

Christ Woos His Bride

Communion Season

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Bible Text: Song of Solomon 2:14

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Let us open up the scriptures to the Old Testament, to the Song of Solomon 2 and we read the verses 8 to 17. The Song of Solomon 2 beginning to read at verse 8 and reading to the end of the chapter where we have a glimpse of the Lord Jesus coming to visit his bride.

8 The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. 9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. 10 My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. 11 For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; 12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; 13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. 14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. 15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. 16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies. 17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

The text for this morning's Lord's Supper sermon is taken from this passage, verse 14.

14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

Dear flock of Dundas, how will a poor a needy people come to meet the Lord at his Table especially after a week of self-examination in which they have been confronted with their own corrupt nature and that unbelief that remains in them against their will? How will they draw near to the Lord? How will they get from there to here? By Christ wooing

them and that's what our text tells us. "Christ Woos His Bride." That's what you can write as theme over this text, Christ woos his bride. We'll see, first of all, the place from which he woos her; secondly, the way in which he woos her; and thirdly, the aim of wooing her. Christ woos his bride: first of all, the place from which he woos her; secondly, the way in which he woos her; and thirdly, the aim in wooing her.

We have discovered already, dear congregation, that the Song of Solomon we meet in that song the bridegroom, the heavenly bridegroom, and it is clear from the passage that we have read together and also meditated on last week, that the bridegroom is longing to meet his bride. He wants to meet her but from the side of the bride, something is not right. She does not come out to meet him. She's not in her right place and we're given a picture of her, a picture that maybe also our boys and girls understand, the picture of a dove. Now boys and girls, I'm sure that you've seen some doves, maybe also you see them around the bird feeder at your home. Doves. And how you know that there are people who buy doves and they train doves and they own doves, and they put a little ring around one of the legs of the dove and those doves, they fly away and after some time they come back again. The owner then, when they come back again, he takes them into his barn for the doves and he takes care of them, but when we meet with the dove in our text, the dove is not in her right place. She's hiding somewhere. Where? Well, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs.

So she's hiding in a cave somewhere, hiding literally a steep place. That's what is meant with the secret places of the stairs, the secret places of some steep cliff maybe or mountain. Hiding. How come? Well, it can be for different reasons, can't it? It can be for one reason because the dove has gotten confused. It's gotten confused, I mean, maybe the dove in making his way back to his home and back to his owner's place, a storm came and a terrible storm and the dove in the midst of it all has lost the sense of direction and does not know the way home anymore. I mean, maybe you've had birds like that, birds that you see one day on your windowsill sitting there, they looked confused, they're in a daze, and the next day they're there again, and the next day they're there again. They're confused. That could be one of the reasons why the dove is hiding, because it's confused. A second reason for why the dove may be hiding is because it's been chased. It's been chased and maybe a bird of prey has begun to chase after this dove who is a defenseless bird. Maybe a vulture or a hawk has begun to prey on it and the dove seeking to escape from that bird, has sought for a place to hide in order to be safe from that vulture.

And you can be sure for one or other reason, the dove is afraid maybe because it's far from home, maybe because of that vulture that has tried to attack her, and she's gone into hiding and you can imagine the dove's heart is racing, it's beating hard, afraid that maybe the vulture will find her after all. But then here in our text, the owner of the dove comes. Maybe you can imagine that. The owner of the dove comes and he comes to seek her out and he sees her. And maybe this is how the owner of a dove would do it but he has a little container in which there's some food and he rattles it in the presence of the dove, that's what he does maybe in the barn, he rattles that container and he says, "Now come now. My dove, come now." He's trying to woo that dove to himself.

Now that's what happens here. The owner of the dove comes and he sees the dove hiding in the clefts of the rock and he says, "Come now." But the dove is hesitating. She's holding back. She's afraid. Now maybe you've seen something like that in a relationship between maybe a young man or a young woman and there comes a time when the young woman holds back. Maybe she's ashamed. Maybe she's become afraid. Maybe something has come in the way between a couple. Maybe she's not sure that she can trust this young man anymore and she goes into hiding, she holds herself back, and that's how it is spiritually too, isn't it? Sinners go into hiding. They hold back.

It's always good when we give some illustrations and let me do that now. Let me give some illustrations from the Bible of those who have gone into hiding. I begin with the beginning with someone like Adam and Eve after the fall into sin when the Lord comes to meet them. He had done that before, he had walked with them in the cool of the day, but that time after the fall into sin when he goes out to meet them, they are not ready to meet with him and they don't dare to come out. Instead they run away from him and Adam explains to the Lord, "Lord, when I heard thy voice, I was afraid." You see, he fears the worst and what do you do then? Well, you go into hiding and that's what Adam is doing. He's hiding from the Lord and he doesn't dare to come out.

