

# The Best Bridal Processional

Song of Solomon 3:6-11

11 July 2021

11:00 AM (Halifax); 3:00 PM (Glenholme & Livestream)

## Introduction:

Today we continue our sermon series on the Song of Songs.

- We have been looking at this book in the way that I believe it is intended to be seen— as an allegory of the relationship that Christ has with His church.
  - This has been the way the book has been generally understood from the time it was written (the days of Solomon) until about 150 years ago when many began to assert that it was not an allegory.
    - Keep in mind that in Solomon's day, the promise that the Son of promise would be David's Son (descendant) who would reign on His throne forever and who would reign until all His enemies were brought under His feet, had just been given.
    - Solomon, who obviously was not the promised Son, wrote this song by the Holy Spirit about the relationship of David's greater Son, the Messiah, and Israel His bride, who would one day be composed of all nations.
  - Some of the modern interpreters can have some helpful expositions about marriage and relationships, but sadly such expositions miss what is so beautifully and helpfully set forth for us in this book—
    - A message that I believe the church, and especially reformed churches need.
    - Too often, we value our doctrinal precision (which we ought to value) but downplay the wonder and beauty of our relationship with Christ (which we ought not to downplay).
      - I have always tried to stress as a pastor that we are to have both sound doctrine and ardent love.
      - The two are meant to complement each other, not to play against each other.
        - It is my prayer that our series in the Song of Solomon will help us to cherish Christ more and to see how much He cherishes us.

Our text today is very helpful in this regard.

- We are looking at Song of Solomon chapter 3 verses 6 through 11.
- What we see here is essentially the bride of Christ being brought down the aisle to Him.
  - There is the wonder of seeing *her* (of all people) as *His* bride.
  - Then there is seen here the excellent way He transports her to Himself.
  - And finally, there is seen the delight He has in receiving her as His wife.
- Just as we have seen that she is a very complex bride—made up of many persons from all ages and all places from the dawn of history until the end of the world when Christ returns to take her as His own,
  - So here we need to see that her procession is His conveyance, or His transporting of her to Himself over all the centuries.

- In other words, this speaks of Him doing what He has been doing since the fall, bringing His betrothed bride down the aisle of history to marry Him at the last day.

Listen now as I read this text to you.

- Again, it is Song of Solomon 3:6-11:
- Please give full and reverent attention because this is the word of God.

**Song of Solomon 3:6-11: Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders? <sup>7</sup> Behold, it is Solomon's couch, with sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel. <sup>8</sup> They all hold swords, *being* expert in war. Every man *has* his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night. <sup>9</sup> Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King made himself a palanquin: <sup>10</sup> he made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup> Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart.**

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy and infallible word.

- Let me remind you again that poetry like this is not given to us to teach us what we are to believe about Christ and His saving work. We learn that from other parts of the Bible.
  - This poetry is given to us that we might delight in Him more and see how much He delights in us, all that we might love Him better.
  - It is not written to inform us of what we are to believe so much as it is to inflame and deepen our affection for Him.
    - We have to come to this book with sound doctrine already intact, not to learn what to believe, but to learn to love what the true faith has already taught us to believe.
  - In preaching from this book,
    - I desire to set forth nothing about our faith but what can be demonstrated from other scriptures—scriptures that are designed to teach us what to believe.
    - My goal is to present the pictures given us in this Song about our love for Christ and His love for us so that we will love Him better and will know His love for us better.

So let's look at this wedding scene.

### **I. First, the bride is presented to us. She is a wonder.**

- In our weddings, the groom typically goes to the front of the church to wait for his bride.
  - The music rises and everyone turns to the back of the church to see her, adorned for her husband in glorious apparel.
  - Her procession is then from the back of the church to the groom at the front of the church.
- In the time of the Bible, the procession was much longer. The brides were often brought from their father's house to the groom's house.

