

The Security of Love
Song of Songs 1:5 - 3:5

This is the second message in a series on the Song of Songs, or the Song of Solomon

As I said last week, the **Song** is a drama with two soloists. The female voice is “the beloved” and the male voice is “the lover.” The transitions between the two soloists are sung by “the daughters of Jerusalem.”

The passage today opens with the beloved expressing her insecurity because she does not believe she is physically attractive to her lover.

5 I am very dark, but lovely,
O daughters of Jerusalem,
like the tents of Kedar,
like the curtains of Solomon.

6 Do not gaze at me because I am dark,
because the sun has looked upon me.
My mother's sons were angry with me;
they made me keeper of the vineyards,
but my own vineyard I have not kept!

7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves,
where you pasture your flock,
where you make it lie down at noon;
for why should I be like one who veils herself
beside the flocks of your companions?

HE

8 If you do not know,
O most beautiful among women,
follow in the tracks of the flock,
and pasture your young goats
beside the shepherds' tents.

ESV

The couple in the Song of Songs was young but used wisdom. He met her insecurity with honest praise, not vain flattery. She responds in kind.

This story has some aspects of a “Cinderella story.” She is the daughter of poor sharecroppers who work the vineyards and flocks of King Solomon.

It seems that Solomon visited his vineyards, probably disguised as a shepherd. He sees and falls in love with a commoner. She also falls in love with him. He returns to Jerusalem, but later he returns dressed in his royal garments and reveals his true identity and takes her as his bride.

The Song reflects on the thoughts of the bride and the groom on their wedding night.

Her Insecurity 1:5-6

This small town girl finds herself in the “big city” of Jerusalem, surrounded by “city girls” of fairer skin and better clothing. She feels out of place with the “daughters of Jerusalem.”

The “I” in “I am very dark” is an emphatic pronoun that indicates the intensity of her insecurity. The other women stare at her because her skin is “swarthy,” very dark.

She had been forced to work in the vineyards unprotected from the sun. In this culture the women avoided the sun and prized a fair complexion. She compares her skin with the “tents of Kedar.” The Kedarites were a nomadic tribe who lived in tents made from the skins of black goats. Evidently the curtains in Solomon’s tent were also black [5].

Her dark skin is not the only thing that causes her insecurity. She reveals two other characteristics which set her apart from the other women in Solomon’s life.

For one thing, she is a farm worker, and not of the privileged class.

Also, her home life had not been pleasant. Her mother’s sons had not been kind to her and made her work in the sun. As a result she had not been able to keep her own “vineyard.” She had no time for personal beautification.

Where Can We Meet? 1:7-8

Her question is another expression of insecurity.

With Solomon so busy with affairs of state, where will she find him?

She wants to be with him and a logical time would be at noon when everyone in a hot climate takes a “siesta.” At this time she probably still thinks he is a shepherd because she does not address him as king until chapter 3.

If he doesn’t tell her where she can find him at noon, she will be like a “veiled woman.” She might be mistaken as a prostitute, going from tent to tent.

His answer in verse 8 is a playful rebuke reassuring her that in his eyes she is incomparably beautiful and without competition.

Images of Praise 1:9-11

**⁹ I compare you, my love,
to a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots.
¹⁰ Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,
your neck with strings of jewels.**

OTHERS

**¹¹ We will make for you ornaments of gold,
studded with silver.**

Solomon is willing to lay aside all else and concentrate on expressing his appreciation of her in honest, thoughtful, and deliberate praise.

In the Song, Solomon praises his bride 40 times. On their wedding night he praises some aspect of her beauty or character seven times before he touches her. [4:1-5]

As strange as it may sound to us he tells her that she has the ultimate sex appeal: She is like a mare harnessed to one of Pharaoh’s chariots. Pharaoh’s chariots were pulled by stallions. To harness a mare to a chariot and place her among the stallions would cause an equestrian riot! He is telling her that she is as desirable as if she were the only woman in a world of men!

Then he tells her how the jewelry she wears enhances the beauty of her face.

Sparks Light Fires 1:12-14

¹² While the king was on his couch,
my nard gave forth its fragrance.

¹³ My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh
that lies between my breasts.

¹⁴ My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms
in the vineyards of Engedi.

Being reassured by his terms of endearment, she responds with “sweet nothings” of her own. She uses three different perfumes to express her feelings about him.

Nard {spikenard} is an expensive oil extracted from a plant in the Himalayas.

Myrrh is an aromatic resin from the bark of an Arabian balsam tree. Hebrew women often wore a small sack of myrrh around their necks.

Henna blossoms were flowers of a Palestinian shrub, cypress or camphire.

He stands out like a cluster of blooms in a desert oasis.

Praise Wars 1:15-17

HE

¹⁵ Behold, you are beautiful, my love;
behold, you are beautiful;
your eyes are doves.

SHE

¹⁶ Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful.
Our couch is green;
¹⁷ the beams of our house are cedar;
our rafters are pine.

Here they try to outdo one another in expressions of affection.

Her Insecurity is Gone: Song 2:1-7

SHE

I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

HE

² As a lily among brambles,
so is my love among the young women.

SHE

³ As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,
so is my beloved among the young men.

With great delight I sat in his shadow,
and his fruit was sweet to my taste,

⁴ He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his banner over me was love.

⁵ Sustain me with raisins;
refresh me with apples,
for I am sick with love.

⁶ His left hand is under my head,
and his right hand embraces me!

⁷ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the does of the field,
that you not stir up or awaken love
until it pleases.

