BEAUTIFUL

Inspired by the Christina Aguilera Song
Week #3 of a 5-Week "Songs of Life" Series
Rev. Richard Maraj
Sunday, Nov. 15, 2026

LYRICS

Every day is so wonderful
Then suddenly it's hard to breathe
Now and then I get insecure
From all the pain
I'm so ashamed

I am beautiful no matter what they say
Words can't bring me down
I am beautiful in every single way
Yes, words can't bring me down, oh no
So don't you bring me down today

To all your friends you're delirious
So consumed in all your doom
Trying hard to fill the emptiness
The pieces gone, left the puzzle undone
Is that the way it is?

You are beautiful no matter what they say
Words can't bring you down, oh no
You are beautiful in every single way
Yes, words can't bring you down, oh no
So don't you bring me down today

No matter what we do
No matter what we say
We're the song inside the tune
Full of beautiful mistakes
And everywhere we go
The sun will always shine
And tomorrow we might wake on the other side

'Cause we are beautiful no matter what they say
Yes, words won't bring us down, no, no
We are beautiful in every single way
Yes, words can't bring us down, oh no
So don't you bring me down today

MESSAGE

How many people have ever felt insecure about some aspect of your body and wish it was a little different; a little more beautiful? You know: bigger eyes, thinner thighs … something like that. How many people have ever had someone say something to you that was negative or insulting, and it kind of hurt your feelings and kind of triggered more insecurities? Anybody? Okay. And how many people have ever felt judged or criticized for a decision you made about living your own life? Anybody have that experience?

Comedian Bob Newhart once said, *"I don't like country music, but I don't mean to condescend to those who do. And for the people who like country music, condescend means to put down."* [Congregants laugh]

We are in Week #3 of our five-week "Songs of Life" series, you know, where I use a famous song, a favorite song, and extract a spiritual message for us. This particular series, I decided to choose one-word songs. Week #1 was "Honesty" by Billy Joel. Week #2 last week was John Lennon's "Imagine."

And today we're doing Christine Aguilera's song, "Beautiful." It came out in 2002. Can you believe 25 years old that song is? That's almost hard to believe! It also won the Grammy in 2004 for Best Female Performance. Interesting.

Christina Aguilera did not write that song. That song was actually written by Linda Perry of the rock band Four Non-Blondes. And she wrote it for herself; for her own insecurities. And so, Christina Aguilera came over to her house. They were working on something from an album called "Stripped." It was the first time they ever met, and she played her this song, and she loved it so much, Christina played the song and asked Linda if she could record it. And she was a bit hesitant because she thought it was incongruent to have somebody singing about insecurities that looked so beautiful. And then she realized that was the perfect person. to actually sing the song about insecurities.

And so, of course, it became a huge hit. Number #2 on the charts. I mean, just a great and powerful song. And this song really is not just about physical appearance. It's a message about self-worth and self-acceptance. It's a message about believing in yourself and your inner beauty. It's about the courage to be yourself, and the importance of refusing to allow what other people say -- other people's opinions -- to let that determine how we feel about ourselves. And so, we are going to look at four messages from this song.

And let me just start with the first verse. It says:

Don't look at me …

Every day is so wonderful. Then suddenly, it's hard to breathe. Now and then I get insecure From all the pain. I'm so ashamed.

And she's really mentioning the fact that we have days where we don't feel so beautiful. We don't have great hair days. There are times we feel insecure and inadequate; that we feel like we're way off our game and we feel some shame and unworthiness. That is an aspect of what we all go through, and how to handle it is an important thing.

So. the first thing is to **BELIEVE IN OUR OWN WORTH.** You know, studies show that the absolute most important key in being successful in any endeavor is believing in ourselves. It is the number one factor of if we will succeed and prosper in our lives.

One of my favorite cartoons that I've mentioned a few times that I love is a kid sitting on Santa's lap. And the kid looks at him and he says, *"Do you believe in yourself?"*

And it's really an important question for all of us to ask ourselves. Do you believe in yourself? On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you believe in yourself if 10, of course, is the highest? You are beautiful! I mean, do you believe that that is the absolute truth of who you are?

And beautiful, not because of how you look. not because of what you've accomplished, not because of what other people think about you or because you're living a perfect life. Beautiful because there is a light that shines in you that no darkness can ever overcome. There is a divine light and spirit within you

that is always shining, always seeking to express more light, more love, and more goodness in all of its various forms. Do you believe in yourself that you are a divine being?

In the Book of Genesis 1, Verse 27, it says, *"So God created humankind in his image; in the image of God, he created them."* And to be created the image and likeness of God -- the Creative Intelligence and the Source of all things -- means that the light of the Divine is within us, and that there is no time that it is not in us.

And I really think that our level of worthiness is directly related to how connected and what sense of oneness that we feel with that great truth. How much time we spend in meditation, sitting in the silence, praying, being still is the thing that lifts us to that level of feeling worthy and believing in our own self-worth.

