

Christ and Creativity

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[0 : 00] I appreciate Alex being willing to lead us in music today. I asked him to do that before I told him that I was going to be talking about art. So that maybe wasn't at all fair to him, but I really appreciate that.

Our main text this morning, if you want to go ahead and turn there, is going to be Exodus 31. So that should be pretty fun to talk about art, to talk about creativity and what the Bible has to say about that.

It was my pleasure to volunteer. I was kind of in a hurry to volunteer as soon as we started talking about speaking on Christ and culture this summer.

So I really want to talk about art because for the last, I don't know, year and a half, I've been doing a personal study on the topic of what the Bible has to say about art and creativity and what other Christians before us, other contemporaries, have said about art.

What part our church should play in creating and promoting art. So I will mostly refer to Christ and art instead of Christ and creativity, which was our original topic, primarily because the Bible doesn't use the word creativity to describe our actions.

[1 : 20] More so the Bible uses that to describe God's characteristics and actions. The word creativity or creative wasn't even applied to a person until the Renaissance when it was applied to a playwright.

And even then, the person who used it to describe the playwright was saying, it's as if God is speaking when this playwright writes his plays. So mostly I'll use the word art, but understand that if I do say the people are creative, it's not heretical or blasphemous or anything like that because we're made in the image of God and he is the chief creator and we're to imitate him.

So I think it's okay to use that type of language just with the understanding that creativity on our part is always mimicking the ultimate creator of God.

So let's read our text and then we'll jump into our discussion. It's Exodus 31, verses 1 through 11. And Moses is up on the mountain.

He's getting God's commandments. He has the Ten Commandments and the tablets, and God's giving him all the instructions for how Israel ought to operate. And verse 1 says, The Lord said to Moses, See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, and cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood to work in every craft.

[2 : 48] And behold, I have appointed with him the Holy Ab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all men ability that they may make all that I have commanded you, the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, the table and its utensils, and the lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burn offering, with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, and the finely worked garments, the holy garments, for Aaron the priest, and the garments for his sons, for their service as priests, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the holy place, according to all that I have commanded you, they shall be.

Pray with me. Father, we ask that you would give illumination, life to these ancient texts that we'll be reviewing, these commandments that you've given, the principles and the truths that you've outlined in your word.

Help them to be real and alive to us today, as you have very clear instructions on how we are to operate, how we are to rely on your spirit for all things.

Help us to see those things today as they relate to our topic. Father, I pray that you would use me, that in my weakness, your strength would be perfected, that great things would be accomplished in and through this congregation, as a result of the way that we open up our senses, and receive your truth and apply it to our lives.

We praise you for this great opportunity. Let it not be wasted on us. Amen. Okay, so in the interest of time, I'm going to give you a really brief introduction to kind of lay the framework.

[4 : 41] Okay? But if you're interested in the history of art in the church, then I would encourage you to talk to me more about it later, because I just have pages and pages of notes and things that I found interesting over the last 18, 19 months.

But they just wouldn't really be pertinent to our discussion today. So this is something that I would really love to talk more about, because I'm really passionate about it. I think that there's an application, a wide application, even for people who wouldn't consider themselves artists. So with that said, I'm going to really breeze through just a brief introduction. We'll call it a brief history of art in the church.

First, if you flip over to page 32, our discussion of art in the church, in order to get us to today, really begins in chapter 32 of Exodus.

We're not going to read there, but if you notice your heading, you're probably familiar with the story. Moses is up on the mountain, and what do we find Aaron and the people doing, but going, Moses must have forgotten about us.

[5 : 45] He's not coming back down. Who are we going to worship now if God's not with us? So they build this golden calf, and they begin to worship it. And it's interesting.

They make the golden calf, which is an artwork. It's a sculpture, statue. But it's an idol for them. And they don't only worship the idol, but they want to incorporate it into their worship of God.

So you would see in verse 5 of chapter 32, an Aaron made proclamation and said, Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord. But then what do they do? They get up the next day, and they begin worshipping their idols.

