Intro:

We are in the unit, Arts & Culture, working on the first section which distinguishes the Biblical Worldview from the fallen worldview.

To review:

I. Views of beauty

- The Bible establishes a cultural triad of truth, goodness, and beauty reflecting the perfections of God
- Part of the creation mandate involves arranging creation in accordance with truth, goodness, and beauty
- Postmodernism denies or relativizes beauty
- The world sees truth, goodness, and beauty as independent rather than inter-related qualities

II. Truth, Goodness, and Beauty in the Eye of the Beholder

> This point is primarily for defining these terms.

A. Truth in the mind of the beholder: Objective vs. Subjective Truth

B. Goodness in the heart of the beholder: Moral absolutes vs. Relativistic convenience

C. Beauty in the eye of the beholder: Beauty is no accident; Beauty calls attention to transcendent realities (calls our attention to something significant)

III. Norms for the Arts

A. Biblical basis for holding to norms for the arts

1. Key verse: Phil 4.8:

> **Philippians 4.8** Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

> "This verse underpins a Christian view of the arts. It provides a biblical reason to take truth, goodness, and beauty as norms." [Ward, 393]

2. The function of "lists of virtues"

a. Such lists are found in non-Biblical literature as well

b. Biblical virtue lists are meant <u>differently</u> than non-biblical lists

   1) The apostle promotes a Christian <u>lifestyle</u> by his list

   2) Christian virtues <u>interlock</u>, they are <u>interdependent</u>

   > Have you ever watched a movie you regretted seeing? Why? The things depicted on the screen may have been "true to life" but were they also "honorable"?
   >
   > "It dishonors sex to take it out of the marriage bed and put it on a plasma screen (Heb. 13:4)." [Ward, 393]
   >
   > "It disrespects the sad necessity of the sword in a fallen world (Rom. 13:4) when people watch blood and gore for kicks." [Ward, 393]

   3) Modern Christianity is aware of truth in popular art, but is less aware of <u>honor</u> and <u>purity</u>.

   > Christians can see the pantheism in *Star Wars*, or the violence of *The Hunger Games*, but instead of shunning such art, look for "the Gospel" in a worldly film promoting a worldly worldview.

3. Analysis of the list of virtues in Phil 4.8

   a. Truth <u>heads</u> the list

   b. Goodness <u>sums up</u> the next three qualities (honorable, right, pure)

   c. Beauty <u>follows</u> (lovely, of good repute [good report, ᴋᴊᴠ])

   > "By *lovely* Paul appears to mean something that is visually beautiful; *[good repute]* probably refers to beautiful, well-chosen speech." [Ward, 394]
   >
   > What Paul has given in Philippians 4:8 is a set of creational norms by which all cultural pursuits can be evaluated, and they boil down to truth, goodness, and beauty. This triad provides a biblical norm for evaluating

all cultural endeavors. Let's look at examples of truth, goodness, and beauty in culture and the arts. [Ward, 394]
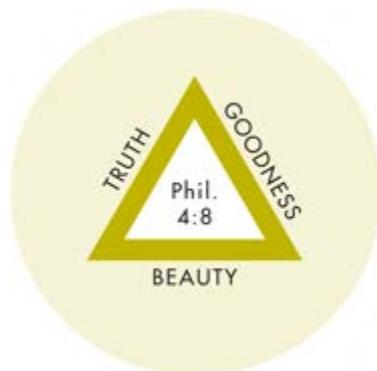
B. Biblical norm of Truth

   1. Foundational concepts

      a. Jesus is the truth (Jn 14.6)

      b. Satan is the father of lies, there is no truth in him (Jn 8.44-47)

      c. God's Word is truth (Ps 119.160)

      d. God's people are to desire and pursue truth (Ps 51.6, Pr 23.23)

   2. Truth in literature

      a. Good literature, even fiction, can open our eyes to truth (2 Sam 12.1-7)

      b. Jesus taught truth with his parables, which were fictional instruction stories (e.g. Mt 18.21-35)

      c. Examples from non-inspired literature:

         1) The lesson of balancing reason and feeling – Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*

         2) The danger of rash vows – Shakespeare, *King Lear*

         3) The folly and danger of sudden wealth – Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

      d. Readers should experience stories as stories, but on reflection, should also discern truths (and falsehoods).

3. Truth in music

   a. Music may not <u>seem</u> to be true or false

   b. However, music communicates at a deep level – and can do so <u>truthfully</u> or <u>falsely</u>

   > Ugly music is ugly because it lies. It suppresses … the truth and goodness of creation and providence. Sad music pleases us by speaking truthfully (in tones and rhythms) about the effect of the fall and the law's curse on creation.… Happy music moves us the way it does by speaking truthfully about grace and hope in a new creation. Only music's potential for communicating the good and the true explains why we find such succor [assistance, relief] in it.
   > [Paul Munson and Joshua Farris Drake, *Art and Music: A Student's Guide*, ed. David Dockery (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 85.]

4. Truth in Visual Arts

   a. Visual art is also capable of <u>communicating</u> truth or lies

   b. Examples:

      1) Leni Riefenstahl, considered a great filmmaker, made a film *Triumph of the Will* as <u>Nazi</u> propaganda, starring <u>Hitler</u>

      2) Jacque Louis David painted *The Death of Marat*, which incorporated several <u>lies</u>

   a) Marat was a member of the French Revolution, an advocate of the Reign of Terror

   b) David painted him sympathetically, in a realistic style but omitting key facts

   i) Presence of the murderess, who did not flee the scene

   ii) Knife on floor instead of buried in his chest

   iii) Skin unblemished instead of mottled by a skin ailment (reason he spent much time in his bath, for relief)

c) The painting was used as a propaganda piece by
supporters of the Revolution

3) "Drip Paintings" of Jackson Pollock – communicate that
<u>chance</u> rules the universe
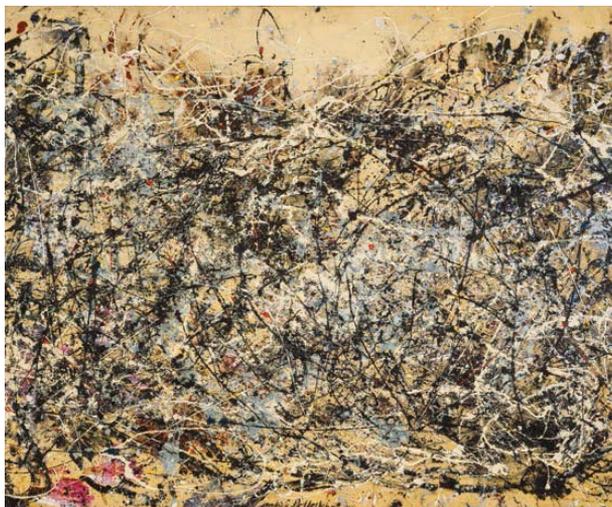
4) Nihonga paintings of Makoto Fujimura, a Christian, whose
abstract work reflects <u>divine</u> <u>order</u>

More next week…