. When we treat beauty as a mere object for our own personal pleasure, we're in danger of forgetting God.

God, we've got to remember that perfect beauty is found in God's house through Jesus. Amen.