So they're trying to incorporate this idolatrous piece of art into their worship of God. And the reason that I bring this up is because it highlights a problem for all of humanity because we're fallen, because our sinful nature is rooted so deeply.

We're really prone to idolatry. And art is primarily image making. Images are really hard for us to keep in their rightful place. And that's exactly what we found with the golden calf.

[6 : 55] A piece of art, I guess, if made for other intentions, could have been a really nice piece of art, could have even brought glory to God. But instead, it was elevated to the status of an idol or a false god.

And the people worshiped it. Throughout history, God's people have continually done that. And even outside of the church and outside of Israel, people really want to see something, want to touch something, have something tangible to worship rather than God.

So art has a real sneaky way of displacing our affections for God. And we find that in history, that's what had happened about the time of the Protestant Reformation.

The Catholic Church was in a lot of trouble. I mean, the Reformation happened for good reason, not the least of which was the idolatry of the Catholic Church. Their cathedrals, their relics, Martin Luther and some others made fun of them with a term that was used to describe the circus, to say it's extravagante, it's just gone way too far.

So the Protestant Reformation happened, and as a reaction to the Catholic Church, Protestants began removing art pieces from their meeting spaces, removing art altogether.

[8 : 16] And it was for good motivation. They said, look, people are worshipping these things instead of God, so let's take away these distractions. The problem with that, of course, is that there wasn't anything inherently evil with beautiful pieces of art.

There wasn't anything inherently evil about musical production to aid in congregational singing. So we, as a piece of application even right here, need to be really careful about reactionism.

We, as people, we tend to see something that's causing wrong, and instead of looking at the root of the problem, we react from the entire situation altogether.

Well, there's an infinite number of directions that you can run away from something. We need instead to begin pursuing godliness, which is a singular direction. We have to stop creating these hedge laws for ourselves, which may or may not be intended to keep us from sinning, but ultimately

prevent us from receiving and redeeming things that God intends to use for His glory. And art's one of those things. The Protestant Reformation got us into a really bad spot with art because it created a skepticism about art that lingers till today. It created a big gap, a widening gap, between the church and artists.

[9 : 40] What happened as a result of that gap were twofold. Art was negatively impacted in the church and outside of the church. Outside of the church, there's a...

Well, I'll read you a quote. Stuart McAllister wrote a book, *What is Good and Who Says?* And he said, Much of the energy and effort of our artists and cultural architects has gone into debunking, dismantling, or deconstructing all that is good, beautiful, and respected, to be replaced with the shallow, the ugly, and the ephemeral, or the passing.

Philip Riken, who... And actually, Liz, will you grab that book for me? Philip Riken wrote a great book called *Art for God's Sake*. It helped me out a bunch in preparing for this sermon.

He said, Most contemporary art is the art of alienation, which, if it is true at all, is true only about the disorder. Thank you. The disorder of a world damaged by depravity.

Did you catch that? Most contemporary art is the art of alienation, which, if it is true at all, is true only about the disorder of a world damaged by depravity. So, art has been affected negatively outside of the church because the church is withdrawn from the artistic community.

[10 : 53] But art has also been negatively affected within the church as we've distanced ourselves from the artistic community. We lost touch with artistic standards of excellence, and we lost the ability to describe and illustrate transcendent truths of Christianity in the language of the culture around us.

So, now we have songs like, I could sing of your love forever, I could sing of your love forever, I could sing of your love forever. And it's a good thing, because we don't have anything else to say anymore. We've lost the ability to speak in terms that the community around us can engage with and connect with, because, in an artistic sense, we've divorced ourselves from them.

The main thing there is that both the world and the church suffer loss when we, as Christians, refuse to engage in the pursuit of high aesthetic standards. I want to read you another quote from Rikens' book on this particular topic.

He says, All too often, we Christians settle for something that is functional, but not beautiful. We gravitate toward what is familiar, popular, or commercial, with little regard for the enduring values of artistic excellence.

Sometimes what we produce can be described only as kitsch, tacky artwork of poor quality that appeals to low tastes. The average Christian bookstore is full of the stuff, as the real artist will tell us, if only we will listen.

