

# Seeing Beauty In the Ugly, Week 3 of the “Stepping Into The Upside Down” Series

Presented by Rob Hamilton on 03-11-2018

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

Waunakee, WI

Scripture:

1 Samuel 16: 7

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Philippians 4: 8-9

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. 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.

So, how many of you have day-to-day routines that you perform each and every day? You know, the ones where you set your alarm the night before (before you go to bed at your regular time), and it's the same time set for the alarm as the time you set yesterday. And you wake up and get out of bed after hitting the Snooze button at least 3 times but ONLY 3 times because you know that if you hit it once more or you turn off your alarm and fall back asleep, you'll be late. Late for what, maybe you ask? Well, late for the rest of your daily routine.

Raise your hand...And for those who are watching on Facebook Live, nod your head... My daily routine means I have a 25 minute commute in to Downtown Madison. On most mornings, I listen to ESPN radio or Wisconsin Public Radio on my way in, depending on how I'm feeling. And then there are the mornings I drive in silence.

Romans 12:2

Peter says: Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Too often we conform to the patterns in our daily lives. We do the same things over and over again, sometime out of necessity but other times just simply because that is what we do – We become numb to the outside world while performing our routine.

Do I have to go to work? Yes. Do I have to conform to taking the most direct route every day? Do I have to drive there? Can I take a different route to work? Or could I bike to work?

And what if I were to stop somewhere in between home and work? Many a morning I will stop at Quik Trip to get a coffee, a breakfast sandwich or a muffin. These mornings allow me to break up the routine just enough to interact with the world in a random manner. Holding the door open for an incoming patron who was right behind me, exchanging pleasantries with the Quik Trip “baristas”, or the simple conversation with the clerk at the checkout all provide an opportunity for a “God Bless You” and a “Have a Blessed Day.”

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Maria and Kathy Parker-Witzke exemplified this while they were with us at Crossroads. Maria spoke of a time where she and Kathy were walking down State Street, and described beginning a conversation with a homeless individual. The way Maria described the man was that he looked rough, I MEAN ROUGH - dirty, unshaven, un-kept, wearing all of his belongings with nothing else, and badly in need of food and shelter. Overall he looked ugly! Yet, they weren't afraid of approaching the man. They were called to approach him and begin a conversation. After the conversation, Maria spoke of his life as if he were the most interesting man in the world. She noted that this man spoke of his travels across the United States as if he had only just returned from them, visiting many of the major cities “from sea to shining sea”. He spoke of his experiences in the armed services as if he was discharged last week, and maybe he'd re-enlist for another tour of duty next week as to continue his service to the nation. After spending 45 minutes with this individual, Maria said that she and Kathy would take subsequent trips to State Street to look for the man, if only just to re-engage in their previous conversations. Maria and Kathy did not conform to the pattern of this world – The pattern where others walk on by; where they don't stop; where they don't offer food or shelter; where they don't show compassion; where they don't even see the man.

Leading up to the encounter, the sermon series was about Stepping out of your Comfort zone, and Maria and Kathy were becoming transformed through the power of scripture and through the Holy Spirit. They were not new to faith, and were not early in their Faith walk, but they were renewing their minds through pushing their personal boundaries and limitations. Maria and Kathy saw the beauty – the man's beauty.

Jason Rahn, here within our Crossroads home, spoke to me of similar experiences he has had while walking around the Wisconsin Capitol square. He told me he often goes for coffee, and that there is an individual who he has spoken to on numerous occasions. Sometimes, Jason buys him a cup of coffee for warmth, and with that come a warmer interaction and a gigantic smile. Jason does not conform to the pattern of this world where he only sees the ugly. Jason sees the beauty.

But let me warn you now – This message is all about “just smell the roses a different way”.

Our scripture today from Philippians 4:8 speaks of performing in a manner that is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy, and “the God of peace will be with you.”

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.

Majority Stoneman Douglas Parkland High School Student David Hogg called the deadly shooting “something that is completely unacceptable and that we need to take action on”, adding that “there shouldn't be any more children that die.” This was a day after the shooting.

<https://www.trendsmap.com/twitter/tweet/964296638570393600>

With tears in his eyes, Majority Stoneman Douglas High School Student Samuel Zeif was interviewed at the White House on February 21<sup>st</sup>, seven days after the shooting. Sam spoke of his texts back and forth from his brother, Matthew, who was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and saw his teacher, Scott Biegel die while protecting him and his classmates.

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<http://www.lovewhatmatters.com/texts-between-brothers-during-florida-school-massacre-will-give-you-chills-were-gonna-get-out-of-here-i-promise/>

Sam's words ring true - "No brothers or sisters or family members or anyone should ever have to share those texts with anyone. I lost my best friend. I'm here to use my voice because I know he can't. I know he's with me cheering me on to be strong, but it's hard. Let's be strong for the fallen that do not have a voice anymore, and never let's let this happen again...Please...Please."

Regardless of whether you are for gun control or against gun restrictions, both David and Sam spoke in a manner that was true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy. The strength and courage shown of these two students, who were directly affected by this horrible tragedy, and who could have withdrawn, and who love their fellow students in such a great manner to fight for their legacies, is the heart and love that God wants us all to have for ALL of our Brothers and Sisters. David Hogg and Samuel Zeif aren't conforming to the patterns of this world by staying silent or by withdrawing, stating this won't happen again at my school. They are BEAUTIFUL, within this world of ugliness and darkness.

Likewise, Ashley Judd was the first individual to come out against Harvey Weinstein with accusations of his sexual harassment. When asked in a recent interview on why she was doing this, and where the courage has come from to come forward, Ashley said her "courage came from that little girl inside of me and my commitment of doing right by her." The cost to her was her career, but the cost of not doing it was greater - the cost of her integrity. As a result of her bravery and integrity, Ashley jumpstarted a movement against all of those who sexually harass women, and giving women who have been harassed the strength and power to stand up to their harassers. "Harvey has given us a great gift. He has revealed the "the Old ways" in Hollywood. "We have sort-of flung the barn door wide open. The Joy of the stampede, I didn't realize it would be so joyous."

<https://storycorps.org/listen/ted-klontz-and-ashley-judd-180302/>

Ashley Judd isn't conforming to the patterns of this world. The national #MeToo campaign is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy, and is JOYOUS! She is seeing the BEAUTY within a world of ugliness and darkness, and with her are thousands of other women.

During my commutes to work this week, the ones I made in silence, I looked out towards the snow and said a prayer of Thanks - The kids can go sledding again. I thought about this sermon, and asked the Lord for strength and excellence in delivering HIS message. I thought of the Albino squirrel shredding our Arborvita, and said a prayer of forgiveness as they are so rare, let them sample the sweetness of the arborvita's branches - a tasty treat for squirrels. I thought of how Pastor Kristen spoke of Christ's journey on this Earth during the 40 days of Lent as being offensive, and even ugly. I thought about Christ Jesus, on the Cross, dying for our sins. Bloodied, torn, filthy, stoned, crown of thorns, left to die - Psalm 22: 'My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?' Yet through HIS love, he sacrificed HIS life, his noble, right, pure life so that we are given ETERNAL LIFE! Do you see the beauty? AMEN.