- So rather than just being brought down an aisle, she would be brought through the streets in a procession with her attendants.
  - In our text, the bride is described in verse 6.
    - She represents the bride of Christ, the church in all ages, who is to be brought to Christ, the bridegroom that He might marry her and take her into His home.
- A. In seeing her coming, the question is raised, **“Who is this coming out of the wilderness?”**
1. There is a sense of wonder at her.
    - On the order of asking, “What is *she* doing as *His* bride?”
    - There is amazement because she has come out of the wilderness.
  2. There has been an amazing transformation of her.
    - It is loosely like the amazement that an uncle has who come to his niece’s wedding when he has not seen her since she was a little girl.
      - He sees that she has become a beautiful young woman now and exclaims to those around him, “Who is this?”
    - It is loosely like that because in this case, the girl is not at all the kind of girl that anyone would expect the king to take as his wife!
      - To put bluntly, she is a girl that was in no way suited to him—one that was unattractive in every possible way—in character as well as appearance.
      - But now she has been transformed to be His wife.
    - This is where our biblical doctrine comes in which teaches us that we are full of sin and defilement, completely unfit to come to Christ because of our sin and corruption.
      - But we are also taught that by the saving work of Jesus Christ we are transformed into what 2 Cor 5:17 calls a new creation in Christ so that the old things are passed away and all things are made new.
  3. There she is to everyone’s amazement, brought out of the wilderness to Him!
    - She is like the church in the time when the Lord brought her out Egypt to be His own—His chosen bride despite her unworthiness in every way.
      - He brought her through the wilderness and then established her as His own betrothed wife.
    - The same thing was done when He brought her out of the exile.
      - It happened again, when He brought her from the nations after Jesus came.
    - All of this points to the final day when the whole bride of Christ, the whole church from all ages, will be presented to Him from the wilderness of this world as a bride perfected by Him, without spot or blemish, to be His own.
      - We might say that she has been brought out of the swamp of sin—she has been washed, she has been forgiven, she has been born again, she is transformed.
        - And there she is! His bride!

B. Look at how she is described here in verse 6.

1. She is said to be like pillars of smoke.

- Regardless of whether this is understood to be an allegory, this is difficult to understand and interpret.
- But as God gave His people sacrifices in the Old Testament to represent the offering of Christ to make them whole—to cleanse them from their sin,
  - It makes sense to see this as the bride of Christ with His sacrifice and intercession (symbolised by smoke) purifying and transforming her.
- Again, our doctrine teaches us that by His death on the cross, Jesus bore our sins so that we could be completely forgiven,
  - By His work, He not only secured our pardon, but fulfilled all righteousness (like the burnt offerings) so that we could be regarded as those who have always been wholly dedicated to God and without sin.
  - The smoke of His sacrifice ascends to heaven as a pleasing aroma to God, and we, His bride, are pardoned and accepted.
    - Our record is now clean because Jesus has paid our debt, the horrible debt of our sin. This is His sacrifice and His intercession.

➤ But that is not all.

2. By His saving work, He also changes our character.

- Never was a sinner pardoned and justified by faith in His saving work who was not also transformed in character—born again, sanctified, so that that sinner loves Him and loves His ways and wants to serve Him.
  - This work is not perfect, but there is such a change in us that now we serve Him whole-heartedly and delight in His law from within.
    - Now, we want to be His.
- This is described in our text as her perfume that she did not get from the wilderness from whence she came, but from the merchants, reminding us that the change is the work of the Holy Spirit in us.
  - Look at the rest of verse 6: **Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders...**

C. Clearly, she is not what she was.

1. To everyone's amazement, she has been washed, she has been justified, she has been sanctified. She is beautiful to behold, being restored by Christ.

- She who was a harlot is now a chaste virgin, espoused to Jesus Christ.
  - As Paul says in 2 Cor 11:2: **For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**

2. Upon seeing her, the onlookers say:

- **Who is this, coming out of the wilderness?**
- There is the bride of Christ who was the drunkard, the adulterer, the murderer, the idolater, now transformed.

- As Paul says, **1 Cor 6:9-11: Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**

- Just look at her!

TRANS> But the narrative does not stop with this brief description of her.

- It goes on to show us how she is conveyed or transported to Him.

## II. See then the marvellous way that Jesus transports His bride to be wed to Him.

- Again, we need to think about how they did their weddings in the time the Bible was written.
  - The bride was brought from her father's house to the house of her groom to be wed to him.
  - There was a great procession, and if she lived in another city or country, the groom would arrange for her to be transported to him with her friends and relations in safety and in luxury.
    - That is what is happening in verses 7-10.
    - She is being brought "down the aisle" to the groom—or in their tradition, through the streets to her groom.
      - He has sent his limousine and a royal entourage to pick her up and bring her to him—like Joseph did when he was the lord of Egypt and sent carts to bring his father and his brothers to him.
  - Look at how His conveyance of her from where she is to His house is described.

A. First, we see that He has provided for her safety.

1. She is described as being on a couch with trained men of valour surrounding her for her protection.
  - Look at verses 7-8: **Behold, it is Solomon's couch, with sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel. <sup>8</sup> They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night.**
    - a. She is said to be on Solomon's couch.
      - We have seen before that Solomon, in this song, is the son of David, the king of kings and the lord of lords.
        - David was promised a Son that would reign forever on his throne, a son who would never die and who would save His people, bringing the blessing of Abraham to them and deliverance from all their enemies.
        - David named his son who followed him on the throne "Solomon" which means "Prince of peace."
          - But of course the true Prince of Peace is Jesus Christ, David's descendent who is king forever and who came in the fullness of time.

