

Beauty For Ashes - Introduction
Genesis 1: 28-30, Isaiah 61:1-3
Sept. 20, 2020

WARM-UP QUESTIONS:

1. What are your favorite parts of the fall months? How is this year different for you?
2. What feelings are you experiencing as we continue to be in the midst of the pandemic, natural disasters, civil unrest and political strife? What are your prayers to God like during these uncertain times?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Isaiah 61 is the anchor text for this sermon series, so take the time to slowly read through the entire chapter several times to receive God's word for us.
2. Who are the different agents and participants in Isaiah 61? How might the hearing of this chapter in its original context, the time of Jesus, and our present situation be unique and nuanced?
3. In verse 3, who might Isaiah be referring to as 'those who grieve in Zion'? Why are they grieving over?
4. What do these images bring to mind: crown, oil, and garment? What is the significance of each? How do the attributes of beauty, gladness and praise stand in contrast with ashes, mourning and despair? How is this transformation process accomplished?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What are you grieving about today? What reassurance and hope can this passage in Isaiah extend to you?
2. Reflecting on the feelings you expressed in the second warm-up question, how can these feelings lead you to repentance instead of despair? How can these 'ashes' turn into beauty in the midst of all these pains and chaos?
3. What should we, as the body of Christ, mourn and repent so that signs of comfort, healing, and good news might be seen in our world today?