

beautiful

LIVES THAT SHOW THE GOSPEL

Message Topic: Dr. Mildred Fay Jefferson and the Beauty of Everyone

Message Date: November 1, 2020

Focus: The beauty that each person has within themselves

Primary biblical texts: Psalm 82, James 1:19–27, Psalm 139

Introduction

Our goal is to engage in conversations about the beautiful life that Jesus has called us to live. Each week, we will be unpacking an element of this life. Each topic is paired with a historical figure who will show us one way to embody each week's topic.

Purpose of Community Groups

To engage with the ideas and scripture presented in the messages, to build connections with each other, and apply what we have learned to our lives.

Gathering

(To help people get to know each other.)

Mixer Questions:

If you could have one talent that you don't have now, what would it be and why?

Do you know of any human who has done something so incredible that it blows your mind? Who are they, what do they do, why is that incredible to you?

Message Content

Review Message: Christian shared this week about Dr. Mildred Fay Jefferson and the beauty of everyone. Dr. Jefferson was a black woman who grew up in the Jim Crow South. She was inspired to be a doctor by her town doctor who encouraged her to pursue her dreams. She ended up becoming the first black woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School and became a surgeon in Boston, where she was a pioneer for women in the medical field. In 1970, she found herself caught in a situation that demanded her response. The American Medical Association passed legislation to legalize abortions, but Dr. Jefferson felt that this was wrong. Her conviction was driven both by her Christian belief that all life mattered to God, but also by her medical belief that her Hippocratic oath to "do no harm" precluded her from taking life. She became one of the foremost voices advocating for the right of all to life, resisting all medical rationale for destroying it. Her story is one that shows us what happens when people believe that all life matters to God, irrespective if that life is born or unborn.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you about the message?
2. Dr. Jefferson believed medically and religiously that she had a responsibility to do no harm to other people. Describe the emotions and thoughts that were stirred within you by her story.
3. Why do you think it is so hard for people to discuss this issue?

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Scripture Study

Read James 1:19–27.

1. What is the main point of this passage, in general?
2. Specifically, Dr. Jefferson lived out her faith not just in her words, but with her actions. Who are the “orphans and widows” in the world or in your life that you are called to look after?
3. Part of following Jesus is learning how to see everyone as beautiful as he does. How did Jesus, as our God who became human, show us God’s belief in the beauty of all people? Make a list; there are lots of examples of this in the Bible. (*Think of Jesus’ interactions with lepers, the blind, outcasts, his stories, etc.*)

Personal Reflection

1. How do you see yourself as “not beautiful?” What would it look like to open the door to believe that God loves you in that place?
2. Dr. Jefferson was seen and encouraged to pursue her dreams by the doctor in her hometown. Who has encouraged you?
3. As the church, what does it look like to be a community that sees and actively proclaims the beauty of everyone?

Challenge:

1. Think of the “orphans and widows” in your life. Do one thing to care for them this week.
2. Think about who you label as “not beautiful.” Think about your reasons and ask if they reflect the heart of God for them. Pray for these people. Thank God for making them beautiful in their own way.
3. Seek out someone you know who disagrees with you over an issue. Ask them to teach you why they think or live that way. Approach them humbly and seek to learn their view, not win an argument. You aren’t here to be right, but to learn. Practice valuing the people behind certain positions by allowing the people to speak.

Prayer

Almighty God, who created us in your image, grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression. Help us to employ our freedom in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations. Grant us eyes to see your beauty in each person we encounter, whether physically, virtually, or in our minds and hearts. Teach us your grace for them, so that we might live to the glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (adapted from Contemporary Prayer 21 in *The Book of Common Prayer*)