She had begun by expressing her doubts about her desirability, begging the daughters of Jerusalem not to look down on her because of her sun-darkened skin and her country ways. Solomon responded by telling her to come to him. He praised her feminine attractiveness and her character. All of his praise allowed her to be comfortable with her uniqueness.

She acknowledges her beauty by comparing herself to two common wildflowers.

A rose and a lily:

The rose here is a flower that grows from a bulb.

The lily is a common swamp lotus flower common in Israel.

Neither of these flowers is exotic, but is as common as sunflowers. It is as if she is saying, “I am no valuable orchid, only a common flower.”

But Solomon takes up the playful exchange: “Only a lily?
Yes, but compared to you, all other women are thorns.

She responds, “Compared to all the other trees [men] you are an apple tree among all the other trees.

The Shulamite girl in Solomon’s Song, along with many other women in the Bible: E.g., the woman of Proverbs 31; Deborah, Ruth, and Esther show women in a way that argues against the image of a subdued and voiceless woman shuffling along behind her husband.

At least half of the words spoken in the Song are the thoughts of the Shulamite. She takes the initiative in lovemaking. Even in this culture where a woman’s status was based on her father and brothers before marriage and on her husband after marriage, she still expresses her feelings openly. She imagines herself going out into the night in search of her lover.

It is a sad commentary on our time when sex outside of marriage is accepted as “normal.” One of the important messages of Song is that true love does not force selfish passions on its beloved [7b].

Together in Love Song 2:4

**He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his banner over me was love.**

Solomon takes her into his royal apartment. He is saying to her and to everyone that this woman is special to me. His love for her is no secret! It is a banner [flag] flown for all to see. She is safe and protected.

The Growth of Desire Song 2:5-6

**Sustain me with raisins;
refresh me with apples,
for I am sick with love.
⁶ His left hand is under my head,
and his right hand embraces me!**

Secure in his love, the dark-skinned girl lets her passionate feelings grow. Raisins were considered to stimulate sexual desire. Apples symbolized romance. Her request to be fed with these special foods expresses her desire for Solomon. To be faint or sick with love is to be overwhelmed with longing for her lover's affections.

Timing is Everything Song 2:7

**I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the does of the field,
that you not stir up or awaken love
until it pleases.**

The charge to the daughters of Jerusalem appears to call on them to serve as a restraint until the appropriate time. The idea here is that these two lovers are determined to restrain their passionate feelings until the right time.

These lovers, as much in love as they are, choose to wait until marriage to engage in physical love.

The power of their desire is pictured by the "gazelles and does of the field." Both of these animals are ancient symbols of sexual potency and fertility. And both are noted for their shyness. While the couple is strongly attracted to each other their commitment is to wait until they are married.

Romance Blossoms Song 2:8-13

⁸ The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he comes,
leaping over the mountains,
bounding over the hills.
⁹ My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.
Behold, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing through the windows,
looking through the lattice.
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.

This appears to be a flashback to the early days of courtship and expresses the progression of a lasting relationship between a man and a woman. To love another person is not a “falling” but a choice, or more accurately a series of choices. True love is based on commitments and a progression.

She recalls seeing him “bounding” over the mountains to get to her. The word “bounding” means to be drawn together. The image is her standing behind her protective “wall.”

“Gazing” pictures him getting to know her. The “windows” suggests openings in the “wall.” She is willing to let him know her and she is getting to know him.

Solomon likes what he sees “through the lattice.” He wants to remove the wall. They need time together [10-13].

These verses may illustrate the experience of a new convert to Christ.

The “winter” of our separation from God is past. [11]

The world [life] looks different. [12]

The dove [Holy Spirit] is present. [12]

The fruit of the Spirit is developing. [13]

The separation between the person and God is gone. [10, 13]

Catching Little Foxes Song 2:14-15

**¹⁴ O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the crannies of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice,
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.
¹⁵ Catch the foxes for us,
the little foxes
that spoil the vineyards,
for our vineyards are in blossom."**

When Solomon first saw the Shulamite girl she was working in her family’s vineyards. Verse 14 expresses his desire to know her. He characterizes her as a dove hiding in the clefts of the rocks. The dove is an ancient symbol of shyness, gentleness, and a sweet voice.

There is much symbolism in these verses. The “vineyard” is their relationship. The “foxes” represent problems. Little foxes keep grapes from developing by digging in the soil and spoiling the vines. The “foxes” may be other men vying for her favor, or other women vying for his. The temptation is to “go too far” and be robbed of chastity before marriage.

Commitment Song 2:16

**My beloved is mine, and I am his;
he grazes among the lilies.**

Any problems in their relationship cannot alter this fact.
The lovers belong to each other

Handling Separation Song 2:17 – 3:5

**¹⁷ Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle
or a young stag on cleft mountains.**

3 On my bed by night

**I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him, but found him not.**

**² I will rise now and go about the city,
in the streets and in the squares;
I will seek him whom my soul loves.
I sought him, but found him not.**

**³ The watchmen found me
as they went about in the city.
"Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"**

**⁴ Scarcely had I passed them
when I found him whom my soul loves.
I held him, and would not let him go
until I had brought him into my mother's house,
and into the chamber of her who conceived me.**

**⁵ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the does of the field,
that you not stir up or awaken love
until it pleases.**

The lovers exercise restraint during courtship but long for their wedding day when premarital restraints will be removed.

While they are separated she dreams that she has lost him. In her restless sleep the beloved searches for her lover, but cannot find him. The content of her dream reveals her fear of losing him.

One lesson is that love overcomes insecurity. When we have the assurance that we belong to Christ or insecurity {guilt} is gone.