

A Love Better than Wine

Lord Supper - Song of Solomon

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Bible Text: Song of Solomon 1:1-4

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We turn in the Scripture to the Song of Solomon just after the book of Ecclesiastes, between Ecclesiastes and Isaiah. Song of Solomon chapter one and we will read the first 11 verses.

The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents. I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.¹

The text is verses two through four. To understand the words of our text, beloved, we should understand some things first about the Song of Solomon. And right there in the first verse:

“The song of songs, which is Solomon's.”²

¹ Song of Solomon 1:1-4.

² Song of Solomon 1:1.

Obviously Solomon is the writer of this song and, as comes out there, this is the greatest song that he ever wrote, the song of songs, like we say of the most holy place, the holy of holies.

Solomon was not only a wise man, not only a man learned in every subject that there was, but Solomon was also a poet. In 1 Kings chapter four verses 29 and 30 we read about Solomon's wisdom and his poetry. 1 Kings four verse 29:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.³

And then it compares him to some well known wise men of that time.

And then in verse 32 of 1 Kings four:

“And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.”⁴

And then these are the things that he spake of in his songs and proverbs.

And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.⁵

The Song of Solomon then is the product of the wisest man on the earth, an expert in every field and every subject. And it is on the topic of love and romance.

And not only from the wisest man, but the wisest man inspired by the all wise God. The Spirit picks, of all the subjects that Solomon wrote of, this subject to be the book that will be in the Scriptures.

We should look, we should listen and we should learn, then, from what Solomon has to say in the Song of Solomon. It is about love. It is about romance. It is about relationships between the male and the female, something that every one of us has to deal with in our lives. And here is God's Word and God's wisdom on the subject. That is first of all.

In the second place, we should recognize that the Song of Solomon recounts a true story, the story of a real romance between a man Solomon and a woman called the Shulamite. This is not a myth. This is not an allegory, but it is a very real and a very natural love

³ 1 Kings 4:29-30.

⁴ 1 Kings 4:32.

⁵ 1 Kings 4:33-34.

story of a man and a woman. It is because of this that many shy away from the book of the Song of Solomon. They are afraid, on the one hand, to be as open as Scripture is about the subject of love and sexuality and on the other hand they are not ready to believe that this could be real, that God would actually put a real life experience and story like this into the Scriptures and so there is a fear to treat it. But it is real. We have to let the story that is in the Song of Solomon come out and speak for itself. We have to let the Scripture. That is one of the main principles of the interpretation of Scripture, let the Scripture mean what the Scripture says. It really happened. This is a real story. You take it at face value. It isn't an allegory, something like *Pilgrim's Progress* where every element of the story has a hidden meaning and then we have to get to the hidden meaning of all the different things in the book. But it is a story in poetry and we have to deal first with the story if we are to understand the book.

Here is the story and you will find it scattered throughout the book. Solomon the king {?} at Ephraim about 50 miles north of Jerusalem. He leaves that vineyard to the care of a caretaker and that caretaker is a woman who has two sons and those two boys have, as well, a younger sister. This younger sister is naturally beautiful, but because of her isolation and because she works so hard in the sun, that beauty goes unnoticed by her brothers and even by herself in verse six.

“Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”⁶

She didn't have time to care for herself and her own beauty because she was so busy working in the sun taking care of this vineyard until one day Solomon comes and he recognizes her natural beauty and there is a courtship between Solomon and this woman and Solomon takes her to Jerusalem where she lives among the daughters of Jerusalem and eventually becomes his queen. So in the second place there is a real story in the Song of Solomon.

In the third place—and this is unavoidable—when the true believer looks at the Song of Solomon and studies it, he can't help but lift his eyes heavenward to Christ Jesus. He can't help but see the gospel, Christ and his Church here in the Song of Solomon and in faith see the great love of Christ for his Church. The Christian marriage relationship reflects the marriage of Christ and his Church, Ephesians chapter five.

And this song the Spirit takes a sinful human marriage and removes all the sinful elements and sanctifies this marriage so that it is presented as a beautiful, perfect picture of the relationship between Christ and his Church. And that is what we have to see as we look at the marriage relationship of Solomon and the Shulamite. It is a reflection of Christ's relationship to the Church.

