

Beauty of Simplicity

#0628

Study given by W.D. Frazee

Let us turn to the 45th Psalm:

“My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever” Psalm 45:1-2.

This psalm was the inspiration for the hymn that we were singing at the beginning of the service this morning (“Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned”):

Majestic sweetness sits enthroned
Upon the Savior’s brow;
His head with radiant glories crowned,
His lips with grace o’erflow.

No mortal can with Him compare,
Among the sons of men;
Fairer is He than all the fair
That fill the heavenly train.

Yes, He’s the One “altogether lovely”, the “chiefest among ten thousand” (see Song of Solomon 5:10,16), and the glorious promise is that you and I shall be like Him, that we shall reflect His image fully while in this present world. It’s a wonderful promise, a wonderful goal, isn’t it, friends? We must never lose sight of that wonderful objective nor of the *means* heaven has for obtaining the objective, for we’re told in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that it is as we behold the glory of the Lord that we “...are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). So as we look, He changes us. As we behold, we become more and more like Him. So we want to keep beholding Him in His beauty, in His glory, don’t we friends? Yes.

Now, you know, we may imagine Him up there in the sanctuary in heaven surrounded with the myriads of the angel host, and it is well that our thoughts gather with Him there.

“A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary” Jeremiah 17:12.

From the days of eternity He was one with the Father, but knowing the limitations of our humanity and our lost condition in sin, He came to this world to show us what God is like:

“And the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us,
(and we beheld His glory...) full of grace and truth” John 1:14.

And so it is to the life He lived here on earth among us that we look especially in beholding the beauty of that character which it is ours to reflect.

Turn, please, to the 53rd chapter of Isaiah and notice how that life was revealed, how it was developed, how it was manifested. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah and the second verse, the first part. This is speaking of Jesus:

“For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant...”
Isaiah 53:2.

Yes, our Lord came into this world as a little babe, and He grew up in Bethlehem and Nazareth. He grew up, in a sense, as our children grow up, as we’ve grown up. But oh, my friends, there was a beauty about that character that we can gaze at, and that we’ll behold in retrospect all through the ages of eternity, the beauty of the life of Jesus as a child, as a youth.

“...He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant...”
Ibid.

You know, the Savior was here in this world only a little over 33 years, and *most* of that time was spent in preparation, as we would say. That’s not without meaning. And the way He was prepared, the way that life was developed, *all* those things are full of meaning for us as we seek to prepare ourselves and our children for the demonstration, the revelation of the character of God in humanity.

“...He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant...”
Ibid.

And that One who had grown up as a plant loved to turn *to* the plants and use them as illustrations of the lessons of simplicity and true beauty that He sought to teach men.

Let us go to Matthew the sixth chapter and note the Savior’s teachings. Let us note the lesson book to which He called attention. Matthew 6, beginning with the 25th verse:

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body,

what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Matthew 6:25-30.

"Take no thought for your life" means "Do not worry. Do not be anxious and concerned." How simple is the faith that Jesus teaches, and how beautiful is the lesson book from which He draws! *Consider* the flowers of the field. Consider the lilies. I do appreciate these beautiful flowers that we have before us here this morning. Together with this Holy Book, they constitute the lesson book from which we wish to draw today. *Consider* the lilies. *Look* at the flowers.

And what are we to learn from them? Why, Jesus says we are to learn lessons of simplicity and faith—*simple* faith. I read here in this matchless little book, *Steps to Christ*, pages 123 and 124, these words:

"Christ pointed His disciples to the flowers of the field, growing in rich profusion and glowing in the simple beauty which the heavenly Father had given them, as an expression of His love to man. He said, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.' The beauty and simplicity of these natural flowers far outrival the splendor of Solomon" *Steps to Christ*, pages 123-124.

Do you believe that, friends? That's what Jesus said: "...Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:29). Do you believe that? Oh, if you do, friends, think how it simplifies the problems of life!

May I read this sentence again?

"The beauty and simplicity of these natural flowers far outrival the splendor of Solomon" *Ibid*.

We've been studying the beautiful way. This morning, I would like to have us note the simplicity of true beauty, the simplicity of *every* phase and area of God's work. In Volume 7, page 215, I read:

“The laws of Christ’s kingdom are so simple, and yet so complete, that man-made additions will create confusion”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 7, page 215.