[12 : 21] Ultimately, this kind of art dishonors God because it is not in keeping with the truth and beauty of His character, and also undermines the church's gospel message of salvation in Christ. Art has tremendous power to shape culture and touch the human heart.

Its artifacts embody the ideas and desires of the coming generation. This means that what is happening in the arts today is prophetic of what will happen in our culture tomorrow. It also means that when Christians abandon the artistic community, we lose a significant opportunity to communicate Christ to our culture.

Furthermore, when we settle for trivial expressions of the truth in worship and art, we ourselves are diminished as we suffer a loss of transcendence. What we need to recover, or possibly discover for the first time, is a full biblical understanding of the arts.

Not for art's sake, but for God's sake. Then we will be able to produce better art that more effectively testifies to the truth about God and His grace. This goal is important not just for artists, but also for everyone else, made in God's image and in need of redemption.

So to review our introduction. First, because people have always been prone to worship art instead of God, the church began to reject art during the Protestant Reformation.

[13 : 35] This rejection led to a deep-rooted skepticism about the arts, creating a widening chasm between Christians and artists. As the chasm grew, art outside the church became less beautiful, less true, and increasingly disconnected from the reality or even the possibility of transcendent truth.

Likewise, art within the church became tackier, shallower, and increasingly disconnected from the reality of the world around us. So it's the framework that we're working with as we begin to discuss

what God's instructions are for art within the church and how we as Christians should connect with art and relate to and create art.

So as we come to our text, keep that kind of a framework and a background in your mind that art has been damaged both within and without the church because of our general neglect of it as Christians.

So Exodus 31, 1-11. We've read that earlier. There are four biblical principles of art that have real implications for us today that we can find in our text.

We're going to discuss each of those this morning. So those four principles that we're going to look at, first is that God calls and equips artists. Second is that God loves all kinds of art.

[14:56] Third is that God has high standards for art. And fourth is that art exists for the glory of God. Okay? So the first principle is that God calls and equips artists.

And we see that in verse 2. We're not going to discuss verse 1, which is the Lord said to Moses, because it would take too long to get into the implications of the fact that God was speaking to Moses.

But verse 2, God says, See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Bere, son of Hur, the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence and knowledge and all craftsmanship.

Right? So he calls Bezalel by name. And then later in verse 6, he also calls Aholiad by name.

Artists play a very special part throughout history in accomplishing God's plans.

Now the second part of this principle is that he not only calls artists, but he equips artists. And we see that in verse 3, as I just read.

[15:54] I have filled him with the Holy Spirit. See that we'll list out the things that he equips artists with. The Holy Spirit with skill or ability and intelligence and knowledge.

And then the last is craftsmanship. Jean Edward Veith said skill or ability. must refer to the artist's innate talent, described here as a gift from God.

The second gift is intelligence, and that underscores that a true artist not only works with his hands, but with his mind, in contrast to current views that consider artistic inspiration to be non-rational or even anti-rational.

Knowledge, the third thing, as a gift for the arts, means that artists must know things, from the properties of their materials to the ideas that their art can convey. Craftsmanship refers to the artist's technique, the difference between a work of any kind being poorly executed or well-made. And then Veith continues to point out that these terms that are used to describe the gifts that God gave to Bezalel to equip him to make good art for the tabernacle, these terms may be used as a criteria for evaluating any work of art which may exemplify or fall short in some measure when it comes to skill, intelligence, knowledge, or craftsmanship.

[17:12] So you can take that with you as you're experiencing art, because art is all around us. The culture at large is increasingly artistic. Hopefully the Christian community will begin to be more artistic.

But as you're evaluating art, you can look back to the things that God gifted Bezalel with to make good art and say, well, does this art employ these skills?

The main point here is that God calls artists to make art for his purposes, and he equips them to be obedient to that calling. The artist needs to have spiritual insight as well as practical skill in order to honor God with the art that we create.

So, to say it a different way, the ability to create God-honoring art comes from God and takes all of a person to create it. Our minds and our bodies and our emotions.

The application for everybody else, because I know some of you may be sitting around going, well, I don't really consider myself an artist. The application here is that God is calling all of us into particular actions, and he will equip us to be obedient to him in those actions.

