

Sermon, June 12, 2022
Psalm 8 and Romans 5:1-5
“The Gift: Molded”
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There is an old saying that seeing is believing. I have to see it to believe it. Of course, today we know that is no longer applicable. With a little bit of knowledge and creativity, one can make a picture of almost anything. With Photoshop, all things are possible. So you have to be very careful to research what you are looking at to make sure it hasn't been manipulated in some way. And so anytime we show visuals on Sunday mornings, I always look into them, do a little bit of research to make sure that what you are seeing is actually what you are seeing.

I mention that this morning because of the pictures I wanted to show you this morning. One of our scriptures for this morning is Psalm 8, a particular favorite of mine. I love that image of David out in the field at night being in awe of God's creation and in his position in that creation. But it occurred to me that we don't have to just look up to see examples of God's creation, they are all around us. I want to show you

some pictures of rock formations from around the world. These are all natural rock formations. And this is where I had to do some research because there are some manipulated rock formation pictures out there. Yes, I know it's hard to believe, but it's true. These are all legitimate formations. None of them made by man. There are a few of these that have been helped. There is one that's about 15 feet meters high but only three meters at the base. That made it precarious enough that it's been shored up and cemented into a base at the bottom. But it's still a natural rock formation.

Like David, I find it hard to look at pieces of creation like this and not believe in a God. I don't have enough faith to be an atheist, I guess. I just don't have enough faith to think things of this type of beauty happened randomly with no hand behind their formation.

No, I can only see God's hand in the water, the wind, the heat over millions of years creating wonders like this. Certainly, I believe He creates them for our enjoyment and to point out there is a God out there somewhere. I also have to believe that God creates formations like this just because it pleases Him.

It also shows me not only does God love beauty, He is also incredibly patient. As we said, these didn't happen overnight. Millions of years of elemental pressure went into these beautiful formations. Good sculpting takes time.

That's true of most sculptures. They don't happen overnight. It took Michelangelo three years to sculpt David. It took him around 2 years to sculpt the Pieta. It took him three years to sculpt Moses, which at almost 8 feet high is impressive. But as one source sites, he really didn't have much going on in his life at the time.

So in the end, are there many differences between the rock sculptures and the works of a great human artist? Maybe not. Both when you see them give evidence to a hand behind them, both speak to the sculpture's love of both creation and beauty. Both invoke a longing of beauty in the observer. Both take an immense amount of patience in order for the finished product to be completed.

They both are the result of the good and the bad forces and pressures of life. Certainly, there is good pressure that creates some of the beautiful God-made and man-made sculptures. Gentle winds, a slow constant stream of water, the careful shaping of a David using the most precise instruments used by gentle and skilled hands.

But there are days when this is not so, and they also play a part. Some of these rock structures come out of torrential winds and diluvian like floods. The clash of thunder and lightning. Hot suns. Hurricanes and tornados. Why, anyone who would have lived then might wonder how a loving God would allow the elements to be in such chaos, never seeing the object of beauty arise out of the rock.

There are times when the sculptor's hand, the hammer, must seem cruel. The sound of the hammer incessantly ringing on the chisel, great pieces of the marble flaming to the floor. Careful, we think, if you hit it too hard, the entire piece of marble will shatter and fall at your feet.

Like those rock formation, like the statue of David or Moses, we, too, are being formed into a thing of beauty. That's the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are in the season of Pentecost. In many ways, we are always in the season of Pentecost because the Holy Spirit is present with us and within us. We are going to spend the next few weeks looking closely at what the gift of the Holy Spirit can do in our lives. One of the things that becomes evident from our Scripture in Romans is that Jesus has come to give us the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit's role in our lives is to make our character like that of Jesus. Now, I want you to hear that, less you become disappointed with your gift at some point in your life. The roll of the Holy Spirit in your life is not to make you famous. Or powerful or, heaven forgive us, make us better than someone else. The roll of the Holy Spirit is to sculpt you in the image of God that you might have the character of Jesus Christ.

In other words, it's to sculpt us into His image. Well, if that's the truth and we have asked the Holy Spirit to come, and if He comes, He will begin to sculpt us, So, why does our character not look like Jesus?

Well, let's go back to our passage from Romans. Paul says we boast in the sharing of God's glory. The good moments in life, the joyous moments we have are to sculpt the character of Christ into us. That's what they are for. These are the streams and gentle breeze, the light curve, the sculptor's delicate instrument. So we ought to constantly ask God when we experience His glory, when we have a good day, when church is great, when we are blessed by family and friends, God blesses you. Now, use it, use the moments of Glory that I might be made into Your image. It's that's easy.

But its only part of the picture. What else does Paul say? Paul says we boast in our sufferings, Why? Because our suffering creates endurance and they will eventually make us into the image of God. Suffering brings endurance, endurance brings character, character brings hope. This is the storm, is the flood, is the lightening, and hurricane winds.

Paul says we need both. If the gift of the Holy Spirit is to do its job, we are to have both. The good and the bad, the joy and the sorrow, the days of glory and the times of suffering. The flood and the stream, the delicate tool and the hammer.

The problem, of course, is that we don't want both. We want only one of them. And we question God when He allows the other to invade our lives. We question why God allows us to go through times of suffering, we question why God allows us to be disappointed, to have our hearts broken. It seems like God is just hammering away, and we think *if you aren't careful I will break*. Never seeing that God is making us

into a thing of extraordinary beauty. We question why, and God says *my dear child, there is no other way. My role is not to keep you from hard times, but to use them that My glory might shine through you.*

Of course, there are those who struggle with the good times. There are Christians who simply cannot allow themselves to be joyful. Not only do they not want to be joyful, they work very hard to make sure you are not joyful, either. Oh, how much of God's beauty is not revealed in us because we refuse to be joyful? Friends, glory in it all. Glory in the good and bad, glory in the joy and in the hard times, give all you are to God, and allow the Holy Spirit to make you into a thing of beauty. Amen.