Now not all the elements of that relationship that are described in the Song of Solomon are going to have particular application to Christ's relationship to the Church, but the

⁶ Song of Solomon 1:6.

main theme of the Song of Solomon, the theme of love and the richness of this relationship, that will lead us to looking to Christ in his Church.

And the love that is spoken of here in the Song of Solomon is not just an abstract theological thought. Christ loves his body the Church, something in our minds rather distant. But now the Song of Solomon brings Christ's love to the experience of the individual believer. This is about a man and a woman in a personal relationship and the richness and the experience of that relationship and that is the way we should read the Song of Solomon. It is not just Christ and the Church, but it is Christ and the believer, Christ and me and my relationship with him, his love for me and my love for him. That is what comes out when we understand the Song of Solomon.

Compares Christ's relationship to the believer to all the joys and all the blessings of a man and a woman in courtship and in marriage. It is personal. We have to put ourselves into it.

But this morning we will look at verses two through four under theme them a love better than wine. And we will look at this, first of all, from the point of view of the earthly relationship of Solomon and the Shulamite and then we will look at it from the point of view of the spiritual relationship of Christ and the believer.

Verses two through four.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.⁷

What is going on here in these verses? We have to understand that in the Song of Solomon there are three voices that speak. And if you have a newer translation at home or maybe some other versions or publishes they often indicate which voice is speaking at which point in the Song of Solomon. There are three main speakers in this poem. First there is Solomon and then with him the Shulamite. And the Song of Solomon is chiefly a dialog between Solomon and the Shulamite, between these two and they speak looking at the other and describing the other.

You can think of it this way. They have a camera in their hand and they are looking through that camera and telling us what is on the other side of that camera.

And then the third group is the daughters of Jerusalem. You have them here in the text in verse four. It goes to the plural, we. "Draw me," says the Shulamite. And then the daughters of Jerusalem respond, "...we will run after thee." And then the Shulamite speaks again, "The king hath brought me into his chambers." And then they say,

⁷ Song of Solomon 1:2-4.

“...we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine.” And then she says, again, responding to the daughters of Jerusalem and their love and their recognition of Solomon’s virtue, she says of Solomon, “The upright love thee.”

So there you have the daughters of Jerusalem are a sign the Shulamite is married to Solomon. And what she is doing here in verses two through four is sitting with her friends, the daughters of Jerusalem and reflecting and contemplating the love of Solomon and speaking out loud to those friends about her experience of Solomon’s love.

Now notice three things that she does here as she reflects on Solomon’s love. First she remember or contemplates his love. She does that on two levels. First of all, she does that on the physical level in verse two.

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”⁸

And again in verse four:

“... the king hath brought me into his chambers.”⁹

She is speaking here of an intimate relationship between her and her husband King Solomon and she is delighting in that intimate relationship between the two of them. There is nothing filthy, nothing dirty about that. The world makes this kind of thing cheap and dirty, but the Scriptures exalt it in the right place at the right time between a man and a woman who are husband and wife. This is a good, a healthy, a glorious thing. The Scriptures delight in it. It is the expression of the closest relationship, a man and a woman in marriage.

But not only does she reflect on Solomon’s love on the intimate physical level, she also goes deeper and further than that in verse three where she says:

“...thy name is as ointment poured forth.”¹⁰

She speaks of Solomon’s name, Solomon’s character. She compares the character of Solomon to a refreshing smell of ointment. She is a country girl. She comes to the city and there are all kinds of new smells in the city and this is one that stands out to her that she likes the ointment, the oil that the King Solomon uses as a deodorant. Now we are familiar with those kinds of smells, perfumes and deodorants. We don't go around smelling other people, but it is pleasant to be with some because of the odor that they have. And that is what she is saying about the name of Solomon and the character of Solomon. It is pleasant to be with him. It is a joy to get to know him and to be around him. His name, his character is like cologne, sweet savor.

⁸ Song of Solomon 1:2.

⁹ Song of Solomon 1:4.

¹⁰ Song of Solomon 1:3.

Now the Spirit tells us something here about what is important in a man. It tells the young lady what to look for in a man and it tells the young man what to have in order to attract a good, godly wife who is from the Lord, what you should aim for. It is not in biceps and a hairy chest. But it is in character. It is in your name.