You know, within every single person, these spiritual qualities exist. Love. Do you believe that you are a source of love? Do you believe that in you is wisdom; that in you is strength; that in you is faith; that in you is understanding and peace and joy and life? I mean, these qualities are foundational of our spiritual nature and that we are here to express those qualities.

The greatest of those qualities, to me, really, quite frankly, is love. Because we are created in the image and likeness of God. And if God is love, we are created in the image and likeness of love. The greatest commandment is to love God; to love others as we love ourselves.

And the hardest love to practice and to demonstrate is loving ourselves. We have so much trouble truly accepting and loving and appreciating and celebrating who we are. We spend more time wishing we were different: wishing we looked different, acted different, or had more of this and less of that. It is really, really quite stunning how much.

And so, when we're running a little low in love, what we need to do is keep going back to the Source. Keep going back to knowing our oneness. Keep going back to our spiritual identity of being divine beings. And when we reconnect with that truth, that's when we begin to believe. That we don't have to use outside sources and outside measures to believe in ourselves. It is within us, and we need to recultivate and reconnect with it.

Believe in your own worth. Do you believe that you are worthy? And that's the first and most important thing. It is not about how we look. It's about how connected we feel and how much we express the love that is in us.

The next thing I think this song teaches us that's important is to **STOP COMPARING OURSELVES TO OTHERS.** Stop comparing ourselves to others. When I said that to believe is one of the best and most important things for success, one of the worst things for us -- our peace and happiness -- is comparing ourselves. Comparing ourselves with other people in terms of looks, in terms of money, in terms of success actually makes us feel more inadequate. It makes us feel more self-*doubt* and more dissatisfaction.

And we all -- everybody -- compares themselves to someone/to other people from time to time. It can be good in small doses. It can help us, you know -- whether it's in school or at work or social media or wherever it is, it can be. But then studies show it can actually -- if you do it habitually and consistently -- it can actually affect your self-esteem, your mental health, and your overall well-being.

I heard there's a study that, for Facebook -- when people look at other people on Facebook all the time -- they actually feel worse. Because it's like, *"Look how much fun they're having. Look how much money they have. Look how much they're traveling. Look how much they're this, that, this."* And we feel insecure and we feel like failures because we compare ourselves to them.

And so, one of the most important things that helps us is to get to a place of self-acceptance. To realize where we are and to be at peace with who we are and where we are and what we do and who we are hanging with. Self-acceptance is about making peace with parts of ourselves and our lives that we don't particularly like.

And one of the most important messages in this song is that **we've got to learn to accept ourselves rather than constantly trying to be something different than we are.** You know, self-acceptance is the willingness to embrace ourselves: our strengths, our weaknesses, our accomplishments, our mistakes, our imperfections, our personality, and even the parts of ourselves that we sometimes wish were different. To accept all of it.

And so, here's what it says. It says: I may not be everything I want to be, and I may not have everything figured out. But I am worthy of love, respect, and acceptance exactly as I am today.

Acceptance isn't about giving up on ourselves. It is actually about refusing. And it's not about refusing to grow, but it's choosing to grow in regard of where we are right now. And the only way to be able to grow from where we are is to be honest about where we are. And to be at peace with where we are right here and now.

So, is there any area in your life that you're comparing yourself to other people? And is there any area in your life, like that one, where we know we need to take time to make peace with that and find acceptance in who we are just the way we are right now?

The third thing the song teaches us is to **DON'T LET THE WORDS OF OTHERS DEFINE US.** I'll bet you if we all sat and thought about how much time we have spent in our lives thinking about what other people are thinking about us, or what other people said about us, it would be a chunk of time.

Growing up, I remember my mom saying sometimes, *"What would the neighbors think?"* We would think about what the neighbors might think. I mean, you could be thinking about*, "What would my family think?" "What would my friends think?" "What would the kids in high school think?" "What's that girl I'm dating? What is she thinking? Does she like me?"* I mean, we have all these things that we keep thinking about what other people might be thinking.

You know, we spend so much time and energy trying to become someone we think other people will like that we forget to appreciate who we are right now. Right here and now, we're pretty smoking. We're pretty amazing. And yet, we're always thinking what other people are thinking and wishing that we were something other than we are right now.

Every single one of us in our lives will get criticized and judged and rejected by other people. And sometimes there'll be voices in the head of those people and all the things that they said. All kinds of other folks and other opinions are around us all the time. Even Bob Newhart has an opinion about people who like country music or not.

But the worst part is: is when those voices in our heads of other people become the voice in our\ own minds. Where we adopt and begin to accept them and parrot them and repeat them and believe them to be our truth and our reality and our identity.

"I will not let someone else's judgment determine how I feel about myself."

"I will not let someone else's judgment determine how I feel about myself."

Let's say it together: *[with congregants] "I will not let someone else's judgment determine how I feel about myself."*

The opinions of anyone cannot take away the beauty and the truth that is already within us.

