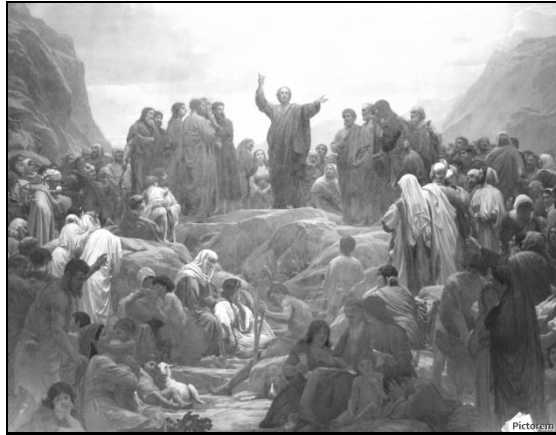


WABI SABI



Scripture:

Psalm 1

¹Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; ²but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. ³They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

⁴The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Luke 6:17-26

This is known as the "Sermon on the Plain"

¹⁷He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

²²"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.

²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

²⁴"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵"Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

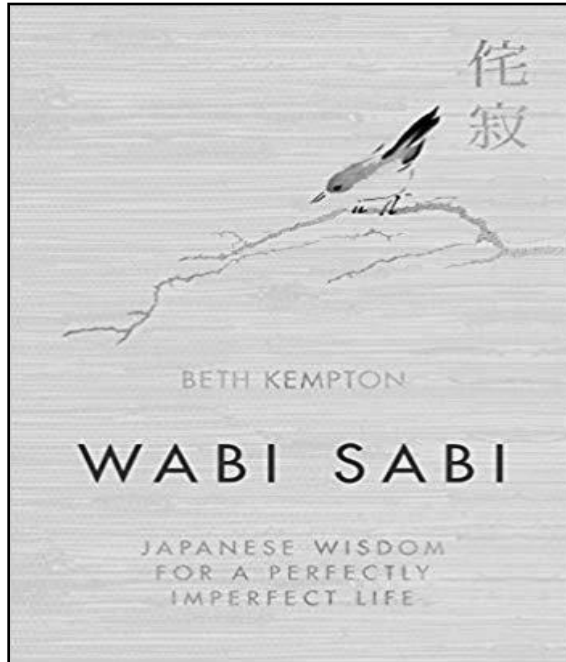
This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



WABI SABI

I was going to title this sermon “Blessings and Woes,” but then I found an article about ‘Must Read Books Recently Published.’

I was intrigued by one book titled *Wabi Sabi: Japanese Wisdom for a Perfectly Imperfect Life*.



The Japanese philosophy of Wabi Sabi is difficult to define. Basically, it is the beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. Wabi Sabi is the opposite of the Rat Race. It values stillness, simplicity and the evolving process of nature. Thoreau and Emerson would agree with its call to get rid of all that is unnecessary, get out into nature, and to stop being preoccupied with wealth, status, power, and luxury. Instead, enjoy the unencumbered life. It is a way of seeing and experiencing the world from your heart, a recognition that imperfection is the natural state of everything including ourselves.

JAPANESE CULTURE

I have a daughter-in-law who is a mixture of Japanese/Korean/American. Many of her family still live in Japan including her grandmother, father and brother. My son, Ryan, has fallen in love with Japan. He can speak the language which comes in handy when they go for a visit every year.

Their Wabi Sabi culture is not talked about. It is a foundational appreciation of the natural state of things, finding beauty in things simple, humble, and imperfect or damaged.

JESUS' TEACHINGS

Jesus had a Wabi Sabi like perspective on the universe. He was teaching this kind of philosophy in today's Sermon on the Plain which is expanded in Matthew as the Sermon on the Mount.

In the ancient times of Jesus, those who were rich, boastful, and famous were perceived as being more blessed by God than those whose lives were full of struggles. Jesus was determined to correct this false perspective on the poor and suffering.

LUKE – A DOCTOR AND A NEW GREEK CHRISTIAN

This passage is in the Gospel of Luke which has been called the “social gospel” because of its sympathy with the poor and disenfranchised.

