

A Glimpse into the Bride's Heart

Lord Supper - Song of Solomon

By Rev Rodney Kleyn

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Song of Solomon 1:12-14

Preached on: Sunday, June 11, 2006

Trinity Protestant Reformed Church

3385 Van Buren,

Hudsonville, Michigan 49426

Website: www.trinityprc.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/trinityprc

We read from two places in Scripture this morning, first from the book of 1 Kings chapter 10 and we will read the first nine verses. And as we read, take note especially of Solomon's table and the way that he entertained these foreign dignitaries.

And then we read from the book of Ephesians chapter three. We will read from verse 14 to the end of the chapter.

The text for this morning's sermon is from the Song of Solomon chapter one verses 12 through 14.

While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.¹

As we try to understand the book of the Song of Solomon, beloved, we need to be balanced in our interpretation. In the past centuries the Song of Solomon was interpreted very narrowly. The Jewish rabbis saw the Song of Solomon to be something that pointed to or spoke of the relation between God and the nation of Israel and they saw it as exclusively that. The early New Testament Church in its interpretation of the book of the Song of Solomon saw that as well. And there is certainly truth to that understanding of the book of the Song of Solomon. But many wanted to see the Song of Solomon as referring exclusively to the relation between Christ and his Church. They didn't see here a real human relationship. So much so that in the year 550 in Constantinople assembly of the Church condemned any literal reading or understanding of the book of Song of Solomon.

That is one way people interpret the book or have interpreted it. And in that way they take everything in the book and they say every element of the book needs to be spiritualized. It can't refer to anything on the human level. And so myrrh has a special meaning and spikenard has a special meaning and breasts have a special meaning and

¹ Song of Solomon 1:12-14.

Engedi and all of these things that are mentioned in the book. You have to find a special spiritual meaning for each of those things. And that would make the reading and the understanding of the book of the Song of Solomon almost impossible.

But today modern interpreters have let the pendulum swing the other way. The higher critics view the Song of Solomon as an oriental love song which has really no place in the inspired Scriptures. They say that it was written by a man and a woman and that there is no way this book belongs in the Scriptures. There is no inspiration and no authority according to them in this book.

And the book of Song of Solomon is used by some even to justify erotic literature and certainly the Song of Solomon can't be used that way.

We need to be balanced as we come to this book and as we try to interpret it and understand it.

The book of the Song of Solomon is a true story. It is literal. Solomon the king married a woman who worked in a vineyard of his who was a country girl and he took her to his palace and he made her his wife and his queen. And this book gives us glimpses into their relationship and glimpses into her experience in Jerusalem and in the palace of the king. It is real, a real story. And we certainly {?} what the Holy Spirit has done is he has taken this relationship of Solomon to this woman and he has sanctified it. He has taken out all adulterous aspects of Solomon's relationships and shows us this one beautiful relationship. And, as such, this relationship has for us as it is described here in the Song of Solomon very practical implications for our own relationships in marriage between husband and wife.

So it is helpful from many practical points of view for the relation between a man and a woman.

But the book of Song of Solomon is far more than that. It is a beautiful, poetic, biblical picture of the relationship that exists between Christ and his bride the Church. Ephesians chapter five, as the apostle Paul describes human marriage and the duties of the husband and the duties of the wife and the institution of marriage in the beginning as the reason that a husband and wife ought to behave towards each other in a certain godly way. He says God brought the two together and made them one flesh. And for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. The apostle says, "But I show you a mystery and I speak not only of this earthly relationship, but of Christ and the Church." And he is saying that this earthly relationship of a beautiful Christian marriage between a husband and a wife who are believers is a picture for us of the relation between Christ and his Church. And certainly that is what we have to see as well in the Song of Solomon. Unless we see it, we miss the main point of the book of the Song of Solomon.

We don't go through, then, and try and find a spiritual meaning for every little detail in the book. But what we do is we look at the relationship and what is being said about the

relationship in each of the different sections of the book and what does this say about the relation between Christ and his Church.

Now to help us understand the verses that we look at this morning, I remind you again that there are three main voices or three who speak in the book of the Song of Solomon. There is Solomon. There is the Shulamite, his bride and then there are the daughters of Jerusalem, the acquaintances of this bride.

In these verses this morning it is the Shulamite, the bride who speaks and she doesn't speak or express herself to Solomon, but she expresses herself either later to the daughters of Jerusalem or, perhaps, we have here just an expression in poetic form of what is going on in her mind. And it is as though she turns to us and says, "Here I am in the king's palace at his table. And these are the thoughts that are going through my mind."

