

His Love Keeps Abounding

Song of Solomon 2:4-7

20 June 2021, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Dear congregation, this morning we will continue our sermon series in the Song of Solomon.

- Preaching from this book has been one of the most delightful experiences of my life.
- Many ministers who have done so before me have expressed the same sentiment.

In the first verse, the Holy Spirit has revealed to us that this book is the Song of Songs.

- It is superior to all the other songs in the Bible and certainly to any that are outside.
- Here we have revealed to us the love of Christ for His church and the love of the church for Him, presented to us in an allegorical way.
 - This is the reason that throughout the entire Song, the name of our LORD is never mentioned. When you have an allegory, the one that the allegory is about is represented by other persons or things by allegory.
 - For example, when Jesus tells “The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers,” the owner of the vineyard clearly represents God the Father, the servants he sends represent the prophets, the vinedressers represent the apostate leaders of the church, and the Son sent by the owner of the vineyard represents Christ.
 - It would spoil the allegory if the owner of the vineyard were to appeal to God in the parable. Then you’d have the one who represents God praying to God.
 - God is seen throughout the parable in the person of the owner rather than being spoken of directly... So in the Song of Solomon, our Lord Jesus is throughout the Song in the person of the bridegroom—who is also called the beloved, the king, the shepherd, Solomon, and often simply referred to by pronouns.
 - We have noted that the whole book reads like an allegory instead of a historical account in that the one who is a shepherd looking after sheep in the fields is also a king in a palace, and his bride is seen running through the city looking for him and getting beaten by the watchmen.
 - That is the stuff of allegory.

Some of you may be struggling with the allegory that is used in Song of Solomon.

- I get that.
 - It can seem weird to have the relationship the church has with Christ represented by the relationship of a man and woman in marriage—especially when it includes the sexual aspect.
 - But you need to work through that struggle because the Song of Solomon is not at all the only place that our relationship with Christ is illustrated by marriage or even by sex in marriage.
 - Much of the Old Testament speaks directly of God’s people as committing harlotry with idols and with other nations, and it speaks of the Lord’s relationship with them using the imagery of a holy sexual relationship.

- Of course this does not mean that Jesus is like some perverted cult leader that has a sexual relationship with the people who follow Him.
 - It means rather that important aspects of our relationship with Him can be illustrated by sex in a holy marriage.
 - Just as there are aspects of that relationship that can best be illustrated by eating a feast—even by us eating Him, by running a race, by offering ourselves up to Him as a burnt offering.
 - Allegories are powerful.
 - Do not let them cause you to stumble, especially when they are from God.
 - Don't close your mind to them.
 - Seek to understand them. They are part of God's holy Word, given to us.

Last week, we began looking at chapter 2.

- We covered the first three verses.
- I want to read those again today along with verses 4-7 which is our text.

Here is God's word, beginning with chapter 2, verse 1:

Song of Solomon 2:1-7: I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. 2 Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. 3 Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, 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 cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick. 6 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me. 7 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.

And there we will end our reading of God's Word.

You might say that last week, we left the bride in a very happy place:

- sitting under the one that she has compared to apple tree among all the trees of the woods, delighting in the shadow and eating His fruit which is sweet to her taste.

Verse 4-7, the verses we are looking at today, show you what happens to her when she does that.

- It is very wonderful indeed.
- This is what the bride of Christ experiences as a whole and what each member within her experiences.

I. When we abide in Christ, He brings us into more and more of the fullness of His blessing as our husband.

- Look at how this is brought out in the Song.
- A. He brings us from “under the apple tree” to “the banqueting house.”
1. In verse 3, we (the bride of Christ) are sitting under His shade with great delight and eating His fruits which are sweet to our taste.
 - We are abiding in Christ as those who believe and are truly born again.
 - That is what is true of us if we are truly converted—part of the true church.
 - We have turned from idols to serve the living God.

