



The Beauty of the Church 2021!
Calvary Reformation Church 24th Church Anniversary
April 25, 2021

Text: Psalms 96:1-13

Happy Anniversary CRC!

The LORD Jesus Christ has been faithful to our Church for nearly a quarter century. We've, by His grace, been able to minister to thousands of people, and see many saved and baptized.

With so much ugly in the world, our LORD has shown us so much beauty. This Psalm is filled with exhortations to that beauty!

A Few Exhortations from Psalms 96, verse by verse:

1. Feel the joy flowing from the Psalmist in verse one. "O sing unto the LORD!" The hearts of those that worship the God of the Bible should be brimming with enthusiasm and praise! Although song never sung are great, every song can feel "new" because the LORD's mercies are! Every church should be characterized by the beauty of praying and singing with passionate, joyful hearts!
2. We sing "unto" the LORD. We sing to Him! We adore His name and witness to His great salvation! Every church should be characterized by His salvation, focused on and rejoicing over the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. The heathen need His glory declared among them; they need to see Jesus in His church! They need to know the wonders of God, the glory and majesty of God. Our lights need to shine brightly when we gather and when we scatter!
4. The LORD is indeed great! He created all things and sustains all things. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He spoke and the universe leapt into existence. Therefore, He is to be feared! The Fear of the LORD is the beginning of both wisdom and knowledge. Every church should be characterized by reverence and trembling. God loves this kind of heart. As we will see, fear is beautiful.
5. Idolatry, in all its forms, is ugly. God's people must refuse to worship anything or anyone else. The LORD made the heavens!
6. The LORD is majestic. Words fail mere humans to describe His glory. But we are called to manifest as much of that glory as possible. There should be beauty in His sanctuary. His church should be a sanctuary...a beautiful refuge from worldly trouble! Wherever the church gathers, it must gather and worship according to God's precepts alone! This is beautiful!
7. How does one give glory and strength to the LORD? These things already belong to our God. We simply remind ourselves of them in worship and declare them. We ascribe them to Him in our praise and actions.
8. The church has a duty to give God glory. In fact, this is why we gather! Our offerings are our lives and worship. Every church should be categorized by loving and free giving away of ourselves and our desires to God!
9. Holiness is beautiful! Unholiness is ugly. We must worship according to His mandates! This requires holy fear and reverence, which are also beautiful. The opposite, arrogance and pride...self-centeredness and self-focus, are ugly!
10. Let us be bold! Let us declare, yes even among unbelievers, the authority of Christ! His Kingdom SHALL be established! He WILL judge the living and the dead!
11. Let us do these things as the angels in the heavens...with rejoicing and gladness, which the LORD Himself bestows:***Psalms 30:11-12 (KJV)** Thou hast turned for me my mourning*

into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; 12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

12. All of God's beautiful creation praises Him! Why?
13. He is coming! He is coming! Announce it! Live like it! Insist upon biblical beauty because of it! He comes to judge the world and all people! Praise Him! Like creation, the church can display the beauty and glory of the LORD before a hurting and confused world!

The Beauty of the Church 2021

Friends, there is nothing like the Church. I believe that after well-ordered, biblically healthy families, the faithful local church is the most significant institution God created: • It is built on the rock of Scripture (Matt 7:24-27), and on the foundation of the apostles and

prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone! (Eph 2:20) • Jesus promised to build His Church and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it! (Matt 16:18)

- Indeed, our LORD called CRC to be a "Pattern House," a church willing to continually reform itself to look like the Bible. This is actually the call of every church:

2 Timothy 1:13 (KJV) *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

*The Pattern can be described as fundamental **doctrines**, **expressions**, and **traditions** given to the Church by Christ through the New Testament writers. The Pattern teaches what Christ intended His church to be, what He intended it to teach, and the way He designed it to operate. All of this is clearly illustrated in the New Testament.*

• And the Pattern is Beautiful. It isn't easy. But it is beautiful:

1. The Beauty of Honoring the Lord's Day
2. The Beauty of Word-driven prayer and Scripture-regulated Worship and Preaching
3. The Beauty of seeing God's Word as Sufficient for Life and Ministry Practice
4. The Beauty of Walking through Scripture to behold the purity and Love of the Lord
5. The Beauty of Worshipping with and Discipling our Children
6. The Beauty of Reaching out to others with the Whole Gospel
7. The Beauty of Serving one another and the Community
8. The Beauty of becoming a true Family, enjoying times of fellowship and hospitality and love
9. The Beauty of biblical Marriage and Singleness and Manhood and Womanhood
10. The Beauty of being Accountable to a small group of saved sinners
11. The Beauty of forgiveness and mercy and walking with each other through difficulties
12. The Beauty of using resources for His Glory

Do you consider the LORD's ways as pleasant, and all His paths as peace? (Prov 3:17) Is He beautiful to you? He was to David...

