

**Song of Solomon 8: 13; “Dwelling in Christ’s Gardens”, Sermon # 74 in the series – “I am My Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

It is Christ who is speaking here in verse 13. And in the context, together with verse 14, we see that Christ is speaking of His being gone for some time, and as a result, He would hear His Bride’s voice, which can only refer to her being faithful to pray to Him during that time when they are physically separated from one another. We do not see Christ yet. He is gone away into heaven, to sit at the right hand of the Father all during this Church age, and to make intercession for us. But He will eventually come back and gather us to Himself on that glorious Day of His appearing, which the Bride speaks of in verse 14.

She would have Him make haste, and so do all believers in all the generations of Church History, greatly desire Christ’s Second Coming. I will speak to you about His Coming in my final sermon to you from this book. But today, before we observe the Communion, I would like to draw your attention to the voice of Christ speaking to His Bride the Church; to every group of believers in every one of His Churches during this whole Church age. He would remind her of what He desires her to remember while He is away.

He would 1<sup>st</sup> of all – Christ would have us, as a part of His Bride, to remember where we dwell. 2<sup>nd</sup> – He would have us to remember the companions who are listening for our voice. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – He would have us to remember that He is listening for our voice. As we prepare our hearts to receive the Lord’s Supper, let us receive also these truths to stimulate our fellowship and communion with each other in this ordinance, and also with our unseen Lord.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Christ would have us, as a part of His Bride, to remember where we dwell.**

Christ says here to His Church – “You who dwell in the gardens”. Now, this kind of language has often been used by Christ in this book. The garden of the believer’s heart is often spoken of. Song of Solomon 4: 12-16 – “A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” “Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices – a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.” “Awake, O north wind, and come O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out.” “Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.”

This garden is called “my own vineyard” by the Bride in the verse before this. When the word garden is used, it is being referred to, in terms of the individual believer’s heart. We, as Christians, cultivate this garden, and we bring forth spiritual fruit to Christ. But here in verse 13, Christ’s emphasis is upon the gardens (plural), by which He means the individual churches that make up His Universal Church. Christ would have every believer to remember that they dwell in one of those gardens, one of those churches of His. This shows us that every believer should be dwelling in a local church. They should remember that this one of the greatest ways that they will bear fruit to Christ.

Christ desires that every believer see the importance of dwelling together with others in a local church to cultivate greater fruit than they could individually bring forth by their own solitary life. Our God and our Christ have a plan to see the whole world affected by the gospel; that He is in the process of saving His people from the sins. The way that he would have to live for Him is in the context of learning to cultivate righteousness and loving the brethren. People who never join a church are not able to do this very well, on their own, without being in a local church. And that is why He expects that every believer will be a part of a local church. This is how love is cultivated. This is how the seed of the word is sown. This is how fruits are gathered for eternal life. Not separately and on your own, but in

connection with a local church. When He sees you dwelling together with others in a particular church of His people, cultivating the fruit of the Spirit and good works, He is pleased.

In Psalm 133 says – “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” “It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments.” “It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing of life forevermore.” How precious is the unity of our church! How good and how pleasant a thing it is when you and I as brethren dwell together in this church in unity! When you and I dwell together in unity it is like the precious anointing oil which was poured out on the head of Aaron, the high priest of Israel.

This anointing of Aaron is typical of the anointing of our Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit without measure. When it speaks here of dwelling together in unity, we should see it as precious. It is precious because this unity comes from Christ Himself and what He has done and is doing for us now, as our great High Priest. He intercedes for us so that we will learn to repent of our sins, and be cleansed of them. He intercedes for us so that we will cultivate every good and righteous thing in our lives because we are united to Him spiritually. He was anointed by the Spirit without measure, but this anointing flows down upon the rest of His body; His beard, and His garments.

This anointing of Aaron is typical of our being anointed by the Holy Spirit, making us kings and priests to our God because of Christ. It is typical of our being placed into the one spiritual body of Christ, and our being clothed with His wisdom and Spirit in relation to our dwelling together in unity and bringing forth fruit together to Christ. It is like the dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion. Our blessings, both individually and together as a church are all based upon Christ giving us grace, which is compared here to dew which settled in great abundance on Mt. Hermon and the mountains of Zion.

This is typical of all of Christ’s churches receiving the blessings of Christ’s Spirit in relation to all their joint activities of worship and fellowship and labors together for Christ. This fruit-bearing as a church comes to be seen in our midst because of the dew of Christ’s grace. It comes to pass out of our spiritual interaction with each other in worship and praise of God, and in fellowship with each other, and in our labors together to see the kingdom of Christ advance while we have this time together. Christ would have us to remember this and to make the most of it.

Acts chapter 4, verse 32 and 33 says – “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.” “And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.” “And great grace was upon them all.” This great grace was the dew of Hermon. It was purchased by our Lord Jesus Christ. And when it is seen working in the life of the church gathered, it is very powerful. Listen to how it is worded in Psalm 110, verses 3 and 4. “Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, you have the dew of Your youth.” “The Lord has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’”

So to dwell together unity, in the garden of the Lord in which you are placed, means that if you see the importance of the dwelling together in unity that I have just talked about, you will strive to bear fruit together with others in this local church. You will volunteer freely in the day of His power. You will join in worship of the church, coming to the services and worshipping God with all of your heart. You will cultivate fellowship and friendship with other people in this church. You will help sow the seed of the word together with others. You will help to spread the gospel to this community. You will rejoice to be a part of this local church. This means that you will consciously cultivate fellowship with the other believers here and not be simply living to yourself. The Lord takes notice of these things.