You know, it's kind of interesting. Like, we could hear 20 compliments in a day. People saying, "*Oh, that was a really good presentation."* Or, *"Hey, you're looking really good."* Or blah, blah, blah. Twenty things. Then they say one. And it could be, *"Have you put on some weight?"* And it ruins the entire evening. Or the only thing our mind thinks about that night is that one thing that they said.

Why do we allow other people's opinions to have such an impact on us. The song says it brings us down. We allow it to bring us down.

What in your life have you allowed to bring you down recently? And the truth is: that's not our identity. That's not our reality. That's not who we are. That's someone's opinion. And what we do in those situations is get back to the truth of who we are: that we are spiritual beings. We are created in the image and likeness of divine love. And other people's judgment is not the truth of who we are.

And so, whenever we hit those bumps, we always have to get back to Source. We always have to get back to the truth of who we are and connect with that Oneness.

"I will not let someone else's judgment determine how I feel about myself."

One more time: *[with congregants] "I will not let someone else's judgment determine how I feel about myself."*

And the last one is to **RECOGNIZE THE BEAUTY IN EVERYONE**. There is beauty in everyone. Jesus says, *"You are the light of the world."* Notice Jesus does not say, *"You might be the light of the world if enough of people approve of you."* He's saying you are – are, in the present. You are the light of the world.

Your light doesn't disappear when someone doesn't see it. Our light doesn't disappear when we sometimes forget and don't see it. We are spiritual beings. And we have the capacity for growth and greater awareness and change and healing and beginning again. We are in a process of unfolding and growing.

And, yes, sometimes we won't make those mistakes. Sometimes we won't see the light not only in others, but even in ourselves. Instead of, *"I'm not good enough,"* we can say, *"I am worthy of love and good in all of its various forms."*

You know, instead of saying, *"I've made too many mistakes,"* we can say, *"I am growing through every experience."*

Instead of, *"What will people think?",* we can say, *"I choose to live from my spiritual truth."*

Sometimes the person that judges us the worst and the harshest is the person looking at ourselves in the mirror. You know, we can wonderfully and compassionately say to other people that everything's going to be all right, and yet we have a hard time forgiving ourselves.

And we can tell a friend, *"Hey, don't worry. Everybody makes mistakes!"* And then we make a mistake, and we flog ourselves for months, weeks, sometimes years because we messed up. You know, we tell someone, *"You deserve happiness."* And then, when it comes to ourselves, we think we've got to earn it, and it'll be quite a while before we earn it. We tell others, *"Let go!"* And yet something happens, and we carry the guilt and the blame and the shame.

Knowing our spiritual identity is greater than our mistakes. There is no mistake we could make that is greater than our spiritual identity, our spiritual power, our spiritual truth. We can take responsibility without condemning ourselves. We can learn from the past without living in the past. You know, we can acknowledge our shortcomings while still loving ourselves. We can learn how to support and grow in these more positive and more effective ways by remembering our true identity, by remembering our own worth.

When we show kindness to someone who's struggling, we are beautiful. We're expressing the inner beauty within ourselves. And when we're listening without judging, we are beautiful. We're expressing the inner beauty within ourselves. And when we stand up for someone who's being mistreated, we are expressing the beauty in ourselves.

Mother Teresa is known for being a saint, someone who literally dedicated their life to helping the poor and the sick and the forgotten. And she is absolute proof that beauty has nothing to do with money.

That beauty has nothing to do with all the status and all the things that we can sometimes measure them with.

And this is her formula: See the beauty in someone else. Look beyond whatever appearance of the most challenging person you've got in your life and just notice the quality of goodness that they have about them. And then speak that beauty out loud to them and let them know that they're talented or they're smart or they're good at this or that. And then do something kind for them. She says, just doing this simple little thing of recognizing beauty, speaking some beauty, and taking some action of beauty brings out our inner beauty.

An Amish father and his 15-year-old son were visiting a city shopping mall for the very first time. They stared in amazement at these two shiny silver walls that slid open and closed. The boy asked his father what that was. The father said, *"I have no idea."*

While they watched, an elderly woman in a wheelchair went between the doors, and the doors closed. And they watched the numbers light up, and then they lit up on the way down. And then out stepped a stunning 24-year-old blonde woman. And the father grabs a young boy's arm and leans into him and says, *"Go get your mother." [Congregants laugh]* That's a bad joke.

We are beautiful expressions of the Divine. May we look at ourselves with compassion. May we look at others with understanding and kindness. And may we be examples of acceptance, kindness, and unconditional love. And may we never forget the beauty that we seek in the world is already within us.

I found this on Facebook, someone's podcast, and I liked it: *"I hope beautiful things happen to you. And when they do, I hope you never doubt that you deserve them. Give yourself some credit. You've made it so far, and you deserve to enjoy the good things that life has to offer. Never forget that."*

And never forget that you are beautiful.

God bless you all.

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