

The Day the King's Heart was Glad

Hello & welcome to *Voice of the Church*. I'm Pastor Ryan Swale, and we've been looking the last couple weeks at the Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon. Last time, we saw the king propose marriage to the bride-to-be. After that, in Ch. 3, there's a period of separation before his return in Ch. 3 vv. 6 to 11 "on the day of his wedding," which v. 11 calls "the day of the gladness of his heart," leading into Ch. 4 where he adores the bride's beauty, & at the end of the chapter the marriage is consummated. I'll read Ch. 4 – the day the king's heart was glad:

He says, "Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, & not one of them has lost its young. Your lips are like a scarlet thread, & your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your 2 breasts are like 2 fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies. Until the day breathes & the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh & the hill of frankincense. You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you."

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir & Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, & the fragrance of your oils than any spice! Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey & milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed. Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, nard & saffron, calamus & cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh & aloes, with all choice spices – a garden fountain, a well of living water, & flowing streams from Lebanon."

And then she says, "Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, & eat its choicest fruits." To which he replies: "I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk." And then an anonymous onlooker says, "Eat, friends, & be drunk with love!"

Certainly, one of the more PG-13 chapters in the Bible, yet a *beautiful* one. After arriving for his bride, the king adores her & accepts her invitation to “come into her garden.” I just want to make a few observations about the king’s adoration of his bride on the night of their wedding.

First of all, that it’s his **bride** he’s adoring. This is the only place in the book where he *calls* her his bride. Up to this point, she’s been his “beloved;” *now* his **bride**! In fact, he says it *6 times* here... And it’s not without significance the only place this word is used is on the wedding-night, making the point “that the sensual experience described is inseparably connected marriage...” It creates the covenantal context where it’s right & good for the locked garden of v. 12 to be *unlocked*, & the sealed fountain to be *unsealed*. Marriage is the only place this may be enjoyed. Because sex is given by God as an *expression* of covenant vows that’ve been made... What we read of in Song of Songs 4 belongs exclusively in the context of covenant-vows... “**My bride!**”

Notice also that 4 of those references to her as bride also call her as “*sister*...” Not to be read literally, but what Solomon is doing is using a term of endearment that elsewhere suggests *purity* to say something about the *kind* of sensual enjoyment that takes place in marriage... That marital love always sees one’s *bride* as *sister* who shares a common humanity & common place in the family of God... That, just as you’d recoil at the thought of objectifying your sister, so you should at the thought of doing so to your wife... It forces husbands to examine their motives. Do I love my wife with a “disinterested tenderness,” treating her with dignity...? Genuine, marital-love always sees one’s bride as *sister*... And that filial connection by which she is not objectified but *dignified* leads to a careful & delicate description of her beauty...

This is perhaps the most erotic section in the book, yet doesn’t *degrade* her by speaking of her body in *crass terms*... Very different from how the world speaks of the female body. And instructive for how husbands speak *about & to* their wives. Not with the language of our pornified culture, but in a way that honors her...

Which is what he does throughout the whole section, “Behold, you’re fair, my love! Behold, you’re fair...” He starts with her eyes, & moves to her hair, & teeth, & lips... Comparing them to doves, & goats, & sheep. Which may sound odd, but this description is not *literal*; it’s a “transfer of value” where the imagery evoked speaks of what she *means* to him...! And does so in a way that is biblically & theologically profound...

I won't say too much about it, but all this imagery is temple & promised-land imagery. The Garden of Eden, Promised Land, & temple are evoked in the comparisons, communicating *not only what she means to him*, but also that their union symbolizes God dwelling with his people. That's why she invites him in to her "garden..." And when she does in 4:16 & 5:1, that's the literary center of the book: **111 lines** on each side, suggesting we have come to the heart of the book, where the desires that've been building ever since Ch. 1 are fulfilled.

He comes into his garden & the anonymous speaker says, "Be drunk with love!" And since the curtain is closed with no one else present, many commentators suggest the speaker is God himself! Adding his divine blessing to the marriage, just as he did at the *first* Garden-wedding in Genesis... The Lord is the unseen guest when the curtain is closed, & he *approves*...

Meaning what's described here is not something dirty, but *good*, given by God as a *gift* to teach us about the great love he has for us in his Son – that just as we're to be intoxicated with the wine of marital-love, the gospel invites us to a holy intoxication on the "wine" of Christ's love! Of which we get a foretaste at his table, & will we'll enjoy in full at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb **with his father's blessing & approval, even as we see in 5 v.1.**

I love this line from Edwards (I'll close with it); he says of this glorious bridegroom & bride: Christ will "sweetly invite his spouse to enter in with him to the palace of his glory, & take her by the hand to present themselves before the Father, receiving his blessing & henceforth rejoicing together in consummate, uninterrupted, immutable, everlasting glory in the love & embrace of each other & enjoyment of the Father's love." That's what we get a glimpse of in 5, v. 1. The Father's *blessing* on the union & communion of the greater-than-Solomon & his flawless bride in whom he delights...

God's delight in the union of Christ & his bride: THAT's what the marriage bed points to. And *that's why it must be undefiled*... Because pornography, lust, sexual sin, sexual abuse, premarital sex, all of these things distort that picture. Trampling on that which is holy... Maybe you're listening today & you realize you've done just that: you've trampled the sacred. Like the bride, you are not naturally pure (you are "dark" from sin, 1 v.6 – defiled from the ways you've trampled the sacred)... The bridegroom of heaven has come to make you holy: to wash away your sin by the blood of his Cross, that he might say of you as he does her in 4 v.7: "There is no flaw in you; you are altogether beautiful..." Confess Christ in faith & repentance & that will be true of you today: your sins washed away & he will delight in you..... Thank you for listening, and may God bless you.