In 1 Timothy three the apostle Paul describes to us the characteristics of a good office bearer or the qualifications of a man who should come to office. But he is not speaking her as though these virtues only need to belong to the office bearer, but he is saying we should have the best man, the man with the best character in the church serve in the office. And this is what he says about a good and virtuous character in 1 Timothy three. And it is worth keeping in mind in connection with the congregational meeting this week:

A bishop [and elder] then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.¹¹

And then late in verse seven:

“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”¹²

And the same virtues to the deacon. He must:

“...be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.”¹³

There is the good character, the good name that is like the sweet smell of ointment, pleasant to be with.

And this Shulamite recognizes that Solomon’s name is something that is even recognized in the community. The daughters of Jerusalem say:

“...we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine.”¹⁴

Speaking of Solomon. And she responds to that estimation of the daughters of Jerusalem of Solomon:

“...the upright love thee.”¹⁵

¹¹ 1 Timothy 3:2-4.

¹² 1 Timothy 3:7.

¹³ 1 Timothy 3:8-9.

¹⁴ Song of Solomon 1:4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

See? Even the daughters of Jerusalem recognize the good name of Solomon. This is what makes a man. This is what women should look for in a man. This is what men should be towards their wives. These are the things that she admires in Solomon. You might say even this is what brings this physical response from her.

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”¹⁶

Solomon and his name and his character, trustworthiness and so on creates for her a comfortable and a secure environment to express her love to him physically. She trusts him. He cares.

It is important that we see that this is something that she communicates to her husband Solomon and never Solomon’s writing. And Solomon is writing something that he as heard from her. She has told him this. That is healthy that in a marriage relationship the husband and the wife communicate with one another. That kind of communication strengthens and draws them closer, something that many of our marriages could have more of. So, first, she remembers Solomon’s love.

In the second place she compares his love. And the comparison here shows how much she enjoys and how much she appreciates the love of Solomon.

“...thy love is better than wine.”¹⁷

We shouldn’t think of wine here in terms of partying and drunkenness, the kind of way that alcohol is used for the most part in our day. But we should think of wine here as a symbol, a biblical symbol of joy. You have that in Psalm four which we sang together. And the last part:

“Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.”¹⁸

The wine puts gladness in the heart. It is a symbol of the greatest earthly joy and prosperity. And we should think of wine here in terms of it being a part of the staple of the diet of those days when a meal consisted of something like we have here in the sacrament this morning, bread and wine. She says:

“...thy love is better than wine.”¹⁹

Wine was associated with giving strength to a man, physical strength. His love more than wine. Wine was associated with medicine and giving healing to those who were sick and even used as a preventative against disease. And she says, “Thy love more than wine.”

¹⁶ Song of Solomon 1:2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Psalm 4:7.

¹⁹ Song of Solomon 1:2.

Wine brings joy and gladness to the heart and the soul, makes the heart merry. And she says of his love, “More joy than wine. Your love,” she says, “is better than the greatest earthly pleasures, more invigorating, gives more strength and life and health to my bones than anything else in all of the world.”

She is enamored with him. She is in love with him. And that love is healthy for a human, healthy for men and woman. It is good for us—and this is the point—to have rich personal relationships and to seek those kinds of rich, personal relationships. God made us for relationships. Think of the law.

It is all about relationships to God and to one another. And now God gives marriage especially as the place for the richest of personal relationships. She delights in his love and she compares {} earthly pleasure and it is superior.

And in the third place, you see here that she desires his love. In verse two:

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”²⁰

And in verse four, “Draw me,” and then later on:

“...the king hath brought me into his chambers.”²¹

This is a healthy desire of a wife for the love of her husband. She gives herself to him and they go into the chamber. There is something rich in this relationship. They understand one another. He has character. She understands him as a man and she gives herself to her husband. Because they understand one another there is an inexpressible joy in their relationship. That is beautiful.

But now let’s lift our eyes to another relationship richer than any earthly marriage. The richness of the relationship of Solomon’s love here is but a shadow and a reflection of Christ’s love and his relationship to the Church.

Solomon comes from the place in Jerusalem to the hill country of Ephraim to a vineyard and a country girl who is isolated. He brings her to Jerusalem and he chooses her above all the daughters of Jerusalem to be his wife. He draws her with his love into the intimacy of his chambers and she responds, “Let him draw me.”

