

ARISE AND COME AWAY

Sunday, February 11th, 2024 - 5:30 p.m.

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Song of Solomon chapter two and we're going to start reading at verse 10.

“My beloved speaks and says to me: “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away,¹¹ for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone.¹² The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.¹³ The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.” (Song of Solomon 2:10 – 13)

Song of Solomon, is also known as the Song of Songs. That is, in fact, the title that's given to it in the very first verse of the book itself. If you were to go back to chapter one, verse one, it talks about the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. In the Book of Kings, it tells us that Solomon wrote 1005 songs during his lifetime. But 1004 of them didn't make it into the Bible. They didn't get recorded, as this one is.

This is the only song of Solomon's that made it into the Bible, and hence the name, the Song of Songs. It's the greatest of his songs. It's the one that went double platinum. This is the one that Solomon loved and obviously, the people loved. And it's evidently the only song he ever wrote, that was especially inspired by the Holy Spirit with the purpose of being included in God's word. It's probably also right to say that since he called it his Song of Songs, it was his personal favourite. It's his favourite song for his favourite bride.

Now, when you read the Song of Solomon, there are actually three different ways of interpreting the book. The one that's become most popular I think, in our generation is actually the naturalistic way of interpreting the book. That is, you read the book and it's clearly a poetic book about a man and his lover, his bride. And so they say that's what this is about. It's about marriage. It's about human love. And that's all that we should take out of it. It's a naturalistic explanation of the Song of Solomon.

Another way is to look at it as an allegory, an allegorical interpretation, that means that these are all symbols that we're supposed to figure out what they mean. And it's got some great moral to it that we're supposed to draw out of it. So that's the allegorical way.

And then there's the typological way. Now this is the one that's the most interesting and we'll come back to this in a moment. But the typological interpretation of Song of Solomon means that, in this Old Testament story, we find types, for which later on in the Bible, we will find anti-types. That is, there is a foreshadowing going on here of something that's to come later. The typological.

Now you can forget those three words if you want to, naturalistic, allegorical and typological. But I want you to understand why this book was written because generations of our Christian forefathers, the Church Fathers way back in the first few centuries, the reformers, the 16th and 17th century, the

Puritans, right up until fairly recent times in fact, they saw in this book, a picture of Jesus Christ and his Church, that this is typological, it points forward to Jesus Christ, it is not merely allegory.

When you read the Song of Solomon, you read about a real historical person, King Solomon, and his love for a young woman of a particular family background. She is called a Shulamite. She's of the Shulamite tribe. And then it set against the backdrop of real places like Damascus, Engedi and Mount Hermon. So these are real places that existed in King Solomon's time.

So this is history. It's not a made up story. This is talking about something that really happened. But the ancients very clearly saw it also as typology. It has a simple meaning as a human love story, but it also speaks of something far greater. Solomon had his wife in mind as he wrote it, but the Holy Spirit included it in the scriptures to speak to us of a greater marriage, the great king of kings and his bride. The great romance, Jesus and His Church.

The Song of Solomon speaks to us of Jesus. It is a love story that reveals the depths of Christ's love and desire for His Church, His Bride. The Bible uses this analogy of God and His people in a marital union in a whole bunch of places. In the Old Testament prophets, they spoke of Israel as the wife of God. Their calling as preachers was for Israel to come back from spiritual adultery, worshipping idols, they call that spiritual adultery, and to devote themselves to their faithful husband, Yahweh.

Then you come across to the New Testament and you read Ephesians chapter five, where the apostle Paul says very plainly, marriage is a picture of Christ's union with the church, and he calls it a great mystery. This is what marriage is meant to be in the theatre in the world, where God is telling the story of his love for mankind.

And then you go right to the very end of the Bible, to the last book, the book of Revelation. And John tells us what's coming and you know, what's coming, a marriage supper, the great marriage supper of the Lamb. One day very soon, every believer in Jesus will be summoned to that great banquet. The church will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and we'll go to that wedding celebration. The bride adorned and ready for her husband.

Marriage, human love is a reflection of God's love. Another reason for us to see the Song of Solomon as a picture of Christ and His Church is simply this. Jesus is revealed in every book of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. He is revealed in types and pictures and prophecies. In fact, he is the key to the whole of the scriptures. Jesus unlocks it all and if you want proof of this, you might remember that seven mile bible study that Jesus had after he had risen from the dead. In fact, the very day that he rose from the dead, he was walking along the road to Emmaus with two of the disciples and it says in Luke 24:27 **“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27)**

I believe that text is letting us know that you can find Jesus on every page of the Old Testament. Jesus was able to expound all of the Old Testament scriptures and talk about himself in all the scriptures. Therefore, like every other book of the Old Testament, you should expect to meet Jesus in the Song of Solomon and that's what we do find.