- This couch or bed (it can refer to either) is seen to be a couch on which the bride is seated as she is brought to Him in a palanquin (which we will look at more when we get to verses 9 and 10).
    - It is a litter, or a portable sedan chair carried on the shoulders of men.
  - b. You see how the men are described as trained military men.
    - When a wealthy bride was transported, there would be robbers and other enemies who would want to rob her or harm her.
      - Consequently, a king like Solomon would provide for the protection of his bride so that nothing could prevent her from coming to him.
      - It would bring shame and sorrow to him if something happened to her.
    - These men that he has employed are valiant men—they are men who are experts with their swords.
      - They are not mercenaries, foreigners hired out, but they are men of Israel who have an interest in their own people and who love their king.
      - They are well armed, each with his sword, and there are sixty of them.
        - We are told that David had thirty such men. Here are twice that number for Solomon's bride.
      - Under their protection, there is no reason to be afraid.
2. What an excellent picture of our Lord's provision for our safety as His bride.
- a. He will see that we make it safely to Him at His house that we might be wed to Him.
    - Did Jesus not say that He would keep all those that the Father gives Him?
    - Did He not say that not one of them would perish?
    - That is what our theology teaches us, and here we see that He does this for us because of His love for us and His desire to marry us.
  - b. If you have come to Christ for salvation, be assured that nothing can prevent you from coming to Him.
    - Satan is a roaring lion, seeking whom He may devour. He is crafty and has no scruples about the means he employs to bring about our destruction.
    - There is also the world that opposes us. We offend them because we make them feel the guilt of their sin by serving the Lord.
      - They want to corrupt us because we expose their wickedness—our light exposes their lies.
      - They will try to tempt us and lead us astray, and they will persecute us to discourage us from following Jesus.
        - We need our king to protect us.
    - Furthermore, we are weak and unable to protect ourselves.
      - We have hearts that are not yet perfected, but Jesus has surrounded us with a valiant army to protect us.
        - None of these enemies will by any means hurt us.

- If we are His bride, He will convey us safely to Himself.
  - In 1 Peter 1:5, we are told that we are kept by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last day.
  - So do not be afraid.
    - If you belong to Christ, it is your desire to be kept by Him and you will be kept by Him. He has provided for your safety.
    - There is hope and certainty that we will arrive safely at His house.
- But it is not only for our safety that He has provided.

B. Second, He has provided for our comfort and delight.

1. We have a description of Solomon's luxurious palanquin that He has sent for us.
  - Verse 9-10 say: **Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King made himself a palanquin: <sup>10</sup> he made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem.**
  - A palanquin was a litter that was used to transport aristocrats and royalty.
    - They would sit inside it on a seat, in this case, on Solomon's couch, and it would be carried on the shoulders of men, using poles.
  - As you can see, there was no expense spared to make it.
    - Each of the fine materials used is surpassed by the one that follows.
      - It was crafted of cedar from Lebanon, a prized and durable wood.
      - It had columns of silver to support the canopy.
      - Its base was made of gold, more precious than silver.
      - The upholstery was dyed purple, a dye that was obtained from the secretions of mollusks... 8000 of them were required to obtain one gram of dye.
      - But then most precious of all, the interior of the palanquin was said to be paved with love.
2. It is unlikely that the Lord intends us to find some detailed allegorical connection for each of these materials.
  - The point is that Christ spared no expense in providing for our redemption.
  - As this analogy shows that Solomon used the finest things that were available to him in bringing his bride to him,
    - So we learn that Christ used the most precious things He had to convey us to Him, even His precious blood that was poured out for our salvation.
    - By comparison, Peter explains that we were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.
  - We see the strength of His love for us in His providing what was required for the forgiveness of our sins that He might bring us into His father's house as His bride.
3. This ought to make us very glad.

