



Theology of Beauty and Imagination: A Guide to Wonder with Dr. Junius Johnson

Lesson 1: What is Beauty?

Outline:

What is a theology of beauty?

- The theology of beauty is an account based in everything we know about God through his self-revelations of what the meaning and value of beauty is.
- A theology of beauty relates beauty back to our spiritual needs of justification and sanctification. What role does beauty play in the manifold works of God?

Why do we need a theology of beauty?

- You do not really need a reason to love beauty.
- We are already devoted to beauty. We love it and are attracted to it.
- Humans love beauty. We look for it. We pursue it.
- Beauty is at the center of every human heart.

What is beauty?

- Plato made the claim that the beautiful is difficult.
- Three main senses of the word beauty:
 - **The first is the beautiful itself or the form of beauty, which is transcendent.**
 - Beauty is a fundamental property of reality.
 - Transcendental properties of being are the properties that every being must have.
 - To exist is to be beautiful (Augustine). Sin introduces the reality of a creature failing to be what was meant to be. Sin damages natures.
 - As a being, everything has a relationship to beauty which is intact or damaged to varying degrees.
 - Beauty is a standard according to which beings are measured.
 - God is beauty itself. He is all delight. God is the fountain of all beauty.
 - Beauty is a way of expressing something about God.
 - There is no truth about God that is not enriched by seeing it in relationship to beauty.



- **The second sense is in reference to beautiful creatures.**
 - There is only one source of beauty. God is the source of beauty.
 - For a creature to be beautiful is for the creature to participate in the beauty of God.
 - Participation is a certain type of imitation. Creatures have a beauty like God's beauty (like, but also infinitely unlike).
 - Creaturely beauty is a lesser instance of beauty sent forth into the world by God for the purpose of declaring God's glory.
 - There is a measure outside of human opinion that grounds the judgement of beauty.
- **Lastly, beauty is used to describe the experience of the person or thing.**
 - "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder?"
 - The first two senses of beauty are about whether something is beautiful. This third sense is about whether something is found to be beautiful.
 - Judgement can differ for the person in different times and circumstances.
 - The experience of the beautiful contains an element of the subjective. The sense of beauty can be trained (in positive and negative directions).
 - Beauty may not lie in the eye of the beholder, but the eye of the beholder can fail to uncover beauty.