So what we have here is a glimpse into the heart and mind of the Shulamite. We look at it this morning under the theme: a glimpse into the bride's heart. We will notice, first, what is in the Shulamite's heart and, second, what is in the Church's heart, a glimpse into the bride's heart, in Solomon's bride and in Christ's bride.

In verse 12 we are told the king sits at his table.

"While the king sitteth at his table..."²

We read something of the table of Solomon in 1 Kings chapter 10. And Solomon's table was quite a fanfare. In 1 Kings four verses 22 and 23 we read about the supply that came to Solomon's table day after day to feed himself and all his servants and everyone who labored and was connected to the palace life. That table was used by Solomon to receive, as we saw in 1 Kings 10, foreign dignitaries like to the queen of Sheba. And when these foreign dignities were received there was a banquet of some sort and that is what the queen of Sheba witnessed when she came to Solomon's table. She saw in verse five of 1 Kings 10 the meat of his table, the sitting of his servants, the attendance of his ministers, their apparel, his cup bearers and so on. There is a banquet to receive these foreign dignitaries. And that is what is being talked about in Song of Solomon 1:12, the king sitting at his table.

There is a lot of fuss and to do in the banquet room of the palace. And to add to the picture or to complete the picture, the king has invited the queen to join him at his supper. So there she is dressed in her finest, looking her prettiest, smelling her prettiest with the king in the palace.

And from these verses it is quite clear that this Shulamite doesn't find great pleasure in this banqueting. She doesn't care much for what is going on at the dinner. You can imagine her sandwiched between a foreign dignitary and his wife and all the pomposity and fanfare and finickiness of these people from some other palace. We can imagine. And

² Song of Solomon 1:12.

there she is. She is, you remember, a country girl. And it is boring enough this kind of thing when you are used to it. But she is not used to this kind of thing. And perhaps there is some ambassador or some speaker drowning on and on as she sits there. She is bored with it all. And Solomon is busy, busy entertaining all these guests, busy engaging in his work as a king.

And as she sits there, this is what is going on in the verse. She gazes across the room, takes in to her eyes the king. And she begins to think about the king, her husband, her well beloved. And everything else around her is a haze as she focuses on and gazes lovingly and longingly at the king.

She shares her thoughts with us here in these verses. We know what that is like. Your mind goes from one thing to another to another. She takes in the king and she begins to think of the king. She says:

“...my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”³

She is talking here about something that she, as a queen, must hold in her hand to distinguish her as a queen, some kind of emblem or some kind of rod which smelled beautiful that she holds in her hand. And others will be drawn by that scent and look towards her to see her beauty as the queen. And she is thinking about that thing that she is holding in her hand and hoping that the king will notice it.

“...my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”⁴

And she hopes that the king who is across the room, across the table will notice that smell. Her love focuses on the king. She says of the king, he is a bundle of myrrh to me.

“A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me.”⁵

The bundle of myrrh was a sack of sweet spices that women would bind around their neck and hang in front of them. And she says as she is engrossed in her thoughts and gazing on the king, she suddenly smells that myrrh. The king is like that to me. My well beloved is just like that. He is close to my heart. He is refreshing just as the smell of the bundle of myrrh. And then she thinks of the night time. And she smells the bundle of myrrh in the nighttime and she thinks of the king in the night time.

Then she in verse 14 changes the figure as her thoughts go from one thing to another.

“My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.”⁶

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Song of Solomon 1:13.

⁶ Song of Solomon 1:14.

The idea of a cluster of camphire is a bunch of flowers, a bouquet of flowers. Camphire was a small shrub that grew in this oasis called Engedi which had a cluster of white and yellow flowers. And she is saying, “The king is like that to me.” She puts herself in one of Solomon’s vineyards there in Engedi. She is holding in her hand a cluster of that sweet smelling flower and she says, “Solomon is like that to me, refreshing.”

Engedi was and is still today an oasis on the shores of the Dead Sea in a barren desert where nothing is growing all around for miles and miles. Everything is dying and desolate. Suddenly the traveler comes across this watered oasis, green, lush. And she says, “Solomon is like that to me. He is refreshing. Thoughts of him are sweet to my soul like the sweet smell of flowers in a dingy room. He is like an oasis to a weary traveler. He is like a splash of color in the midst of gray, brown monotony.”