Or think of David after his sin with Bathsheba, he goes into hiding. Then David does not do that as Adam and Eve did that by hiding behind trees and bushes. No, David keeps up his religious life, he continues to go to the temple, he still bends his knees to pray, but really he keeps everything closed to the Lord. He's holding himself back and he tells us something of it in Psalm 32, "When I kept guilty silence, my strength was spent with grief." Do you see what he's doing? He's trying his best to keep himself hidden from the Lord. He's trying to cover himself up so that he's not honest. That's someone who's hiding and maybe that's how you're sitting here this morning, trying your best to keep yourself hidden from the Lord. Still going to church, still reading the Bible, yeah, you have to do that, after all, still praying but not with an honest heart; only putting on an act and that means you've gone into hiding.

Or to give another illustration, this time from the life of Peter, Peter who had had so much confidence in himself and surely he would not deny the Lord Jesus, "Yeah, though everyone else would deny thee and be offended by thee, yet not will I!" Then that maidservant came and asked him if he belonged to the Lord Jesus and he said no. And someone else later on asked him again about belonging to the Lord Jesus and he said no. Then a third person came and asked him if he belonged to the Lord Jesus and he said no, and then he looked to the Lord Jesus standing there before Caiaphas and the Lord Jesus looked at him and he went, Peter, let me put it very simply, Peter went into hiding. And then a few days later, the first day of the week, the news is heard that the grave is open and the grave is empty, and then John and he, they run together but Peter is running with hesitation, he's running with fear, he's holding himself back, you see. And maybe you're sitting here this morning and you understand Peter. There was that time in your life maybe in which you went after the Lord and your heart went after him and your legs readily ran after him. He called you, you went and you loved nothing better than following the Lord Jesus. Maybe then there were times, dear children of God, that you

came to the table of the Lord so eagerly, so willingly and you desired to follow him. But then you found the world still so strong and the flesh so weak and know often, just like Peter, you deny the Lord.

So you've gone into hiding. Maybe there's another dove here hiding from the Lord Jesus because we have been chased, an enemy like a bird of prey has attacked you, maybe even someone from your own family, maybe someone from church without any love for you criticized you. And maybe another bird of prey came and then I'm thinking of a terrible bird of prey and you want to go in the direction of the Lord Jesus but then Satan comes who acts so much like a vulture, a bird of prey, and he says to you, "Do you really think that the Lord Jesus is for you? Do you think really that you belong to him? I look only at your life and look at all those sins in your life and there they are, all those accusations that are made and the temptations that you have faced and how many times you've fallen and all that you've done and all that you've not done." And when Satan comes and attacks like that, you can't deny it. It's true. And like a dove, you don't dare to come out. You only know and maybe, boys and girls, you've seen it at the bird feeder but when a dove is at the ground picking at some seeds, hears a noise, and what does it do? Immediately flies away. Away.

Maybe that's what you've been doing and maybe there's another dove here who's simply gotten lost in a storm maybe, a storm in your life and you've lost the Lord and you've gone astray and your heart is cold and you've ended up in the dark, in a dark cave, and you wonder, "Will the Lord have any dealings with me? Does the Lord still want anything to do with me?" And the answer is yes. It's clear that he does from the words of our text and that brings us to our second point: the way in which he woos. The way in which he woos. Listen, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Do you see how he woos?

Let me say two things of the way in which he woos. First of all, he woos with compassion. He woos with compassion. He knows where the dove is. He knows that she is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, and he knows and lets you know that he knows. And isn't that so that this morning, as you sit here this morning, maybe that burden is in your heart and maybe they're full and maybe there are many yet the Lord knows. There's no secrets to him. He knows where you are. He knows what has happened to drive you into the clefts of the rock and to hide from him, and he knows your fears, and he knows your folly, and he knows how it all went in this past week. He knows how you've been tempted and he knows how you fell, and he knows how that bird of prey came and attacked you. And he knows where you're hiding and he comes and stands close by and he wants to woo you for, you see, not only do you miss him, he misses his bride. He misses his dove.

It's not as if, you know, someone who may own doves and who may one day get a call from somebody who says, "Listen, is this one of your birds?" And he reads maybe the number that is written on that little band that is around the leg of the dove and the dove owner says, "Yeah, that's one of my own." And he hears about how this dove has come

on his windowsill and is there day-in and day-out and he seems so confused and dazed. And you tell him that there had been this terrible storm and maybe the dove owner says, "Ah, just leave him. Now that he's in such a state, he'll never get out of it. He's of no value to me anymore." That's what a dove owner may say but that's not what the Lord Jesus says.

You see, he misses his dove. She's precious to him. Listen to the way in which he speaks with that compassion in his voice, "O my dove." And the second way in which he woos, not only with compassion but with calls. He comes with his voice and he calls her and she's not in her right place and so what does he do? Well, he doesn't leave her. He doesn't ignore her. He calls her. And isn't that what the Lord does? Let me give some examples from the Bible in which he does that, some illustrations, and let me begin with Adam. What does the Lord do? Does he ignore Adam? Does he rain down fire and brimstone upon Adam? No, he seeks him out. That's how Belgic Confession of Faith so beautifully puts it in Article 17, one of the most precious Confessions of Faith in which the gospel rings forth which says, "We believe that our most gracious God, in his admirable wisdom and goodness, seeing that man had thus thrown himself into temporal and eternal death, and made himself wholly miserable, was pleased to seek and comfort him, when he trembling fled from his presence." Do you see what he does? He seeks Adam out and he asks him and the boys and girls know the question that he asks him, "Where art thou?" And it's as if the Lord is saying to Adam, "Adam, why are you hiding from me?" And maybe that's a question that's fitting to ask of you this morning, "Why are you hiding from me? Why are you seeking a covering in the trees?"