[18:24] We're going to come back to that idea in a little bit, but God always equips the called. He doesn't always call the equipped, but if he's calling you into an action, he will equip you to be obedient to him.

So the second principle is that God loves all kinds of art. We see that in verses 3 through 5. I have filled him with the Holy Spirit, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, he says, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.

Right? To work in every craft. And I do want to mention, just before I move too far ahead of the things that God equips artists with, he equips every Christian with the Holy Spirit. He certainly begins his discussion of the artist with that. And it's actually the first time that that language being filled with the Holy Spirit is used in Scripture. So artists get dibs on that. But as we're continuing to apply these truths to ourselves, I don't want you to get so bogged down into the idea of artistry that you neglect the fact that God has given all of us, as Christians, means the Spirit within us to produce obedience, to produce the good works that he's planned ahead for us to walk in.

[19 : 52] It's a really key element, it's maybe the key element to living Christian life is to be empowered by the Spirit of God. So begin applying aspects of these truths to yourselves in as much as you can, because the Spirit of God is within you.

And we're going to see that there's obedience called for on all of our parts, even if we don't call ourselves artists. So, to move on, God loves all kinds of art. And we see that in verses 3-5. He gives to these artists all craftsmanship, and then he says, he gives them these gifts to work in every craft. And he uses language like that throughout the passage.

It doesn't mean that all artworks are necessarily good or even godly. Certainly, let's not make that mistake. Just that all forms of art are intended to be used for God's purposes.

He doesn't say, I'm really into music, I'm kind of into painting, sculpture sort of out because of the whole golden calf thing. All art forms are intended for God's glory, for His purposes.

[21 : 00] I want to show you just how far-reaching that concept is in the types of art that Bezalel and Aholiab made. So we can see that they made symbolic art, which symbolic art can be representational or non-representational.

I'm going to talk about what those mean. But they made symbolic art, they made representational art, and they made non-representational art, what we call abstract art. So symbolic art, that's physical form that stands for a spiritual reality.

An example of it in the tabernacle was the gold lampstand. It symbolized the light of God's glory and grace. You see that's symbolic. There were several things in the tabernacle that represented something else.

They were to remind us of spiritual truth. The second type of art that they made was representational. And representational art imitates life by portraying recognizable objects from the physical universe.

So, for instance, on the high priest's robes, there were pomegranates sewn into the design on his robes. They really looked like pomegranates, and they were supposed to look like pomegranates.

[22 : 14] They were supposed to remind people who saw them of the physical universe that God had created. So that's representational art. It looks like what it's supposed to represent. And then the third type is non-representational art, which is just pure form.

It's form apart from meaning, per se. An example is the colorful curtains in the holy place. They didn't mean anything, but they were pretty, and God instructed these artists to make them beautifully.

So there was abstract art. There was representational art. There was symbolic art. There are a lot of art forms that are left out here, but they're discussed in other places in Scripture.

The main thing to gather from those truths is that as the house of God on earth, the tabernacle was the ultimate statement of God's eternal values concerning art.

So God intended that the tabernacle be made up of all kinds of art because He values all kinds of art. Furthermore, the Bible's full of different forms of art.

[23 : 19] There are psalms that mention different music, different songs. A psalm will say, to the tune of, and then it'll be like the death in the valley, or another will be like the morning and spring.

I make both of those up, but they're really diverse song titles throughout the psalms. There are stories and poems and historical narratives, prophecies, proverbs, parables, et cetera, et cetera, all these different forms of creative expression that communicate and convey the truth to us, and they're all examples of different types of art forms that God employs in His own Word, certainly giving some approval of these diverse forms of art.

We have painting and dancing in Scripture, different use of different instruments mentioned in Scripture. So there's broad, very broad application for the arts being employed by Christians and not just specific types of art.

So we might make a case in our meetings together for using varied instrumentation instead of just singing without instruments, which some denominations and churches have said, no, we can only have singing by itself, no instruments, because that's idolatry.

Well, that's not what the Bible has to say about music at all. We don't have to have drab colors in our meeting spaces. We can have paintings up and we can enjoy ourselves.