So what does the book actually say? Let me give you a little overview of the Song of Solomon. The Song of Solomon is a poem consisting of the reminiscences of King Solomon and his bride and the first question you should ask yourself is, which one? You might recall that King Solomon had a thousand wives and concubines, so you think who was this one written for?

A lot of scholars have suggested that it was written for his first wife, the wife of his youth as the Bible describes your wife when you first get married. The girl was from a very poor family in Ephraim and from the descriptions we have of her, she seems to have been what you might call the Cinderella of the family. I like to think of Song of Solomon that way, it's the Cinderella story of the Bible. She was naturally beautiful but she was very much unnoticed. She was not given the privilege of other rich girls and in fact she was made to work hard tending the vines in the vineyard which meant that she had very little time to care for her own personal appearance. And the description is that working in the sun had made her dark and tanned.

This Shulamite girl was not one of Jerusalem's front cover models of Vogue magazine so she didn't see herself as beautiful, she thought herself plain. But one day, she met a handsome young shepherd. Now, spoiler alert, it's actually King Solomon in disguise. She thinks he's just a shepherd because he's dressed plainly that particular day and when Solomon saw the Shulamite girl and she saw Solomon, it was love at first sight for both of them.

We then read in the poem about how their love relationship is taken up and how they bond in courtship and how they grow in love towards one another. But all of a sudden, after they bond in such a close courting relationship, this young shepherd says to the Shulamite, "I have to go away. I am going away but if I go away, I will come to you again." And after an extended absence, he finally did return. Not as the humble shepherd this time but when he appears this time, he is in the grandeur of the great king and Solomon took her back to his palace in Jerusalem as his bride.

Have I even got to point out the typology? It's obvious, isn't it? Our shepherd king, Jesus, the Lord is my shepherd. He has come to us in such poverty and meanness, he came into the world that he had created and the world didn't even know him. The bible says "Though he was rich, though he was a king, yet he became poor." Why? So that through his poverty, we might be made rich.

He came from the splendours of glory to woo and to win, to buy with his own blood a bride for himself and then he had to go away. But he said, "*If I go away, I will come again and receive you to myself.*" How many know that he's going to look a lot different when he comes the second time in all of his glory!

That brings us right to where we are living our lives today. We are in the period between him leaving and him coming again. Jesus is coming again and when he does, he's not coming incognito. Every eye will see, every knee will bow, everyone will know him. He's coming in all his kingly majesty.

What an incredible book the Song of Solomon is. So intimate and powerful in its language about the love that God has for his people and the plan that he has instigated.

As I read through the Song of Solomon, one recurring phrase captures my heart and I pointed it out to you in the reading. The king, the beloved, speaks to his bride and he says to her, "Come away." It's

repeated twice here in the verses that we read, verse 10 and 13. It's also in similar language in chapter 4, verse 8 "Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon."

And this is the burden of my message this evening. The Lord's call to us, his church, to every individual Christian on the eve of his return. He's coming quickly. The signs show us that his coming is imminent and he is calling to us as always. "Come away." So much in that call, so much in his voice as he says that, and I perceive three things and I want to draw these out for you right now. The first things I think in his voice is:

1. THERE IS INTIMACY IN HIS VOICE

Listen to how he addresses his bride. "***My love, my beautiful one.***" It's Solomon speaking to the Shulamite bride but it's also God speaking to his church. "My love, my beautiful one." It reveals to us a couple of things.

First of all, his feeling for us. "***My love...***" God loves his church. God loves the whole world so much he gave his only son to redeem back a people for himself and then all of his love is poured out on that people. He loves us.

Then secondly, his view of us. "***...My beautiful one.***" Over in chapter four, verse seven, we read this again, "You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you." No stain, no flaw, no blemish. That is not how we see ourselves, is it? Because we know where we came from. We know what we are capable of. We know our sinful past, everything that we wish we could forget. And we continue to live with present weakness, our proneness to falling and we would have to admit we failed God on a weekly basis. No. that's too long, isn't it? Daily basis? Hourly basis?

We fail him. So we don't see ourselves as with no stain, no flaw, no blemish. How is it that God sees us that way? His beautiful one with no spot. Only grace can do this. Because grace found a way, the blood of Jesus, only Jesus' righteousness, his perfection can cover us, to make us right in God's sight. The power of Jesus' blood washed us, cleansed us, healed us and delivered us so that God can look at us in the midst of all of our fallenness and see the perfection, the obedience, the beauty of his own Son and say, "***my beautiful one.***"

Just as God spoke to Jesus in the river Jordan said, "***You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,***" He looks at you and says the same. He shouldn't. But he can because of what he has done giving his Son in our place. We're no longer seen by God as the sinners that we have been by nature, we are the bride, the bridegroom's own loveliness shines on us. We are dressed in his royal robes. The Bible says right here in Song of Solomon, "***he brought us into His banqueting house and his banner over us is love.***" He brought us into fellowship with himself.

