

The Wednesday of JESUS' PASSION WEEK, April 8, 2020

Turn off the outside "noise" for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God's Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9 (TNIV)

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is **true**, whatever is **noble**, whatever is **right**,
whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **admirable** —
if anything is **excellent** or **praiseworthy** —
think about such things.

⁹ Whatever you have learned
or received
or heard from me,
or seen in me—
put it into practice.

And **the God of peace** will be with you.

— PART 5 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

We get to **CHOOSE** what we allow our minds to **FOCUS** on. And Paul encourages us to **concentrate our attention** on some very specific things. Like...

*"whatever is **TRUE** . . . **think about these things**" —
"whatever is **NOBLE** . . . **think about these things**" —
"whatever is **RIGHT** . . . **think about these things**" —
"whatever is **PURE** . . . **think about these things**" —
"whatever is **LOVELY** . . . **think about these things**" —*

We are five words deep into our thinking through eight noble and beautiful things that warrant our attention. Starting tomorrow, we will take a brief pause from Philippians 4 as we walk together **S L O W L Y** through the final days of Jesus' Passion, from **MAUNDY THURSDAY**, to **GOOD FRIDAY**, to **HOLY SATURDAY**, to **EASTER SUNDAY**.

Gordon Fee suggests that "This word ["lovely"] has to do primarily with what people consider 'lovable'.... The NJB catches the sense well by translating, 'everything that we love.' **Here is the word that throws the net broadly, so as to include conduct that has little to do with morality in itself, but is recognized as admirable by the world at large. In common parlance, this word could refer to a Beethoven symphony, as well as to the work of Mother Teresa among the poor of Calcutta; the former is lovely and enjoyable, the latter is admirable as well as moral.**

GORDON D. FEE, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT).

So then in a sense we can say that "**lovely**" isn't necessarily a "**church-y**" word.

We don't need a lengthy etymology of the Greek word to understand it (and I wouldn't be offended if you're thinking you don't ever particularly need that!) — for ***loveliness is something we all observe . . . in everyday life!***

Walt Hansen puts it like this: "Thought must...be given to **aesthetic appreciation**.... The term translated lovely...means '**causing pleasure or delight, pleasing, agreeable, and lovely.**' **In the story of Queen Esther's encounter with the king, this word points to the beauty of Esther's face.** Consideration of this virtue leads to an **enjoyment of genuine beauty that gives pleasure.**"

G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (Pillar New Testament Commentary).

Ben Witherington III adds "...the net effect of this list is that Paul is shown to be calling for **not merely an appreciation of moral truth** as found in the wider culture, **but also an appreciation for aesthetics, 'beauty.'** The last two terms in the list make this clear — **...whatever is loveable and attractive or winsome, Christians should contemplate these things.**

Paul is not one who saw the church as all light, and the world as all darkness. To the contrary **he believed the world was redeemable** and occasionally, aided by God's grace, **manifested redeeming qualities.** Paul's vision is that the Christian faith is in the main a **world-transforming** not primarily a **world-denying** religion, **not least because the world and all its inhabitants were created by God, and God has not given up on them.** Paul believes that we should **focus on the good things and praise and appreciate admirable human qualities wherever we find them.**"

BEN WITHERINGTON III, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary.*

So let's *each of us* thank God for the things that we find "lovely"!

What's the loveliest *novel* you've ever read?

What's the loveliest *movie* you've ever watched?

What's the loveliest *action* you've ever observed in another person?

What's the loveliest *music* you've ever heard?

What's the loveliest *natural wonder* you've ever seen?

What's the loveliest *food* you've ever seen or smelled or eaten?

What's the loveliest *piece of art* you've ever gazed upon?

What's the loveliest *face* you've ever set eyes on?

Who is the loveliest *person* you've ever encountered?

This week, we are pondering the life of one of the loveliest *people* to ever live, and we will witness some of the loveliest *actions* we've ever seen. Growing up, we used to sing a little gospel chorus in our church. I'd like to use it for our prayer:

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*"Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All his wondrous compassion and purity,
O thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me."*

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May the loveliness of our Lord Jesus Christ, the grace of God, and the beautiful companionship of the Holy Spirit bring joy and serenity to your heart today,

Pastor Doug

P.S. Please be praying for God to pour out His kindness and grace on our guests and visitors this Sunday — our first “distance learning” **EASTER CELEBRATION *online!***

We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at info@bethanyonline.net

P.P.S. Keep checking our “ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY” webpage — we will try to post fresh encouragement ***every day*** during this crisis!

P.P.P.S. And watch our **LIVE-STREAM Worship Service** this coming Sunday at 10:30 a.m. for more encouragement.