[24 : 56] When we're singing, we don't have to stand tall and erect and hold our hymnals, but we can move a little bit. It's okay for Nathan to shake a tambourine. It's okay for you guys to get outside of your Baptist non-dancing comfort zones.

It's all right because God intends for all forms of art to be used to bring glory to Him. Stan made a joke Wednesday about line dancing.

I was about to make fun of it. It even means line dancing if you're into that kind of thing. So, a final note about different art forms before I move on. Bezalel and Aholiab had been filled by the Holy Spirit and given craftsmanship and the idea with craftsmanship is that they had practiced and perfected their skills.

They spent a lot of time doing these things. In fact, they had been building these skills and building on these skills far before God called them to build the tabernacle.

In other words, before they were given a quote-unquote holy calling for their art, they were making art. And God was pleased enough with their artistic expressions that he called them into this sacred task of creating the tabernacle.

[26 : 12] So, I use the word sacred task because I actually want to point out that to distinguish between sacred art and secular art is a really terrible mistake. Art itself is amoral.

There's no such thing as Christian songs. I've never heard of a song that was dead and in need of a savior. People who sing songs are dead and in need of a savior. People are moral or immoral, but songs really can't be.

Paintings really can't be immoral in that sense. Certainly, paintings and songs and art pieces can be displeasing to God, but it's not the art piece itself that's sending.

It's the person who creates it. God is also, besides art that goes into our corporate meetings, God is also pleased with so-called secular art.

As long as it doesn't violate his character and standards, it's okay if it doesn't serve strictly church-related functions. Even secular art by non-believers is an exploration of the world that God has made, and it can serve us.

[27 : 24] It can serve to deepen our understanding of his work and his character. If creation itself is general revelation of God, art as an interpretation of the world around us and our reality can also serve us to enhance our experience of the general revelation and creation.

We're not limited in our art forms to only images that have been used by the church, or only modes of communication that have been used by the church.

We don't have to only stick with images of the cross on flannel board. We can get outside of that a little bit. We don't have to only sing hymns. We don't have to only sing the new praise choruses.

We're not stuck with cheap evangelistic skits if we want to get into theater. We can make movies and go to movies. If we're crying out loud, we can go to movies.

All of the possibilities that art provides are open to us, and God wants us to use the arts to flourish in all of the great artistic potential that they possess so that we can discover the possibilities that creativity affords us for coming to a deeper knowledge of our creator.

[28 : 37] The second principle is that God loves all kinds of art. The third principle is that God has high standards for art. This is the part that I tried to scare Alex with, but he had no reason to be scared.

God has high standards for art. Now, post-modernity says that there are no absolutes, and especially not in art. Post-modernity really wants to divorce our idea from absolutes, and especially when it comes to art.

But God says that he has an absolute standard for art. So this is where we really become divergent in our thinking about art, if we hadn't already, from the world.

God says that there is an absolute standard for art. God's aesthetic standards include three major things that we're going to discuss at a little more length. They're goodness, truth, and beauty.

You can see these in scripture. First, goodness, and I don't mean ethical goodness, although that's certainly included. I think we're all kind of on the same page there.

[29 : 47] If you paint something that is unethical, if you sing something that is unethical, if you sculpt something unethical, that obviously is not going to please God. What I'm talking about when I say goodness more has to do with the quality of the art itself.

Verse 11 of our text, we see that they are to do all according to all that God has commanded. Now, some background that you have to know about these two artists is that they were the best artists in all of the land. We know that because God gives them instruction to teach others who come along to help them, because they are supremely qualified, they're the masters of art. So God calls these men who are the best at art, and then he says, do according to all that I've commanded you. And if we read the preceding chapters, we find out that God's standards and his commandments are those of perfection.

Colossians 3.23 says, whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord. And 1 Corinthians 10.31 says, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. If we're going to do anything, whether it's art or otherwise, we ought to do it the best that it can be done, because an infinitely powerful God resides within us.

[31 : 09] So if we're going to do things in such a way as to show that he is empowering us to do them, we better do it well. Because if we don't do it well, then what we're showing is our God's not really that great, he's not that powerful to work through us.