The words in Luke reflect the perspective of a doctor and a new Greek Christian. He wrote the book of Luke around the year sixty, and the book the Acts of the Apostles he wrote between the years eighty and ninety.

As a physician, Luke had a personal appreciation for the healing ministry of Jesus. He also accompanied Paul on some of his mission journeys and believed that the way of Jesus was the way of salvation, which he defined as “healing” for the world.

Today's Luke 6 passage explains the poor, hungry and mournful are the blessed ones on earth and the rich, full, comfortable, and famous are the woeful people of the world.

WOE

We don't use that word ‘woe’ very often these days. So, I was wondering what do we say? How do we interpret ‘woe’ today?

Did you know that “Oy ve!” in Yiddish translates to mean “Woe is me!”

But Jesus is using the phrase, “Woe to you...” as a warning, like “better watch out!” He is saying, “Be careful! The comforts of being rich, happy, full, and famous may be your downfall.”

Today I believe Jesus would add to his Sermon on the Plain:

- Woe to those who use tax money for building physical and political walls to keep out those who are suffering.
- Woe to those who allow children to be pulled from the arms of their mothers who brought them to our country to keep them safe.
- Woe to those who believe they are better and more deserving of life’s blessings than those born in poor countries.
- Woe to those who ignore that our precious earth is suffering irreparable damage from the use of fossil fuels and plastics.

JESUS’ FIRST SERMON

This reading today is Jesus’ first sermon. He used the teaching opportunity to remind the people to approach with care and not turn away those who are mourning, those who are poor, those who suffer, because their care is all our responsibility.

Yet it may be hard for some of us to approach people who are suffering because we don’t want to do or say the wrong thing. But here God is saying to be with them and give them hope for a good future.

This passage begins with: “Jesus came down and stood with them on a level place.” Jesus is the great leveler. His first sermon was meant to do that as well.

Nadia Bolz-Weber says that Jesus was God’s beatitude. (God’s blessing) to the weak in a world that admires only the strong.

Jesus uses the teachings in the Beatitudes to level out the playing field among those

who think they are above others just because their lives have more comforts. He says we are not alone in our sufferings and we are never forgotten by God. He levels us with God’s kingdom which has many of the characteristics of Wabi Sabi, which is founded on the wisdom that we all lead perfectly imperfect lives and God loves us no matter what.

God wants our help to create a kingdom of beauty that appreciates all of creation, not just what our current society values as admirable. The most important part of the kingdom is that we have love for one another even if the other is not like us, and seemingly unlovable. It is a kingdom of authenticity and courage to call out the injustices in the world and in our nation.

STOICISM

I first read about the philosophy of Stoicism in seminary. A book about one of the founders of Stoicism, Seneca, was required reading at Princeton. The beliefs are similar to Wabi Sabi in that it encourages an attitude of acceptance and harmony with events that happen to you, no matter how imperfect.

A video was shown to the congregation.

<https://www.bbc.com/reel/video/p06wv1q3/a-stoic-s-guide-to-happiness>

Wabi Sabi and Stoicism and Christianity all call us to do our best to meet the needs of those around us. They agree that we are all connected, and our over-abundance of consumerism and materialism causes suffering and disrupts the natural flow of creation.

LONG LIFE

Japan currently has sixty-eight-thousand plus centenarians, people who are one-hundred-plus years old. Japan’s healthy diet of mostly fish, vegetables, and rice and the Wabi Sabi life philosophy seems to be helping them live longer. One centenarian said when he feels he is going off track from living in the “Wabi Sabi,” he slows down, gets out in nature and breathes deeply.

Another key component in Wabi Sabi is to feel every emotion that comes along. Be present to all your emotions and let them guide you.

The author of the Wabi Sabi book sat with a wise elderly woman and asked her to tell him the key to her healthy aging. She said, "When you are grateful for what you have and share it with others, what you need comes to you."

Despite the aches and pains that accompany aging, growing old can be a gift.

Simplify everything, find happiness where you are, and only worry about the things that really matter. Then remember to be gentle with yourself and others. Blessed are the Wabi Sabi which includes all of us who are perfectly imperfect! Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen



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