What a marriage supper that's going to be. You got your ticket? It's coming right up. What a marriage supper. When we sit, Jesus at the head of the table and all of us gathered around and we know His perfect love that we've only had glimpses off in this lifetime.

Now don't get to thinking to yourself, "well then really we must have been beautiful all along. We just didn't know, we just needed a little bit of makeup." Romans 5 tells us "***while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***" The lover came for us when we were completely unlovely. Sin had

disfigured us and made us so abhorrent to a holy God. Every vile thing that we had done, every act of rebellion screamed out for him to justly reject us. But he loved us anyway. An old Andre Crouch song said, “he looked beyond my fault, and saw my need.”

And he loved me. So 1 John 4:19, says **“We love Him, because He first loved us.”** You say you love the Lord this evening, and I say this, it's a reflex. Because he loves you first, you love him back. He started this. The world really does have pathetic ideas of love. Love in the world today is so fickle, and so fleeting. People talk about falling in love, like they talk about coming down with the flu. And just as quickly as you fell in love, you can fall out of love again.

But God's definition of love in the Bible is completely different to that. And right here in Song of Solomon, he talks about it. If you go to chapter eight in verses seven, it says **“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it...” (Song of Solomon 8:7)** Not all the rising tide of men's collective sin and rebellion could quench or douse the fire of God's love for us because his love cannot be overcome. It never changes. It's never diminished. It's as hot today as it ever has been. This is who God is. His very nature is love. The Bible says God is love, but it's not saying that God is just some emotion that we feel.

I've heard people say that, you know, whenever we experience love in our lives, that's God. They say that's what we speak of as God, just the love that we feel in our lives. Rubbish! That is sentimental nonsense. God is a real person. And He has revealed Himself as having a nature that is all of love. That's what it means when it says God is love. It's his core attribute.

Continue reading verse seven. It says **“If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.” (Song of Solomon 8:7)** That's how the old poet said it. Two more recent poets, John Lennon and Paul McCartney said, “You can't buy me love.” You can't. There's no price you can put on love. Love is impossible to purchase with anything. It's only a gift.

True love is not for sale. God's love is not for sale. And if it had been up to us to propose a purchase price to gain God's love for us, no price would have been enough. You can't even buy love from another person. You might buy companionship, you might buy friendship, but you can't buy anyone's love.

What could we have ever given to God that would have made him love us? But yet he does love us, without any price he has freely given grace upon grace. God loves you today. There's intimacy in his voice, **“my love.”** He says, **“my beautiful one.”**

But it's not just intimacy, there's something else in Jesus' voice.

2. THERE IS JEALOUSY IN HIS VOICE

There's jealousy in his voice because he says those words we've been pointing to, **“Come away.”** The beloved calls his bride away to be with Him alone, to be exclusively his, away from others, away from the world, away from other suitors who would come calling for her, he wants her all for himself.

Now when we hear the word jealousy, we might wince because the word jealousy has taken on only negative connotations. It's often spoken of today as a bad thing. "Oh, they're such a jealous person." You never should be jealous. That's an ugly thing that we're told.

But the Bible shows that there is a godly jealousy. There is a right jealousy. No matter what modern psychologists may say, that jealousy is always a bad thing. If a man truly loves his wife, and you seek to intrude on her, let me assure you, you are going to feel the full brunt of her husband's jealousy. And I put it to you that that's a godly thing. St. Augustine said, "He that is not jealous is not in love."

That's true. I'm not speaking of the cruel possessiveness that sometimes poses for jealousy. That's just superficial, very unloving, all demanding and overbearing, doesn't come from love at all, but from selfishness. Proverbs says that kind of jealousy, that's overbearing and selfish, it is rottenness to the bones. It's a kind of cancer that will eat you up and destroy your relationship even while you're clutching onto it and trying to control the other person.

But there is another jealousy that says, *"You are my wife, you are my love. I am laying down my life for you. We share something that no one else has a right to be a part of. We are one flesh united in the sight of God and woe to anyone that comes between that love."*

A passionately devoted husband, you know, God is just like that, in his jealousy for his people, he will not share us with another. The Bible speaks of the sin of idolatry as a kind of spiritual adultery, unfaithfulness to the only true God who deserves to occupy the throne of our hearts and receive all of our worship.