- To be loved so well by the one who is the finest and best of all men, the Son of God, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.
  - To think that He has such a great love as to provide all this even while we were yet sinners—can we ever doubt but that He will freely give us all things that He has promised?
- How can we ever question His love?
  - How can we be insecure?
  - How can we fail to have unspeakable joy that is full of glory?
- With such a provision, His mercy and acceptance of us is sure and certain.
  - Never has a sinner come to Him, relying on His freely offered promise to obtain full remission of sins and acceptance, and been rejected.
  - To suggest that such could happen is to impugn His gracious character.
- No, dear child of God.
  - Come into His palanquin of redemption and grace and He will bring you safely to His home, safely to Himself.
  - Do not try to get to Him by your own steam—you will never make it.
  - Enjoy His provision with joy that overshadows even the deepest afflictions that this world can throw at you.
    - You are riding in the priceless palanquin that your Solomon has made for you—for you, His bride—to come to Him.
    - Enjoy His love. Bask in His palanquin, paved with love.
- 4. But notice—it is said to be paved with love *by* the daughters of Jerusalem.
  - Does this mean that it is their love rather than Christ’s love?
    - Is it the love of the daughters of Jerusalem that pave this palanquin and hold it together?
  - No. The daughters of Jerusalem are said to pave the palanquin with love, yes indeed, but it is not their love by His love with which they pave it.
    - They receive His love, they delight in it, and as the bride of Christ they speak about it with one another.
  - All of His saving work (the cedar, the silver, the gold, and the purple cloth wisely crafted) is held together by His love.
    - The daughters of Jerusalem delight in this love and when they do, they ride in the luxury of His grace that is more precious than gold or silver.

TRANS> And now the focus is turned directly upon the bridegroom.

### **III. In verse 11, the daughters of Zion are told to go forth and see King Solomon.**

- Consider these daughters of Zion:
  1. The daughters of Zion are the same as the daughters of Jerusalem.
    - They are the disciples of the church—those who are being taught of Him in the church by the church (as we have seen, the bride teaches herself—those who are pastors and ministers within her teach those who are disciples).

2. They are instructed here to come and see King Solomon who is eagerly waiting for them, His bride.
  - It says, verse 11: **Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart.**

➤ The focus here is obvious.

B. They are to see this illustrious king, eagerly waiting to receive His bride.

1. He is King Solomon—the Son of David, the Prince of Peace who is king over all of God’s people.
  - He has come from heaven to be born of David’s line by a virgin mother.
    - He is the sovereign Lord of all who saves us, as we have seen, bringing us from the wilderness to His own house to be His bride.
    - He is the king who delivers us from all our enemies and who provides redemption for our forgiveness, our righteousness, and our sanctification that we might live in His house forever in the joy of His love.
    - He is conveying us to Himself that we might wed Him on the appointed day.
      - He is the Lord of all—and there He is, eagerly waiting for us.
2. We see that He is said to be crowned by His mother.
  - This speaks of the church’s acceptance of Him.
  - His mother is also His bride.
    - The church brought Him forth, but she is also his bride.
    - Jesus said in Matthew that those who believe in Him are His brother and sister and mother.
  - He is king already, but the church crowns Him as our king by receiving Him as our Lord and Master.
    - Many cultures, including Israel, had a tradition where a crown was put on the heads of the bride and groom.
3. But the focus here (above all) is at the end of the verse—that His wedding day is said to be the day of “the gladness of His heart.”
  - He is yearning for the day when we will be presented to Him as His bride, without spot or blemish, as those who have transformed by Him.
    - He is yearning to take us into His Father’s house that we might see the love that He and the Father have had from before the foundation of the world.
    - He is yearning to bring us into His house so that we can receive that love and so that we can love with that love—so we can be His bride forever in His house of perfect love and righteousness.
  - There is something so exhilarating about seeing Him filled with joy at the prospect of taking us as His bride.
    - He is the shepherd who rejoices over the sheep that was lost and is found.

- Jesus is the shepherd who finds His lost sheep and **“calls together *his* friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.**
- He is the one who will rejoice over us a bridegroom rejoiced over his bride.
  - **Isaiah 62:5: “For *as* a young man marries a virgin, *so* shall your sons marry you; and *as* the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, *so* shall your God rejoice over you.”**
- He is the one who will rejoice over us with singing.
  - **Zeph 3:17 The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet *you* with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.**

**Conclusion:** If you are in Christ, let your heart be warmed by this portion of the Song of Songs.

- You are the bride that He is bringing from the wilderness to His father’s house.
  - He has already called you and betrothed you, if you believe.
    - You have been brought out of the wilderness and you are in His palanquin.
    - He has spared no expense that He might bring you safely to His Father’s house.
  - And there He is, waiting for you with joyful anticipation.
    - What could be of greater encouragement than this one who promises to receive all who come to Him with such gladness?
      - It would be good enough if He were to receive us with great reluctance.
      - But what can we say when we see that He receives us with great joy?
        - Words will not suffice.