Suppose we try it. Suppose I bring a spray gun in here this morning with various pigments in different jars, and I try to improve upon these flowers. What would you say? I think some of you’d say, “No, no! Let them alone. Let them alone.”

“The laws of Christ’s kingdom are so simple, and yet so complete, that man-made additions will create confusion. And the more simple our plans for work in God’s service, the more we shall accomplish” *Ibid.*

When we study the ordinances that Christ has given His church, we see in them the *acme* of simplicity. Take the ordinance by which we enter the church—baptism. There is not some queer, unusual, expensive agency that is used, but water. And what is there in this world more simple, more universal, more accessible?

And what is the service? Is it some long, complicated ritual, some complex form? Oh no, my friend, it is the acme of simplicity. In the very simplest fashion, the one who has accepted Jesus as his Savior and been instructed in the precious truths of God’s message is lowered into the water by the officiating minister and raised again, thus in the simplest way representing faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord.

We have been warned, my friends, about not trying to *add* things to what God has arranged. We’ve even been warned about details, about not having ornamentation on the robes of those who are baptized. Why? Why, it detracts from the simple beauty of the symbolic service.

Again, take the ordinance within the church (we’re going to celebrate it this afternoon at 4:00) of coming to the Lord’s Table. We’re going to review in our imaginations that scene in the upper room, just before our Savior went to Gethsemane and Calvary. What do we find in the ordinances He gave? Again, the acme of simplicity.

For that preparatory service, He uses again that simplest substance—water. And it is not in some golden fountain, not in some jeweled container, but in a simple basin that He pours that water. It’s a simple towel with which He girds Himself. And in the simple act of service, He reveals the love and the humility that heaven values, and He says, “I want you to keep doing it as I have done it to you.” What a shame it would be were we to dress that up with all sorts of ornamentation—add frills, add this, and add that—until the simple service might be buried beneath a mound of rituals. No, my friend.

“The laws of Christ’s kingdom are so simple, and yet so complete, that man-made additions will create confusion.

And the more simple our plans for work in God's service, the more we shall accomplish" *Ibid.*

Again, take the service at the table as Jesus takes the bread. Oh friends, it was just common unleavened bread, such as had been baked by the Jewish housewives for hundreds and hundreds of years. And the wine, what is it? The unfermented juice of the grape, just as simple as nature made it. And He takes those simple emblems, and He makes of them the body and blood by which our life was purchased through His sacrifice. And He says, "I want you to do this from time to time in remembrance of Me."

The service is so simple that the little flocks in this country and that country and the other country around the world can follow Him. It does not call for long years of practice. It does not call for elaborate preparation. It is simple—beautiful in its simplicity, and simple in its beauty.

My friends, *those* are the ordinances of the church: baptism and the Lord's Supper, with the preparatory service of feet washing. There they are, the great ordinances of the church of Christ in this world. Could you make anything simpler than that? But, oh, how beautiful! Beautiful, beautiful... God keep us from the human tendency to want to dress things up, dress things up, dress things up... Behold, consider the flowers of the field, the lilies, and learn from *them* what heaven values.

Now, another statement from *Steps to Christ*. This one is from page 85 of the pocket edition:

"God would have His children appreciate His works and delight in the simple, quiet beauty with which He has adorned our earthly home. He is a lover of the beautiful, and above all that is outwardly attractive He loves beauty of character; He would have us cultivate purity and simplicity, the quiet graces of the flowers" *Steps to Christ*, page 85.

There you have it. He desires us to delight in the simple, quiet beauty with which He has adorned our earthly home. Do you know, my dear friends, the more we find enjoyment in the beauty of nature, the more insipid the efforts of this world to ornament and frill it will appear to us.

I was reading the other day that there are many people who, in the effort to 'pile up' things to enjoy, lose the capacity for enjoyment. Isn't it true, friends? Oh yes, so true. Thank God, He is calling you and me to a life of simplicity, to enjoy the beauty of nature, and to bring into every phase of our lives as much of the natural simplicity as possible.

Now, we do well to ponder this subject for in 2 Corinthians the 11th chapter, we are given a warning by the inspired apostle, the third verse:

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” 2 Corinthians 11:3.