That is what is going on in her mind. She is in this room filled with all these interesting people. They weren’t all pompous dignitaries. Some of them were very interesting. And she is in this room with all of them. Her thoughts are all about Solomon and only about Solomon. And she tells us not only what is on her mind, but she reveals to us what is in her heart, her love. This is the language of love for her husband. He is the closest thing to her heart like the bundle of myrrh. He is hidden. He has a hidden place in her heart like the bundle of myrrh hanging under her clothes. She has a single hearted desire for him like the smell of the spikenard. Her love for him is unique. She calls him, “My well beloved.” You could say, translate it, “My husband love.” He is the only one I have this kind of love for. She speaks of what he means to her.

“My beloved is unto me as...”⁷

This is what he means to me. He is a king. He is a dignitary. He is all these things. He is a statesman. All these others that are here see him as such, but to me he is a bundle of myrrh. He is a cluster of camphire. He is like Engedi, an oasis in a wilderness. When I have him, she is saying, that is all I need to satisfy.

Now with regard to human marriage, the earthly relationship of marriage we find here in the text a couple of things. First of all, you find something here about the way husbands and wives ought to express their love toward one another.

In the previous verses which we looked at the last time that we had communion Solomon in a similar way expresses his love for the bride, for the Shulamite. And you remember that in this those verses he compares her to a mare that was the male mind. Solomon was fond of horses. Solomon, as he thinks of horses thinks of the best of horses, the ones that are tied on to pharaoh’s chariot. And you remember that Solomon is a king because of his passion for horses introduced them himself into Israel.

And he is saying, “She is like that. She is like the best thing that I can think of. I would give the best that I have, my finest mare for her. She is of more value to me than that.”

⁷ Ibid.

She has quite a place in his heart. That is what he is telling her when he compares her to a mare.

But now we see the difference. When she speaks and she tells us what is on her mind, she compares her husband to a bouquet of flowers. He is like a sweet smelling rose to her. He is like an oasis in a desert of monotony. There is a difference between the man and the woman, between the male and the female. And that difference doesn't just come because of the way that someone grows up, because of the kind of toys that they play with as children, because of where they grow up and the kind of lifestyle that they have as a child. That was all the difference, all that created that difference, then you wouldn't expect that this farm girl, this girl who worked in vineyards would say things like this. But she is a female, a real female. And her husband is to her like a sweet smelling rose.

The difference goes deeper than nurture, deeper than conditioning. It goes to creation and in the beginning God created them male and female. And it is a difference that in the modern day world people are trying to act as though it is not there. There isn't a difference between men and women, the modern Feminist movement would tell us. Wants us to erase that difference. But it is real. It is there. God has created this difference and God wants us to recognize it and in our relationship of marriage to not only recognize it, but learn to express ourselves as husband and wife toward one another in a way that love is appreciated by the other.

Isn't this a problem in marriage, that it takes us so long to learn the language of love with our spouse? And, oh man, it took him 30 years. He never bought his wife a piece of jewelry from the day he married until 30 years later and he couldn't believe the effect it had and he bought her more jewelry since. And he learned something about the difference between a man and a woman and the language of love.

And what we have in these verses is something of the way that love is to be expressed. It is a relationship of man and woman in marriage and that we ought to work to understand the difference between the male and the female, the wonderful difference that God has created.

And then in the second place as regards the human relationship of marriage you have here a single hearted love. That is what is needed in Christian marriage, a single hearted love.

“...my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”⁸

And she is thinking of the odor of it and attracting the attention of her well beloved across the room.

In Proverbs chapter five and verse 15 it is put this way.

⁸ Song of Solomon 1:12.

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.⁹

And that is for the man, a single hearted love for his wife. And here in the Song of Solomon it is the woman expressing her single hearted love for her husband.

The Shulamite wasn't very good at banquets. She wasn't very good at entertaining guests. She wasn't very good socially. But it didn't matter. This is what was beautiful about her. Her love was all for her husband. That is why Solomon wanted her there. That is why he was proud of her as a wife, as a queen. She loved him. She adored him.

There is something special about their relationship, but something very beautiful about their private life together.

We live in a world where everybody wants social activity, a social life. And sometimes that is the only place that husbands and wives come together, when they go out with others and they can share social life with others and there isn't any of this single hearted pleasure in one another on their own. Here she has it. Here she expresses it. I would rather be with just him than all these. And that is her beauty as a wife.

So that is the heart of Solomon's bride. But now let's lift our eyes from the earthly to the heavenly and see here that this is talking about the heart of the bride of Jesus Christ and the heart of the believer for Christ. Then we see some beautiful things.

Apparently this bundle of myrrh which was hung around the neck was not only to serve the purpose of deodorizing and of perfuming, but it was seen also as having medicinal purposes. It was something that was intended to drive away illness, to keep away the insects with their diseases that they would carry. And it was close to the heart. And isn't that something? There is no greater deterrent for the dangers that come into the Christian life than to have a heart filled with Jesus Christ and love for him. That will drive away temptations. That will keep us safe.

