

“Beautiful Dreamer” A sermon based on Genesis 37:1-4; 12-28; Psalm 105:1-6;16-22;45b and Romans 10:5-15 delivered on Sunday, August 9, 2026 by the Rev. Alison Dutton Jacobs at the First Congregational UCC of Onekama, Michigan.

When Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice wrote “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” which was first performed in 1968 to a less than enthusiastic audience, they could not have known just how popular it would become. It wasn’t until after the success, amid controversy, of their Rock Opera “Jesus Christ Superstar” in 1971 that the Joseph musical was remembered and revitalized. Its original Broadway production ran for 747 performances and there have been more than 20,000 performances since in various venues. I, myself, was a co-director and actor in a performance of Joseph at church camp in Maine in 2002.

One of the best-known songs from the musical is “Any Dream Will Do.” Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery because they were upset that the dreams that he was having were indicating that he would be of higher rank than them and that they would need him to help them in the future. They felt he was arrogant and so they were going to kill him but instead sold him into slavery after they had relieved him of his beautiful special coat which showed he was favored by their father. The song, which actually means that Joseph is hopeful for his future even while in captivity highlights the fact that his being able to interpret dreams will be his eventual saving grace. With his “coat of many colors” Joseph was a “beautiful dreamer,” indeed!

Beauty is a concept in the Bible which is more than a description of outward looks. Beauty is tied to God’s character, inner goodness, and holy actions. It reflects God’s glory, the value of the heart and the transformation of pain into hope. Our Navajo brothers and sisters reflect this idea in what they call “Hozho” which is

a sacred philosophy and way of life centered on balance, harmony, and an interconnected respect for all creation. It is called the “Beauty Way.” Navajo “Hozho” is like the concept of the Hebrew word “Shalom.” Neither language limits its definition to “peace,” which is too weak a concept for what it really means. There is a conceptual wholeness of being that is denoted by these words. Beauty is not a one-dimensional set concept, it is not a noun or adjective, it is a verb.

The Isaiah scripture that Paul quotes in his letter to the Romans (10:15) at the end of our passage this morning

“¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

is a perfect example of the Navajo “Beauty Way” and the Hebrew’s idea of what is beautiful. The passage comes from Isaiah 52:7:

*“⁷ How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
‘Your God reigns!’”*

These beautiful feet are beautiful because of **what they do**, not because of their outward appearance. There is an old adage which traces back to the 14th century, “Beauty is, as beauty does” and this is why beauty is a verb! The Navajos do not just call their goal “Beauty” but “The Beauty **Way**” because beauty must be active.

Our Psalm this morning, Psalm 105, retells the story of Joseph and the wonders of his actions in Egypt in response to God’s leading. Joseph is released from prison because he is a “beautiful dreamer,” because he can interpret dreams to bring them into action. The very God-given talent that got him into the mess with his brothers is now being used to save the whole region from hunger. Although he

no longer has the outward appearance of beauty in his many-colored coat, he is performing beautiful acts for humankind. His beauty is a verb!

There is an Aesop's fable that speaks simply and eloquently to this dynamic:

A Fox and a Leopard, resting lazily after a generous dinner, amused themselves by disputing about their good looks. The Leopard was very proud of his glossy, spotted coat and made disdainful remarks about the Fox, whose appearance he declared was quite ordinary.

The Fox prided himself on his fine bushy tail with its tip of white, but he was wise enough to see that he could not rival the Leopard in looks. Still he kept up a flow of sarcastic talk, just to exercise his wits and to have the fun of disputing. The Leopard was about to lose his temper when the Fox got up, yawning lazily.

"You may have a very smart coat," he said, "but you would be a great deal better off if you had a little more smartness inside your head and less on your ribs, the way I am. That's what I call real beauty."

Motto: A fine coat is not always an indication of an attractive mind.

In their book Good Enough: 40ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie speak about beauty as a form of idolatry. By referring to the story of the golden calf in the wilderness, they say this:

“We are not apostates. We are idolaters. We fall in love with things that are almost true. We start taking our gold and pouring it into a cast that we can shape with our own hands, one that inspires us and challenges us, but is not, necessarily given to us by the one true God. Afterall what is idolatry except beautiful things that do not transform us?” (p. 25)

Joseph's beautiful coat of many colors did not make him good. His coping with the hardships of captivity were what transformed him into what God had intended for him all along. The beautiful dreams with which God gifted him were what transformed him and the world around him.