So God's standard then for art includes goodness. The Bible actually says very little about the specific skills required for particular art forms.

It would take a long time, and new art forms, I would imagine and hope, are always going to be kind of emerging as technology changes. Moses couldn't have written about digital art, because digital would have been a really weird word for him to even use, right?

So the Bible is going to lay out some principles for us as far as the specific skills required. The measure of goodness, and if you're really into art and thinking about art, here's a good way to think about measuring goodness or quality in art.

The measure of goodness comes from creation itself, whether that's the sights or the sounds that are involved in putting together the art. general revelation gives us also a revelation of quality that's intrinsic to the materials used to make the art.

[32 : 25] So I'm going to give you an example. If I were to draw a stick figure and say, is this a good picture, is this a good sketch of me? You would have to say no, because it doesn't look like me.

See how God has generally revealed some truth just in your ability to perceive what I look like compared to what my sketch would look like. So goodness has to do with how in line with the created order and created materials are being used.

Music is another example that we won't get into the science of music, but the sound waves that travel together, we can hear when music is bad, because the sound waves don't harmonize, they don't match up.

You can tell when somebody's off beat or out of key or off pitch, because the physical materials used for creating music are constant.

Now, good artists, even if we can't always tell the difference between good and bad art, good artists always know. It is intrinsic, it's not necessarily objective, but it's not as subjective as a lot of artists would like you to think either.

[33 : 41] Good artists know the difference between good and bad art. Now, God, being the primary creator, the chief artist, he also knows the difference between good art and bad art, and that's a biblical principle we can see over and over throughout the scriptures, that he knows the difference between good and bad art, and that he has a taste for excellence.

So while the particular standards for particular art forms are outlined for us, the general standard is that God desires that goodness be a part of our art or excellence be employed.

The second standard is truth. Our art can't just be good, it can't just look like what we say it's supposed to look like or sound like it should sound, but it also has to be true.

We can see that outlined pretty well in the tabernacle. If we look at some of the art pieces in the tabernacle, there was a golden ark, and it reminded us of God's royal throne.

It was a bronze basin, and it reminded us of his power to wash away sin. The tabernacle itself was where God dwelt among his people, and it reminded us that God with us, Emmanuel, would save us.

[34 : 55] The tabernacle, and all the art pieces in the tabernacle, pointed us to truths about God. another way to say that is the art in the tabernacle was in service to the truth.

I'm going to hopefully make this a little more clear. Postmodern and modern art may be true. A lot of it just completely ignores the possibility of truth, but it may be true in describing the painful or difficult or absurd aspects of humanity, but it's only true in part because it ignores the reality of the possibility of redemptive work.

Postmodern art says there is no God, there is no truth, there is no redemption. This is it. Well, that isn't true. So even though you may look at a painting of someone suffering and think people do suffer, that's only part of the story.

If that painting doesn't point my attention towards the possibility of redemption, then it's only told me part of the truth, which makes it untrue. Now, art is an interpretation, as we've said, of reality.

You can't get away from that. Art is always an interpretation of reality. But if art leaves out the reality of God and the reality of his plans, then it isn't fully the truth.

[36 : 17] True art always tells the whole story. It points us to this ultimate truth of redemption. John 14, 6, Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me.

Why does he make that connection with the truth and coming to the Father through him? It's because the two are inseparable that Christ is the truth. If I'm going to tell the truth, I have to include Christ in my discussion.

And Christ's primary function on earth was to glorify God by redeeming his church. So good art must be true.

And finally, it must be beautiful. Now, how do we know that God cares about beauty and art? I'm glad I don't have to spend a ton of time talking about this because Chris is going to talk about it next week as he discusses Christ and creation.

But if we read Genesis 1 and then walk outside with our senses open, see what kind of a world God has created, see what kind of work he does when he's creating, then what more proof do we need of the fact that God cares about beauty?

[37 : 24] He has made things beautifully. God created man in his own image. And up to that point, it's very interesting, you should go and look at Genesis 1. All we know about God, if we just open the Bible, first page, and I never read another word of it, when God creates man, all we know about him is that he exists, he's self-aware, and he's creative.