And these verses are about having eyes only for Jesus as the bride here has for Solomon. It is about being occupied with him day and night. There is our safety as Christians. There is our joy and our delight as believers to be filled with Jesus Christ. That is the prayer that Paul makes for the Church in Ephesus which we read in Ephesians chapter three and verse 14. You see, it is a prayer.

“I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁰

And this is his prayer, verses 17 through 19:

⁹ Proverbs 5:15-18.

¹⁰ Ephesians 3:14.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.¹¹

What is Paul's prayer? That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. And what is it to have somebody else dwelling in your heart? Well, it is like this Shulamite, isn't it? She sits at the king's table and she sees him and she takes him in and she knows him and she comprehends things about him and those things find a place in her heart and she has affection and love for him as she perceives him and forms an image of him in her heart.

And Paul is saying there that the heart, that the eye of the Christian saw, the Christian heart is faith, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. And that with the eye of faith you may take in Jesus Christ, see the outlines of him, create an image of him in your heart through faith and that that image may find a place of affection in your souls as Solomon does in the heart of his bride. Faith is the eye of the soul. It perceives Christ in the truths of the gospel. And as it sees him in the truths of the gospel, the heart is filled with love for Christ.

Some say, "Don't give us doctrine. Give us Christ."

Others want to say, "Don't give us Christ. Give us doctrine."

But we need both. WE need true doctrine which always leads us to Christ because the doctrines of Scripture are for us the image of Christ, the outlines of Christ. And the more that we know of Christ as he is set forth in the Scripture, the more distinct the image of him becomes in our {?} and the greater the love of our hearts and affection of our hearts for him.

It is as though as we see Christ in the doctrines of Scripture and as we behold him in the preaching of the gospel. It is as though the eye of faith crosses the table to the king. Faith looks to him. And we are taken up with him more and more and we focus on him by faith and we perceive him more and more in the Scriptures. And then he fills our hearts and our love. He becomes the focus of our love and attention. The world and all its attractions grow dim, become a haze. The monotony and the burdens of life fade away as we look in love on Jesus Christ presented in the gospel and in the truth of Scripture.

Do you love him? Does he occupy a place in your thoughts? The focus of your life, your cistern out of which you drink and not other, so that the world fades away? Do you love him? He becomes the goal, the focus, your all in life and in death?

That is the prayer of Paul here for the Ephesians Church. These were saved Christians. When Paul is praying that Christ may dwell in their hearts, he is not praying that they will accept Jesus Christ into their hearts. They have Jesus Christ in their hearts in

¹¹ Ephesians 3:17-19.

regeneration. But he is praying that the presence and the power of Jesus Christ in them may increase, may be enriched through their greater perception of him, their greater faith in him as they see him in the gospel.

It is like the sun coming into a room. The curtains are drawn and it comes in just through a tiny chink in the curtains and the sun is coming into the room, all right. There what Paul is saying, “My prayer is that the curtains of your hearts will be thrown open and that Christ in all his warmth and grace will fill your hearts.”

Paul knew something about the church at Ephesus. Yes, they were saved, but things weren't as they should have been with respect to their love for Christ. You remember, that later on in the book of Revelation when Christ writes to the seven churches he writes first to the church at Ephesus and he writes about their leaving their first love. And Paul recognized that that is the road that they had set themselves on. And he prays that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, that they may be filled with the knowledge of his love.

That is the prayer. That should be our prayer this morning for ourselves, for the Church here, for the Church of Jesus Christ in the world.

How do you exercise your faith so that Christ does dwell in your heart in this fullness, in this richness? Paul says you contemplate his love.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.¹²

This is how Christ comes into our hearts by faith. This is how we are filled with the fullness of God. We contemplate the greatness of his love, the breadth, the length, the depth, the height. It is depth that reaches into hell to save us. It is height. It takes us to heaven. It is breadth. It extends after Pentecost to all nations, the elect in all nations. Its breadth, so far as he removed our transgressions, from the east to the west, so great is his love for us.

And this morning, beloved, we come to the King's table. May our eye of faith cross the table, as it were, to the king and perceive, comprehend something of the greatness of his love, its depth, its height, its breadth, its length and comprehending it, may we be filled with the fullness of God and ourselves go forth with a spikenard love, a single hearted love, a love which has a fragrance like the bundle of myrrh that others will see and that out of this love we grow as a church together and in relation to Christ our head. Amen.

¹² Ephesians 3:17-19.