- Instead of looking to the other trees of the woods, we have become as a chaste virgin who is betrothed to Christ.
 - We follow Him as our Lord and master.
 - We trust in Him as our protector and our provider.
 - Instead of trying to find our life from the riches, honours and pleasures, people, governments, relationships, or careers of this world, we have come to Him to obtain eternal life in the house of God.
 - We want to be His bride for all eternity.
 - What delightful protection and fruit we find in Him.
 - He has made provision for our justification—having paid our debt in full by His suffering and death on the cross.
 - He has conquered sin and death and we look to Him alone.
 - We want to live as sons in His Father's house.
 - We want Him to transform us so that we will be holy and good like He is, not selfish and proud like the world.
 - We are like Ephraim.
 - Having come to the Lord, we say, "What have I to do with idols anymore?" We are abiding under the shadow of Christ and we are eating His fruit which is sweet to our taste.
- Here we will stay. We love it well.
- We are content with our apple tree. We are amazed at His goodness and grace.
2. But then, to our surprise, He comes to get us and brings us from the apple tree to His banqueting house.
 - Verse 4 begins, "He brought me into His banqueting house."
 - a. Literally it is a *house of wine*—a place of the most lavish feasting and drinking.
 - Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that Solomon had within his palace "a most glorious dining room, for feastings and compotations [drinking], full of gold and such other furniture as so fine a room ought to have for the conveniency of the guests; and where all the vessels were made of gold."
 - No expense was spared for the pleasure of the guests. There was abundance of everything with musicians, ointments, and fine fare.
 - Indeed, there was excess.

➤ Under the apple tree, we had such an abundance and now He brings us to unimaginable new heights and depths and lengths!

 - b. It was beyond our wildest dreams to sit under the shadow of the King of Kings and to partake of His fruits in the first place, but this was not enough for Him.
 - He must do more.
 - He Himself brings us from under the apple tree to the banqueting hall.
 - We would never have dared to approach so great a hall.

- Nor would we have ever been able to bring ourselves to it... but as it says, "He brought me in to His banqueting house."
 - It was His decision and He is the one who brought us there.

TRANS> Do not miss the allegory here. This is not about a literal house of wine.

B. This is used to express the experience of Christ's abounding love.

1. Christ is not an apple tree, nor is He a banqueting house.

- This is used to illustrate something far better.
 - It is used to point to the fullness of His love toward us that is beyond our wildest dreams.
 - As the bride goes on to describe her experience in this house in verse 4, she says, "His banner over me was love."
 - This was the ensign that He has put over her.
 - It is like a flag for His house and His kingdom.
 - It is the colours under which we serve as His queen.
 - His kingdom is about love—His love that abounds to the chief of sinners such as His bride is—His love that is proclaimed by the gospel, that even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 - And not only that, but love is the way of the house that He establishes for us.
 - He transforms us by His Spirit who sanctifies us so that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength—we who were fallen and entirely incapable of such love—how wonderful it is.
 - And He transforms us so that we love one another, even as He has loved us. Think of it.

➤ You see that there is indeed something far better than a lavish house of feasting and drinking in view here. It is just the figure of the abundance of His love.

- George Burrows says, "So much better than thousands of gold and silver. Here is a feast of redeeming love. Better than feeding on fame, flattery, riches, power, which are nothing better than husks of the dying prodigal!"

2. Not only does it illustrate the fullness of His love. It also illustrates the greater and greater fullness of His love.

- He brings us from glory to glory, with grace upon grace—from strength to strength—
 - He manifests His great love to us under the apple tree—we see His mercy and grace to us, His saving work and provision, His acceptance, His generosity—
 - But then He brings us into a fuller and fuller appreciation of how great His love for us really is.
 - He promises this in John 14:21: "**He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.**"

- Paul prays for this in Ephesians 3:14-21: **For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,** ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

TRANS> That is the first thing we see in our text... in verse 4.

- Next we see our response as the bride of Christ.
- It is a most interesting response.

II. The more of Christ we receive, the more of Him we want!

A. In verse 5, we, the bride, describe ourselves as “lovesick.”

1. That is exactly what the two words that are used here mean—the word love and the word sick are simply put together—lovesick.
 - a. But just what does this mean?
 - Does it mean that we have become weak and faint as those transported with joy and ecstasy from receiving so much wonderful love?
 - Are we drunk with so much love?
 - Or does it mean that we are missing His love and yearning for it the way someone said to be homesick is missing home and yearning for home?
 - To summarise, is she sick because of too much love or because she is yearning for love that she does not have?
 - b. These two words (love and sick) are only used together one other time and it is in this song—over in chapter 5, verse 8.
 - There it is quite clear that she is yearning for love that she does not have.
 - It is during the time in the song when she is out searching for Him with deep regret because she has refused His advances. She asks the daughters of Jerusalem in desperation if they have seen her beloved and tells them that if they see Him, to please tell Him that she is lovesick...
 - that she is yearning for His love and does not want to go on without it.
 - c. But I would suggest that in the passage we are looking at today, lovesick includes both meanings.
 - On the one hand, she is sick from receiving so much of His love that she is overcome and can't take it more.
 - On the other hand, she is so delighted with His love that she feels she must have more.
2. The bride of Christ is here like a little child who says, “Do it again daddy!”