What are you afraid of Paul? Yes, Paul was concerned that the church should lose what? “The simplicity that is in Christ.” As an example of how that might be done, he pointed back to the beginning of sin in the Garden of Eden. Eve was what? Beguiled. By whom? By the serpent. Beguiled from simplicity. The serpent painted to her a vivid picture, how she could be more wise than God had made her, more beautiful than God had made her, and have a greater thrill than God had ever given her.

Isn't that what people are seeking for today, friends? They're seeking wisdom that God has withheld. They're seeking thrills and forbidden pleasures. They're trying to improve on the beauty of the natural. Eve was beguiled from her simplicity. Sin, by its very nature, is *confusing* and *complex*. The beauty of truth, by contrast, shines with native luster of *simplicity*.

Paul was anxious that that beauty of simplicity not be lost by the early church. When we turn to the pages of church history, we can well see *why* Paul was concerned. The great apostasy owed much of its cause to the fact that men were continuing to add and multiply forms and ceremonies of which the apostles had never heard and to bind them as heavy burdens upon the church.

And so in our educational work, we are warned on this very point. Back in the days of the schools of the prophets when Elijah was here on earth, he talked to the students and the teachers on this subject. You'll find an interesting statement about it in *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 512:

“Just before Elijah was taken to heaven, he visited the schools of the prophets...” *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 512.

What do you suppose his *last* study was given on?

“The lessons he had given them on former visits, he now repeated, impressing upon the minds of the youth the importance of letting simplicity mark every feature of their education. Only in this way could they receive the mold of heaven...” *Ibid.*

The next sentence says that our schools today are to be like those schools of the prophets. What point, then, should be one of those that characterizes every educational effort? Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity—simplicity of truth.

I was speaking about our worship, these beautifully simple ordinances that God has given us. Music is a part of worship, but the most beautiful music has in it a simplicity which gives it a native charm.

In the book *Evangelism*, page 502, we are told:

“Learn to sing the simplest of songs” *Evangelism*, page 502.

Do you know one reason I like that, friends? Because that’s something we can all get in on. There are some types of music which, while they’re very *good*—nothing wrong with them, they’re wonderful—they’re only for the few. Isn’t that right?

“Learn to sing the simplest of songs. These will help you in house-to-house labor...” *Ibid.*

Again, page 510:

“The long-drawn-out notes and the peculiar sounds common in operatic singing are not pleasing to the angels. They delight to hear the simple songs of praise sung in a natural tone” *Ibid.*, page 510.

Isn’t that nice? That’s where you and I come in, isn’t it friends? Don’t misunderstand me—we can improve; we *should* improve—but one of the ways in which to improve is to be more simple, more natural, more beautiful, and beautiful in a way that appeals to the angels. I’d like to appeal to the angels in my singing, wouldn’t you, dear friends? Thank God, we can. Beauty—the beauty of simplicity.

Christ’s teachings were simple. It’s His life we’re studying this morning. You remember it said about Jesus that common people “heard Him gladly.” Do you know why? Well, friends, His teaching was simple. The words He used were simple. In *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, page 240, I read:

“Christ’s manner of teaching was beautiful and attractive, and it was ever characterized by simplicity...There were no high-sounding words used, to understand which it was necessary to consult a dictionary.

“...Grace was poured upon His lips that He might convey to men in the most attractive way the treasures of truth.

“This is the way in which He would have us present His truth to others” *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, page 240.

Oh friends, that's the way we want to teach, isn't it? We want to teach our children from their earliest years the beauty of simplicity. That life that Jesus lived in Bethlehem and Nazareth is a pattern for our children. What did we read in that second text this morning, Isaiah 53:2?

“He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant...”
Isaiah 53:2.

You know how a plant grows: “...first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear (Mark 4:28). And we're told that childhood answers to the blade in the parable. There is a peculiar beauty about each stage of development in the plant, and God wants us to avoid either that which is precocious or that which is an indication of retarded development.

The things of God do not haste; neither do they delay. Again and again in the life of Jesus, we hear Him saying, “My time is not yet come. My hour is not yet come.” You may go out in the garden and look at the bud, and you may say, “Oh, I wish that would open right now!” But if ‘now’ isn't the time friends, you must wait. The Husbandman waiteth. He spends a good deal of time waiting.

I read of a little girl who came running to her mother in the kitchen and said, “Oh Mama, I've been out in the garden helping God.”

And her mother said, “Why, darling, what do you mean ‘helping God?’”

“Oh,” she said, “some of the flowers weren't open yet, and I flowered them.”