That's it. And he has a lot of power to create, right? But God makes man in his own image, and all we know about God's image is that he exists, he's self-aware, and he's creative.

We learn a lot more about God's characteristics throughout the rest of scripture, but certainly one of the primary ways that we are like God is that we are creative. If we're meant to display his image when we create, then we'd better care a whole lot about beauty, because he has shown us that he cares a lot about beauty when he creates.

And if we look back to our example of the tabernacle, there are tons and tons of really fine touch kind of elements that are just simply aesthetic, which teaches us that God cares about function and form.

Something that the church has gotten really wrong. We say, does it work? Okay, that's what we'll stick with. Well, God cares about more than just the function of things. He cares about the form. An example is the table of showbread.

[38 : 44] It was really ornately trimmed. And God didn't even give specific instructions as to how it ought to be decorated, but just that it should be. So we see that it's trimmed in gold and that there are artistic designs that should.

We don't even know what that looks like because God didn't give specific instructions for how the artist should do it. But it would have sufficed just to say, put a table in there. Like, this table would have done fine.

Could have held the bread, holds our bread. But God instead instructs that it be beautiful. We've already talked about singing versus using many instruments to accompany singing.

We can apply an aesthetic of beauty to any artistic or creative task that God's calling us to, and we should because one of the characteristics or qualifications of art that he's given to us is that it be beautiful.

Now, truth and beauty always go together in art as far as Christians are concerned. So we can tell the truth about sin, but we have to include the truth about redemption.

[39 : 52] That's the beautiful part of our art. We can talk about the beauty of our faith, but we also have to include the truth about sin and fallenness.

We have to have both elements in our art, and that's something that churches really struggle with. We want to talk about all the great things that God has done, but we don't talk about the hardness of being a Christian.

I read this week that something like 90% of the Psalms are laments, and approximately 0% of modern Christian music is a lament. If we're going to be true to the calling of Scripture, then we need to include all of our experience in art.

art. So we find that God, in the Bible, has the characteristics of being good and being true and being beautiful. An art that pleases God is good, true, and beautiful.

So what we learn from that is that art must be in keeping with God's character to be pleasing to Him. Francis Schaeffer wrote a book called *Art in the Bible*, and he said that the minor theme of all Christian art is the lostness of humanity and the defeated and sinful side to the Christian's life.

[41 : 02] But that the major theme was the grace of God that gives meaning and purpose to life. And now we're going to move into our fourth characteristic, our fourth principle of art, as discussed just in the interest of time.

And so the final principle of art that we pull from Exodus 31 is that art exists for the glory of God.

Johann Sebastian Bach used to sign all of his works, SDG, which refers *Sola Deo Gloria*.

It's Latin for, to God alone be glory. Because he understood that his art was an offering to God. It was intended to please God.

So beauty, we talked a little bit about beauty. It does have its own intrinsic value. Some of the tabernacle art was not symbolic. It wasn't representative. We talked about that. It was abstract art. But it all served the higher purpose of drawing people's attention to the holiness, to a beautiful, redemptive God.

[42 : 07] When art exists only for its own sake, that's just as much idolatry as when we try to live our own lives for our own sake. And to prove that, we have Romans chapter 1, 24 and 25.

We talked about that recently in our study of Romans. Paul wrote, Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever.

Amen. So we have to keep this proper perspective on art, that it ought to serve to glorify God. When we begin to have art for its own sake, then we've elevated it above God and said, well, it exists for itself, God exists for himself.

Every detail of the tabernacle was a physical display of the glory of God, and our art should live up to that blueprint. It's important because a creation always tells you something about its creator. Because art works with the materials of God's creation, then we can convey with art a commitment to a good and loving and gracious and beautiful creator.

[43 : 23] Do you see that? Francis Schaeffer said, Christian art is the expression of the whole life of the whole person who is a Christian. What a Christian portrays in his art is the totality of life.