- You know, when the father is tickling the child and the child is laughing uncontrollably and can't take it anymore—they are overcome with laughter...
- But loving every minute of it.
- The father pauses, but as soon as he does, the child begs, “Do it again daddy! Do it again!” as they catch their breath.

3. Surely the manifestations of God's love are like that for God's people.

- We see many of the saints in the Bible overcome by the manifestation of God's glory, but then crying out for Him to show them more.
 - Think of Moses, quaking with terror before God, but then crying out to Him, “Show me Your glory!”
 - God in His holiness is like that—we are sweetly drawn but at the same time we want to run and hide. It is too much for us, but we want more.

B. Look at how she cries out for help because of her lovesickness.

1. She cries out to whoever might hear—the way you do when you are desperate.
 - The Hebrew shows that her request is plural—the NKJV says it is to the daughters of Jerusalem, but it may be to her husband and His companions as well.
 - She is crying out for help from anyone who will render it to her.
2. She is asking for medicine for her lovesickness.
 - She says (v. 5), **sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples.**
 - These are the very things that made her sick, yet she wants them to make her well.
 - The raisins and the apples are the manifestations of His love to her.
 - James Durham says here, “Love can cure the same sickness it makes.”
 - Indeed, isn't that the way it is with homesickness?
 - It is love for home that made you get sick—but it is going home that makes you get well.
 - Only in this case, she is overwhelmed with so much love at the same time that she is looking for more... like the laughing child.
 - When it comes to knowing Christ, we want more capacity to experience more of His love.
 - We have tasted and seen how good it is and we will not be satisfied until we can taste and see more.

➤ Look at the one who responds to her!

C. *He* responds to her! He, the bridegroom, is the one who comes.

1. Christ our husband sustains and refreshes us with His own embrace.
 - Verse 6 shows how He takes us in His own embrace of love.
 - She says: v. 6: **His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me.**

- What a picture of the support that we asked for when we were fainting and overcome...
 - His left hand under her head to sustain her (the raisin cakes) and His right hand embraces her (the apples that refresh her).
2. He sustains us with more of His love.
- Such language is used in the Bible of the embrace of friends as well as of the intimacy of a man with a woman.
 - As I mentioned in the introduction, don't let this offend you.
 - This is not suggesting that Christ is sexual with us.
 - It is suggesting that the best way to illustrate the intensity of His embrace is with the embrace of a wife by the husband she dearly loves.
 - Just as calling Him the Rose of Sharon does not mean He is a flower, but that He is more beautiful than the best flower, so describing His embrace as that of a man with his wife does not speak of Him hugging us, but of His divine love that is vastly superior to that.
 - This love is something that God's Spirit reveals to us.
 - We read it before in 1 Cor 2:9-10: **But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."** ¹⁰ **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.**
 - This is Him manifesting the **the width and length and depth and height** of His love that surpasses knowledge.

TRANS> This is what Christ has for His bride.

- He is a husband who knows how to make His wife very happy.
- Our marriages are often very poor illustrations, but don't let that discourage you about the love of Jesus Christ our bridegroom.
- Yours may be bad, but your relationship with Christ is the one that you have forever.
- Let your delight in Him eclipse whatever disappointment you have in your earthly marriage; and you will find that you will be able to do much better with your earthly marriage (or without marriage).
- If you are His true bride, you will never ultimately be disappointed—all you have to look forward to are greater and greater experience of His love.

III. Let all those who make up the bride of Christ settle for nothing short of the fullness of His love.

- A. That is the third thing I want to look at this morning from our text.
1. In verse 7, the church admonishes her members with a solemn charge:
 - **Song 2:7: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases."**

- This is mother church speaking to her members—you know how the church is said to be a building that edifies itself until we all come into the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God.
2. She charges these daughters of Jerusalem most solemnly here.
- She calls the gazelles and the does of the field to bear witness against them if they do not listen to her.
 - Later in the Song, she will speak of her beloved husband as a gazelle who runs to come to her.
 - Gazelles are known to mate during certain seasons—having their offspring during the rainy season.
 - Perhaps this is an appeal to their waiting for the time and season of love.
 - That seems to be what is in view here.
- Whatever the case, charging the daughters of Jerusalem and calling witnesses, mother church is emphasising the importance of her admonition.
- B. She is urging the disciples of Christ who make up His bride to **not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.**
1. Some translations say “my love” as if she is talking about Him, the one she loves, and telling them not to disturb Him.
 - But she does not call Him “my love.” She does not use that to designate Him.
 - Besides, the word *my* is not in the original—it is possible to add it, but there is no good reason to do so here.
 2. It seems much better to understand this as a warning against trying to stir up love artificially.
 - This is certainly a huge problem in our day.
 - Love is a desirable thing and people want it if they have not grown too cynical to think it possible—and sometimes that makes them try to drum it up.
 - They end up with a plastic, superficial, shallow substitute for love that is far different from the genuine article.
 - It is like a child’s plastic ring that they are sure is pure gold until the paint wears off.
 - You see this kind of love in Hollywood—it lasts for a year or two at best and then it is gone—but there is a great deal of hype about it all.
 - A lot of people actually ruin their marriage by trying to drum up love instead of waiting for it to grow and develop over the years.
 - They want the excitement that pornography depicts rather than love that is rich and seasoned.
 - But this is speaking, of course, about doing that with our love for Christ and with His love for us.
 3. The danger is that the daughters of Jerusalem will see the love of the church for Christ and they will want that love.