Psalms 27:4 (KJV) *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 enquire in his temple.*

May the Church always remember the Beauty and Duty of Holiness:

- ***Psalms 4:4-5 (KJV)*** *Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.*
- ***Psalms 29:2 (KJV)*** *Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*
- ***Psalms 90:17 (KJV)*** *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.* • ***John 14:15 (KJV)*** *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*
- ***Romans 12:1-2 (KJV)*** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
- ***1 John 5:3 (KJV)*** *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

And as we attempt, in God's power, to Reach, Teach, and Release Hurting People by the Power of Jesus Christ, maybe we never stopping Imagining...

Imagine a person, totally in love with Christ and passionately grateful for His sacrifice at Calvary that redeemed them from sin. Imagine the priority in this person's life to "self-govern" according to Scripture...to line up every part of their life according to the precepts, principles, and patterns of the Bible...to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Imagine their passionate pursuit of holiness. Imagine their willingness to die for Christ...

Imagine a church of passionate worshippers who gather on the Lord's Day not for themselves, but for Christ and His glory and worship alone, with the fullness of the Holy Spirit in their midst. Imagine their love for God burning so hot they encourage each other, hold each other accountable, obey the Scriptures, and work to share the Gospel and make disciples both down the street and around the world. Imagine if their love for Christ caused them to fight against ungodliness, to protect marriage, to take care of widows and orphans, to fight for the unborn, and to work to eliminate oppression. Imagine a church that taught the Word systematically, that deepened their faith through biblically prescribed worship forms, and that kept families together during that most sacred time each week...

Imagine individuals and families who are free of financial shackles, who are debt free with growing savings, who invested, and who saw the multigenerational aspects of work and money. Imagine people who worked hard to fulfill the Dominion Mandate, which is the command to establish the rule of Jesus Christ in all areas and jurisdictions of life (the Family, the Church, and the State); the intentional expansion of His Kingdom by His subjects, the preaching of the Gospel, the discipling of hearts, and the raising up of godly generations that declare, "Your Kingdom come, and your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Imagine individuals and families with a Kingdom "work and money" vision...

Imagine a man or husband or father who loves God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength. Imagine him working hard, with a long-term vision of where he and his family might be by God's

grace. *Imagine his priestly pursuit of holiness, refusing to hurt himself and his family through his own unrighteousness, and his willingness to repent quickly when he fails. Imagine how he*

3 of 4

lovingly, tenderly, but firmly declares God's Word in his home and in the community. If married, imagine how he loves his wife with his whole heart, how he thinks and says she's beautiful, how he covers her, provides for her, protects her, and is literally willing to die for her. Imagine how he counts it an honor to lead her, disciple her, and work so that she always feels safe and secure. If a father, imagine a man who teaches and discipulates his children. Imagine how he protects them from ungodly influences, instructs them, and casts great vision for who they could be. Imagine how he prays with them and prepares them for adulthood, marriage, and family!

Imagine a woman or wife or mother who loves God with all her heart, mind, soul, and strength. Imagine her working hard many times outside the house, but certainly at home. Imagine how she pursues God's long-term vision for her life. Imagine how chaste she is, how virtuous, how modest! Imagine how she lovingly and tenderly instructs her children and others in the Word, much like Timothy's mother and grandmother. If married, imagine how she loves and submits to her own husband as to the Lord. Imagine how she supports him, lifts him up with her words and actions, cares for him, and is willing to sacrifice her agenda to pursue his, seeing her role as a "helper" or a "helpmeet" as a honor bestowed upon her by God Himself! If a mother, imagine her tender care for her children, teaching them, loving them, and caring for them, casting great vision before them about who they could be in the Lord, praying for and preparing them for adulthood, marriage, and family.

Imagine homes filled with biblical care groups and hospitality. Imagine open doors and open hearts, dinner tables filled with friends, fellow church members, laughter, Scripture, encouragement, and meaningful conversation...less television and more discipleship. Imagine how many problems would be solved without a class, a program, or a counseling session through prayer, Scripture, and true Christian friendship. Imagine the new friends and church members who would finally feel welcome in a covenant community and as a result are taught more about the tangible love of Christ. Imagine the teachable moments to train children how to serve others.

As we said years ago, the world, the flesh, and the devil will fight this vision at every turn. He will attempt to pervert it; to create disunity because of it; to unleash so much drama and distraction that we simply give up and do nothing.

BUT I plan to keep dreaming and fighting. How about you?