God created us for himself. And this is where all of history is headed towards the day, when we will finally and eternally be reunited with him. To have no other gods, no other loves, to be with Him forever, the beloved and his bride.

Jesus expressed this out of his own mouth. In fact, he did it on the very night that he went to give his life for us. John 17:24, Jesus is praying and he says, ***"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."*** (John 17:24)

It's the express heart of God to have us with him. And so he said, in John 14:1-3, he's talking to the disciples, he says, ***"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [2] In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."*** (John 14:1-3)

The love of God and his desire to have us with himself. Paul writes to the Thessalonians, in 1 Thessalonians 4 four, he says, it's coming, it's going to happen. ***"We who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."*** (1 Thessalonians 4:17) We get this thinking that we think Jesus is coming and thank God we're going to get away from all these problems. That's not Paul's focus.

It's not about escaping the problems. It's about being with the Lord! It's about finally fulfilling the plan of all his desire for us, his family to be in his house, thus we will always be with the Lord.

No wonder John finishes Revelation and says, Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Take your waiting people home. I hope that thought thrills you, above everything else in life this evening. For some people, it fills them with fear, dread, disappointment. Lord, don't come back just yet. I still have things I want to do and want to achieve. Whatever it is that you got your heart set on. If that remains our thought as a Christian, *"just a little bit longer, Lord, because I'm enjoying things here."* To me, something is terribly wrong.

And this is the great problem in the church today. We are more in love with the world than we are with Jesus. Our hearts are divided. Remember, David said, *"Lord, Unite my heart to fear your name."* Our hearts are not united. They're divided between God and the world. You see it in a thousand ways, how we think, where we go, what we watch, who we emulate, who we're trying to impress, who we're trying to be popular with? What excites us, what stimulates us. All these things become our focus, it's the world. It's other loves. It's idolatry.

Because it's not God alone.

So Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter six, verses 17 and 18. ***"Therefore, come out*** (doesn't that sound distinctly like Song of Solomon, come away? Paul says...) ***"Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you. [18] And I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."*** (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

You hear the jealousy of God in those words, come away. Come away with me, my love, my beautiful one. He loves you, and paid for you and cares for you and wants you for himself. How do we show our love to God? It's quite simple, really. Obedience.

This is what Jesus says in John 14:15, ***"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."*** (John 14:15) That's the ultimate demonstration of the reality of your love is that obey what he has said. A love affair with Jesus will not just occupy you for a couple of hours on Sunday but it will engage every desire of your heart continuously day by day with all that you have in obedience to him.

3) THERE IS URGENCY IN HIS VOICE

Thirdly, there is urgency in his voice. Because he says ***"Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away."*** Rise up! God calls to us with urgency because our time is so short. We're living in a generation that I believe our time is short on this planet completely, and I think many of you would agree with me that this planet can't even go on much longer. We're surely coming down to all of the promises made at the end of the Bible. But even for our grandparents and people who died centuries ago, the time is always short for human beings. Because when you're 18 years of age, it feels like you've got forever but when you hit 54, you think to yourself, yeah, there's not much time left. And you look back and think "Where did that go?" You realize life is so short.

So there's urgency in God's voice because the bridegroom is coming for every one of us and he's coming for a prepared bride. Very soon his call is going to be "come away" and it's going to be the final call and we all will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. His Spirit says to us today, "Are you ready for Jesus? Is your lamp trimmed? Are you watching?" The clear implication is if you're not watching, you may miss his coming.

Jesus said, *"Many will say 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, we did these great things in your name, we did all this stuff in your name.'" (Matthew 7:22)* Notice they have the lingo, "Lord, Lord." They can speak Churchianity, they can speak our language. But he will say to them ***"I never knew you."*** It's the relationship that he's jealous for. ***"I never knew you."***

The Apostle John says this in 1 John 3:3 ***"And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." (1 John 3:3).***

Not just urgency because he is coming soon, but he's urgent for you to give your whole heart to him because another may steal the affections of your heart if you linger. If you don't give everything to God today, you may find that your affections are stolen by another. Arise, come away. It's a command. Christ, our head, speaks with authority and says "Come Away." The onus is on us to rise up from slumber, from every entanglement with this world and to come away for Christ alone.

We're still in the world. We're still going to go to work tomorrow morning, but where is your heart going to be? Jesus said "We're in the world but we're not of the world." We have a different mindset, we consider ourselves citizens of another kingdom and we live accordingly. The fact is, as we look at the church today, others have stolen our affections away.

I don't just hear urgency in God's voice today, I hear grief in His voice, about Jesus' church being caught up with so many other things. Let's finish with this, Revelation 19:7 – 9. ***"Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. [9] And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."*** (Revelation 19:7-9)

"Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away."