

The Choice for Beauty an essay by Ashley Morrison, ~~Robert~~

It's a common enough phrase, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Such a simple set up of words, but do we ever stop to ponder the depth of the reality magnified here? I used to be so caught up in my pain and the failures of my life that beauty was a tainted thing to me. I had this hope that all would get better but looking back I realize I just expected it to happen like some sort of catalyst event without any effort on part Now I know better though I still fall into bad habits ingrained within me. I try to shake it off because regardless of it all beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

This being said, I've been locked up for 6 years since I was 17. Lately cynicism has been trying to take root and it's getting harder to remember to look at the beauty. How painful it is to realize hope has turned her back on me as beauty fades to the background. Each has become this slippery thing as I watch fights break out amongst inmates while I get cussed out by C.O.'s for asking simple questions. But I choose to embrace the struggle of holding on otherwise what use is the existence? I am pushed down, brushed aside, conveniently ignored and forgotten. So much to remind me of a horrid past in this place of present imprisonment...and yet the choice is up to me. It's up to all of us in here whether in white or grey, even out there. Do I choose to turn my eye to beauty or the beasts?

So with it being a personal choice I will admit I oftenly choose wrong, but thank God for redirecting me to beauty. Better yet the beauty of Him. The beauty in a sunrise. The beauty in a lightning flash as thunder rolls, the sky so bright. The beauty of a mother getting mail from a child after years, months, days of silence. The beauty of a simple smile seen not often enough in here. The beauty of restoration. Those moments of genuine laughter with genuine friends, all rare in this place of somberness and suffocation is like stitching one to the devil. It's a moment that causes you to think "let me hold on to this forever, this feeling, these people, just this." Aren't these the moments to live for? To fight for? The slipperiness of hope, of beauty in such a place sometimes locks into place so crystal clear I can't help but smile, and hold on tight within my heart to what is. In such moments the past doesn't define me, the future is full of possibilities, but I'm living in the moment.

Therefore, being in the now is being fully engaged. What better way to do this than to look for the beauty of every second in everyday? I cannot control when a bunkie/cellmate chooses to bully or belittle me. I cannot control when the C.O.'s choose to talk down to me and kick me while I'm down. I cannot control what today brings...but I can control my choices throughout the day. I can control how I act in response to another persons actions/choices. If I truly decide to see beauty as it is, where it is oh how much cleaner and more free I would feel and be in this place of filth and confinement! So I try. What if I choose the responses, actions that make life more beautiful for others to behold? Then I wouldn't just be fighting for myself but others, and if there is anything that I've learned being locked up it's that everybody matters and is worth the fight.

Yet, we come back to the beginning of the fact that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Choices that make the world beautiful may never be beholden. I make them anyways. Choosing to point out such beauty to others may get slapped down. I point it out anyways. In a place of pessimism as cynicism tries to entangle me the bright spots of beauty are illuminated

to an even greater magnitude, because when does light shine brightest but inside darkness? When does beauty stand out but amongst the usly? When I have the choice,as I do every day Lord, help me to choose you, to be the eye that beholds beauty always.

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