- That is all very good so far.
- But then rather than waiting patiently for the real thing to develop and grow, they will look for quick tricks and easy solutions.
- Many would-be disciples of Christ have crashed on this very rock.
 - They come in looking for something quick and easy and then they leave frustrated and disappointed.
 - They did not have faith to abide under the apple tree long enough for Christ to take them to the banqueting house.
 - They wanted to go straight to the banqueting house without abiding under the protection of Christ and eating His fruits under the apple tree first.

C. There are many ways to drum up artificial love for Christ.

1. Idolatry!

- Remember the golden calf? Israel was so excited. They gave their gold to make the calf and then they tirelessly danced and sang.
- They said it was for the LORD who brought them out Egypt—and there was only one who did that.
- But the problem was that they wanted Him in a way that He did not give Himself to them.
 - They wanted to approach Him in their own way instead of in the way that He instructed them to come.
- This is what people do today when they make God to be what they want Him to be.
 - They might say that they could not serve a God who would send anyone to hell—or perhaps they want a God that will tell them what a good person they are.
 - The true God that tells us that we are sinners offends them—they feel that they could not love a God like that.
 - What is the result of that?
 - The result is that they never get to know the love of the God who loved them even though they were unworthy sinners.
 - They do not get to know the one who is so pure and so holy that He cannot tolerate sin.
 - Yes, it is harder to love a God like that at first, but He is the true God and once we turn to Him for salvation,
 - Our love begins to grow and mature and become fuller and fuller as He manifests His great love to us—such love as eye has not seen or ear heard.

2. Sensual worship is another artificial way to drum up love for Christ.

- This is where you use very stimulating music, the pagan style of tongue speaking (where you are not speaking in a real language), drama, light shows,

multi-media presentations... all that instead of the simple worship God gives us.

- The result is that you are carried away in your spirit, but you do not come to know God. You call it that, but it is not that. It doesn't last.
 - There is also the traditional approach—where you do things in worship that God never called for
 - Like hanging up pictures of saints to adore or praying to their images.
 - Or burning incense, having guys with big robes waving their hands around and chanting stuff, making up your own holy days like lent and Christmas, that God never told us to celebrate.
 - There are lot of people who know nothing of Christ who get very spiritually stimulated by Christmas—but they know little about God's Son who came to save us from our sins.
3. Superficiality is yet another way to manufacture counterfeit love.
- You pretend to yourself or to others that you have this deep love and intimacy for Christ when such love and intimacy have not yet really developed.
 - Hey, I will tell you that I still have a long way to go. I feel like that only in the last few years have I really started to know the love of Christ.
 - For years I was a soldier for Him, but had little sense of His love.
 - When I preached through Ephesians, He started to bring me to His banqueting house a little—
 - It was around that time that I realised how much of my zeal for Christ had been zeal for my own success—I became disgusted with my whining about my frustration with the lack of growth of the church—I thought my burden was spiritual, but it was just selfish disappointment.
 - Then when I preached through all the books of the Bible and saw how gracious and kind God was to His people in a way that I had not known—and preached through Genesis.
 - And now going through the Song of Solomon—I have come to delight in the love of Christ in ways that are far beyond what I ever knew.
 - There was no way to rush this.
 - God has to bring us into His banqueting house as He will.

D. What are we to do to avoid stirring up artificial love?

- We are to do what we saw last week.
 - We are to come to Christ as the apple tree in the woods and we are to abide under His shadow of protection with delight and enjoy His fruits.
 - We are to abide in His word and pray that His word will abide in us.
 - We are not to go after idols, but have eyes only for Him—dove's eyes that look to Him instead of to the other trees that cannot give us apples or true protection.
 - We are not to get up and go the banqueting house.
 - We are to wait for Him to come and get us whenever He pleases.

- Ours is to delight in what He has already given us and to abide in it.
 - He will come when the time is right.