Or to give another illustration, I'll mention the name of David. What does the Lord do? Well, the Lord seeks him out. David did not seek the Lord out but the Lord seeks David out by the prophet Nathan and calls him and, in other words, what he is doing, the Lord is doing with David he's saying, "David, now come out of your hiding place. Come out."

Or Peter. Peter, yeah, the Lord seeks Peter out too and he speaks to him.

Or to give another illustration of that woman who had been sick for those 12 years, having an issue of blood. She needed the Lord Jesus and she came to the Lord Jesus and she said, "If only I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be whole." And she reached out and touched his hem and then said, "Now let me go and hide." She wants to make a quick getaway but he stops her and he speaks to her with compassion and he says to her, as it were, "My dove, come now. Come now out into the open." He doesn't stand and yell. He doesn't get angry. He doesn't punish the needy soul that for his mercy cries. He calls. He calls in love and that's how he stands here before you this morning, dear congregation, and that's what he says to his children too. Wherever you may have hidden yourself, wherever you may be and he says, "Come now."

And he has an aim, our third point: the aim for wooing her. Listen to him, he says, "let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Do you hear that? He has a twofold aim. One thing he says, "I want to look at you." And isn't that what a bridegroom wants to do with his bride? He

wants to look her in the eyes. But sometimes a bride has been crying. What does a bride do then? What does a boy or a girl do when he or she has been crying, when the face goes down? She doesn't want to show her eyes but the Lord Jesus says to his crying bride, "I want to see you. Even with those red eyes because you've been crying, even with that pain in your heart and that shows up on your face, I want to look at you." And then we're tempted then to try and improve ourselves and to take some make-up and to cover up all the marks that may be there but the Lord says, "No, I don't want you to do that. I want you to come as you are. You don't need make-up. Show me yourself, the way that you are. I want to see you."

And the second aim that he has, "I want to listen to you. I want to listen to you." And boys and girls, that's what you can do. You know, maybe there are times when your mom or your dad is too busy, or maybe a husband or a wife is too busy to listen to the other and telling you what lays on their heart but the Lord says, "No, I will listen." And then you can tell him, you can tell him all your trouble and your woe. You can tell him how it's been a disappointing week and how you've been so disappointed with yourself. He loves to hear your voice. You know, and a dove has a beautiful voice, doesn't it? But you know also that there are times when a dove doesn't have such a beautiful voice, it has a crackling voice. A crackling voice, maybe that's how you sit here this morning, there's a voice that says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Maybe that crackling voice that says, "God, be merciful to me the sinner. Lord, I don't know why I am the way that I am. Why, I seem to only get worse instead of better but I can't do without thee."

A crackling voice. The Lord says, "I want to hear your voice for it is sweet to me," for the crackling voice means that there is rejoicing in heaven because the Father has a needy soul whom he can help and the Lord Jesus has a troubled soul that he can save, and that's why he says, "Come now." But somebody says, "But now, pastor, what is the way whereby that hiding dove can be restored to the Lord? How can that be, a broken relationship between the sinner and the Lord, how can that be reconciled? How can that be restored? How can I sit at the table?" Well, because I said already, he does not come to punish but he says, "My dove, I have come to bear your punishment on my shoulders, in my hands and in my feet and in my side, and that's how I forgive, and I come to show you my love."

And he calls this morning his needy children, it may be his hiding children too and he says, "I want to see you and I want to take you somewhere. That's why I say come now because I want to take you to Golgotha, and there I want to show you that my grace is as wide as the ocean, and that in that blood a sinner is pardoned and you are precious to me." Now somebody says, "But pastor, a dove? Me like a dove? A dove is such a humble creature, such a meek creature, and I've only learned how proud I am." Ah, I know. He's been revealing himself to you and he's been showing you what you are but he wants to show you what you are and that you are proud of yourselves in order that he can take you somewhere, and in order that he can take you to Golgotha indeed and to show you, "This is where I cover proud sins, and where everything is missing, I have it all. I give it all."

And you see, after all, that's where he just bought his dove, on the cross of Golgotha, and that's why he can say, "Oh my dove, you are mine and I am yours." But then you see his blood is needed or can you, dear congregation, still do without his blood? Now those who cannot do without his blood, let them come now to his Table on the wings of faith. Then there is someone yet who says, "But pastor, but my wings are broken." I believe it but with him is healing and he teaches you how to fly and to come to him and to come at his Table. "How must I come then," the needy soul asks? Flying while looking unto Jesus. Amen.