Listen to Malachi chapter 3 and verse 16 – “Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name.” This is a very encouraging verse indeed, for those who fear the Lord. For it is saying that the Lord takes notice of our fellowship together. He takes notice of our holy and spiritual interactions with one another in conversation. He takes notice of the kindnesses we show to one another and the common vision that we share to cultivate godliness and our love for one another. It is out of this that spiritual fruit is borne to Christ.

When we speak often to one another of the glories of knowing Christ, and of the good church and fellowship that He has brought us into because of His saving us, His leading us, and His guiding us in the way that He does, by His holy Spirit, God is pleased. Let us see the importance of this and live this way, my brethren, and the reward will be very great. It goes on to say in verses 17 and 18 of Malachi 3 – “They shall be Mine, say the Lord of hosts, on the day that I make them My jewels.” “And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.” “Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who swerves God and one who does not serve Him.”

This is what I trust we desire to do together; to promote the glory of the Lord and serve Him together in this place in the ways that He will show us, and in the way that we can, according to the gifts and grace that He has given us.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Christ would have us remember the companions who are listening for our voice.**

“You who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen for your voice....” Now, there is some question among commentators about who these companions are. In faithfulness to the text itself, let me mention 3. The companions could be the “companions” of Christ Himself; that is the Father and the Holy Spirit, as Persons of the Divine Trinity. They are of the same nature, perfections, and glory with Christ and in this sense, they are Companions. Together they listen to what the church and true believers say to them, and what we say to one another. God hears the prayers of His people as one God in three Persons, listening for the voice of His people in prayer.

Will you not remember, dear Christian, that the Triune God receives our corporate prayers as a church? Will you not remember that He hears our corporate voice, and then these Persons who are all seeing, all knowing, and infinitely wise, will act according to what they know will be best for us as a church? We can also see that this word companions could refer to the angels. The angels are our companions in the sense that they are with us and watch over us according to the will of God. Some angel or angels are assigned to this church in this holy way. They are divine watchers. They listen for our corporate voice in how we praise God and how we conduct our worship.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11, verse 10 – “For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.” The angels look for submission to authority in the worship of the local church. In Psalm 34, verse 7, it says – “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” The angels look for those in the local church who fear God, and they will help them. In Hebrews chapter 13, verse 1 it says – “Let brotherly love continue.” “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.” So the angels could be the companions who evaluate on God’s behalf and ours, our obedience to God’s commands and expectations and purpose. They are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those, and for those, who will inherit salvation.

But perhaps the most likely interpretation of this word “companions”, is that they are our own companions here in the local church. In the context, they could be the daughters of Jerusalem, those who represent new believers or young believers in the faith. They listen for the voice of those who are more mature than they are in the faith. They listen to the voice of the pastor or preacher as he preaches and counsels them.

Hebrews 13: 7 – “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.” So we see here that the younger believers should be listening to the voice of those who they know are wise with the wisdom of the scriptures, because they know that they are experienced believers, whose faith has been tried and proven. Those who are younger in the faith should listen to the voice of their companions in the faith who have walked with Christ on the path of righteous for a longer time than they have.

The communion of the saints is an important article of our faith. In our Confession of Faith it says in chapter 26, paragraph 1 – “All saints that are united to Jesus Christ, their head, by His Spirit, and faith, although they are not made thereby one person with Him, have fellowship in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory; and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, in an orderly way, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.” We should listen to the voice of our companions in the way of seeking fellowship, counsel and advice, and even reproof from those wiser than ourselves if we need it.

Psalms 119, verse 63 – “I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts.” Also Psalm 138, verse 5, in terms of our receiving reproof from those who can wisely give it to us. “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.” “And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my heard not refuse it.” These are the companions who listen for our voice, and who will do us good in every way if we will commit ourselves to them and the wisdom that they can impart to us. In terms of preaching, we should come to church and hear the pastor’s voice as he teaches us the word of God for our edification. As we come to the table now, let us give thanks in our hearts, that we have these companions who listen for our voice.

**And then, 3<sup>rd</sup> – Christ would have us to remember that He is listening to hear our voice.**

In the last phrase of verse 13 we find Christ saying to His Bride the Church – Let me hear your voice. As we come to observe the Lord’s supper, let us remember that Christ is listening to the prayers of our hearts for forgiveness of any sins that you have committed, and to your resolutions that by His grace you want to walk with Him more closely. He will also be listening for your prayers related to your being a part of this local church. In relation to your prayers for our church, I want you to turn over to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 10, verses 16 and 17. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” “For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”

Our partaking of the cup of blessing which we bless, together as a church at this time, it means that we believe that Christ’s blood was shed for each one of us individually. In this ordinance we are holding communion together with Him as a church, over His death on our behalf. Christ sees our hearts perfectly as we observe this Supper. We remember Him in relation to our sanctification, our having been bought with the price of His blood, we are now becoming more like Him. Spiritually we need the encouragement that He can bring to us in remembering what He has done for us.

May your remembrance of Him, and Your communion with Him lead to pray and ask how you can serve Him better in the context of our local church. Christ gave Himself for the Church. Will you give yourself in service to Him in the context of this church? This matter ultimately is between you and Him, but it affects all of us. You will be spiritually refreshed and strengthened by Him here. Will you not see that this time is the communion with the body of Christ, not only in His death, but also in the fact that by His death He has made us into one body in this church. For we, though many, are one bread and one body. We are partaking of the one bread. Let us sweetly meditate then upon the reality that if Christ died for us to make us into one body, then how can we show our love to one another, and serve Him better in this church.