Now, I don't want some of you at this point, and I hope not, but some of you may be thinking, okay, it's a lot of information about art. I hope that you'll see that as image bearers of God, who is the chief creator, that creating is an inescapable part of our existence.

And that's certainly a takeaway from this sermon, that as we do anything artistic, from setting up the chairs in this room to arranging the furniture in our houses, some of us are great at silling.

My daughter's wearing a dress today that Heather Cheatham made. Some of us are really crafty and can work with wood. Anything that we do that's remotely artistic gives us an opportunity to portray the greatness and the glory and the beauty of God to the world around us.

So don't neglect the fact that we are all, in some degree, doing art, whether we're called to careers in art or whether we would call ourselves artists. artists. But in conclusion, I just have some final thoughts and maybe challenges to hopefully connect some of the dots.

[44 : 45] So if I've lost you, we're wrapping this up. Please come back to me. The first thing that I want to point out that we haven't talked about is that certain artists, just like Aholiab and Bezalel, certain artists are called to full-time careers in artistry.

Now, we all have specific callings on our lives and we all should take drastic measures to be obedient to our callings, just like we've seen.

God will provide for what we need to be obedient to Him. The church, likewise, should promote obedience. So as it relates to art, we should identify and encourage talent when we see it.

Some of you have probably seen like American Idol or America's Got Talent. Have you seen some of those people that come in to audition and they're just awful and they get shot down, I mean, like laughed at by the judges and like 90% of them say, well, my church thinks I'm a great singer.

Well, that's horrible of those churches. We ought to be identifying talent and promoting talent, encouraging talent to grow and to thrive. Furthermore, we ought to be honest with people about their talents and try to direct them to places where God is obviously gifting them.

[46 : 05] Finally, as a church, and as it relates to full-time artists, we ought to promote and fund, commission and distribute good art made by believers as a way of affirming the artist's calling, as a way of helping them to glorify God and being obedient, and as a way of ourselves being encouraged by the things that God's doing around us.

If you need a painting, get Sam Rayner to do the painting. Don't go to wherever you go, Hobby Lobby. If you need to have family portraits done, get Andy Truitt to take your pictures.

He's a great photographer. Encourage the people in this congregation who have artistic talents to use them for God's glory. Second, and we've spoken about this briefly, but as image bearers, we should all seek forms of artistic expression as ways to portray the goodness and the truth and the beauty of God in us and in the world.

Philip Rikin said, The church can help with this pursuit by serving as a community of encouragement that affirms the calling of artists and nurtures the artistic aspect of every human soul. Our hope here at Christ Family Church over the last several years has been to reverse the reformer's decision about art, to be propelled toward godliness in all parts of our life, including the arts, rather than just repelled away from sin.

We want to receive the things that he's given us to receive, redeem the things that he's given us to redeem. We want to stop this tendency among Christians to live according to our own inventions, hedge laws that reject things that God ultimately intends us to use for his glory.

[47 : 58] Becoming all things to all people has been a theme of this series. Paul says that, and he says, I've become all things to all people in order that some might be saved.

And as far as art is concerned, that looks like us becoming conversant about art. It looks like us preparing ourselves to engage in an increasingly artistic community around us.

Look at Dahlgonega, look at Gainesville, full of artists that we kind of have capped at arm's length. If we're going to be obedient to God's calling to engage our culture, well, our culture is full of artists.

And we need to be able to communicate with them the glory of God and the power of God for salvation in terms that they understand and modes that they connect with.

And to do this, we have to reverse the church's mindset that, whereas we might not say it, we treat artists like an unsavable people group.

[49 : 05] We need to begin to attract and engage artists with the gospel because no culture is beyond God's sovereign power to save. So I hope that you'll make it your prayer, as it has been my prayer, that God would use us as a community of believers, a community of creative people to save artists, to glorify himself in the art community, in the art culture, in order to begin redeeming art.

Because art's going down a terrible path to destruction. It's taking artists with it. But we have an opportunity as the church to reverse that and to inject hope into the art community.

So many Christians seem to have dismissed artists altogether and left their souls in such a dangerous state. So my prayer, and I hope it will be your prayer too, is that God would use us to reverse that.

Let's pray together.