She was working on the buds, you know, just opening them up. She was helping God all right, wasn't she? Yes. It would have been interesting to see what they looked like the next day! But, ah, my friends, how many parents there are who work on the little buds of the growing boys and girls and try to help God open them up, who glory in and gloat over the precocious development of children and boast about it, that *their* boy, he could play the piano at such an age, that *their* girl could do this and that at such an age, read before this age and that age...

What's the purpose of it all, dear friends? What is the purpose of it all? Ah, I tell you that back of all that is an utter failure to grasp the beautiful lesson we are studying this morning. There is a beauty of the bud; let's enjoy it while the flower is in bud. What do you say friends? And not get restless and nervous and anxious, and say, “What are we going to *do* to get this bud open? After all, look at what time it is!” The bud is beautiful.

You know, all buds don't open at the same rate, and all buds on a certain plant don't open on the same day. And all children are not made to learn to read at precisely the same time, or learn to cook, or learn to talk, or learn to sing, or learn *anything*. No. *Natural* beauty, simplicity, individuality—those great principles teach us that God has

made everything beautiful in its time if we'll be happy and satisfied with His simple ways. Isn't it wonderful, Brother, that your little boy is to grow up in *his* little way, grow up as a tender plant?

Now let me read you some inspired counsel on this point from *Child Guidance*:

“The little ones should be educated in childlike simplicity. They should be trained to be content with the small, helpful duties and the pleasures and experiences natural to their years. Childhood answers to the blade in the parable, and the blade has a beauty peculiarly its own. Children should not be forced into a precocious maturity, but as long as possible should retain the freshness and grace of their early years” *Child Guidance*, page 139.

Retain it how long? “As long as possible.” Retain *what* as long as possible? “The freshness and grace of their early years.”

“The more quiet and simple the life of the child—the more free from artificial excitement and the more in harmony with nature—the more favorable it is to physical and mental vigor and to spiritual strength” *Ibid*.

Dear friends, we wouldn't have to devote more than 50 percent of all the hospital beds in North America to nervous and mental cases if this instruction were followed. People today are breaking down under the strain that comes from getting away from the simple, the strain to force children and youth into a precocious maturity. People are cracking under that tension.

Oh, let us come back to the Eden life, the patriarchal life, the life of Jesus in Nazareth and John the Baptist in Judea. Let us seek to have our homes beautifully simple and simply beautiful. What do you say, friends? Thus shall our homes be the preparation place for those who, in these closing hours, will give the closing call.

Oh, there's a statement here in Volume 6, page 202, that whenever I think of it, friends, it thrills me! Listen:

“As Jesus in the temple solved the mysteries which priests and rulers had not discerned, so in the closing work of this earth children who have been rightly educated will in their simplicity speak words which will be an astonishment to men who now talk of ‘higher education’” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 6, page 202.

Oh, I'd rather my child would be the fulfillment of that than to have all the honors on all the quiz programs in this world, my friends. And notice, they will be the “children

who have been rightly educated.” And what they’re going to say will be in their simplicity, not the art of acting, not that polished, foolish glamor which comes from worldly education. “In their simplicity,” the simplicity of natural beauty. “That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth...” David prays in the 144th Psalm.

Boys and girls, I have a little message that I want to read to you here, and you parents may listen too:

The things of God haste not, nor yet delay.
A tiny seed up springing from the ground
Shall yet the knowledge of our God display,
And all the wisdom of the world confound.

Yea, as a tender plant unfolds her leaf,
And beauteous bud to tell His love doth ope’,
So wonderful and fair beyond belief
Shall blossom in God’s hour the child of hope.

Be thou that seed, Be thou that plant, dear child.
Haste not nor yet delay. The hour is late,
Yet there is time enough; so, meek and mild,
Here in thy Wildwood home, just grow and wait.

May we bow our heads.

Our precious Lord, we thank Thee with all our hearts for the lilies that tell of Thy love, the flowers that teach in such a beautiful way the glory of simplicity. God keep us from seeking to paint the lily, to crimp it, to improve it. Lord, help us to see in the beauty of the work of Thy hands the expression of what Thou wilt do for our children and for each of us as we, like these flowers, lay hold of the agencies Thou has provided. We choose to do it this morning, and we thank Thee. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

[Congregation sings “Fairest Lord Jesus.”]

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