But our response to the love of Christ will be greater than the love and response that this woman shows for Solomon. The response of a woman to an earthly relationship of this Shulamite will pale in comparison to the believer’s response to the love of Jesus Christ. Better than wine is the love of Christ. Better than every earthly pleasure is the love of Jesus Christ.

²⁰ Song of Solomon 1:2.

²¹ Song of Solomon 1:4.

Do you love him? As you contemplate his love, does it fill your heart with desire for him that the Shulamite expresses it here? Not the love of the soldier who will stand and be faithful and even give his life, die, but the love and the desire of a wife, a spouse for her partner.

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”²²

We emphasize knowledge. We emphasize knowing Jesus Christ, doctrine in the head and that is good. Our love must be directed by a true knowledge of God and Christ. But we mustn't do that at the expense of a genuine heart felt emotion and love for the Savior as our Savior, my Savior. The knowledge that you have in your head about Jesus Christ ought to stir your emotions, your love for Christ. It ought to fill our souls with an admiration for him. It ought to grip us. It ought to fill our lives so that we live in love with all our being, heart, mind, soul and strength to serve him, {?}.

When you think of the love of Christ, his electing love, his choosing love, does it grip your soul, mind that God looked across the masses of fallen humanity and chose me, that Christ came from the glories of heaven and dwelled among sinful, fallen men and I one of them and he came and did that to choose me out to be one of his, to live in this rich marriage relationship with him? That should bring a response like the Shulamite's response.

When you think of what he did to save you something like Solomon coming from the courts of the palace in Jerusalem and going to the isolation of the hill country and finding there a maiden and bringing her to the place to be his wife, when you think of what Christ did, he came from the heights of his glory in the likeness of sinful flesh. He endured reproach. He was misunderstood of men. He was rejected. He was killed to bring me from the misery into which he came, Philippians chapter two.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.²³

For what? For me. That ought to fill us with a love for him.

When you think on his name, a name above every other name, a wonderful name, a name sweeter than every other name. When you think of all that his name says about him, his virtue, his perfection, his saving love, when you think of all his self revelation in all of his works, all that speaks of his character and which proves his character to the believer. What admiration that ought to stir in our souls for him.

²² Song of Solomon 1:2.

²³ Philippians 2:6-8.

When you compare his love as the Shulamite compared Solomon's love, for every earthly pleasure and the love of Christ, when you compare the love of Christ to every earthly power and the strengths and the greatness of his love to whatever else there is in us.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”²⁴

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.²⁵

His love is more excellent. His love is superior to everything that can be found earthly. That ought to kindle a love in us for him.

Do you love him? The believer says, “Do I love him? Do I ever? Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”

Do you see how the desire of the Shulamite pales in comparison to the believer's love and desire for Christ? That love, beloved, is what should fill us this morning as we come to the table and take the bread and the wine. Our hearts should go heavenward to something better than wine, Christ and his love so that we cry out, “Glory, Glory, I will run after him. Let the king bring me into his chambers. Oh, for more of him. Oh, to be closer to him, to know him, to embrace him. Let him kiss me.”

And that is the desire that will fill the believer's heart as he leads and all the days of his life. He will seek to be with Christ, to know him, to enjoy the riches of his character, his name and his love. Where? Where are the appointed means of grace? Let me have more of Christ. Where? Where in my personal life? Let me have more of his name in the Scriptures? Let me live and walk with him? Draw me after thee.

And so the believer will live, a desire stronger than any earthly desire, a fellowship, a pleasure richer than any earthly pleasure. Amen.

²⁴ Romans 8:35.

²⁵ Romans 8:38-39.

SERMON OUTLINE: SONG OF SOLOMON 1:2-4
SUNDAY DECEMBER 5, 2004 – A.M. SERVICE, COMMUNION

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON SONG OF SOLOMON

- I. THIS IS SOLOMON'S GREATEST SONG
- II. IT IS HISTORICAL – THIS IS A TRUE STORY OF ROMANCE AND LOVE
- III. AS WE STUDY IT, WE LIFT OUR EYES TO CHRIST AND HIS LOVE FOR THE CHURCH

"A LOVE BETTER THAN WINE"

- I. THE EARTHLY RELATIONSHIP DESCRIBED
 - A. THE VOICES SPEAKING IN THE SONG
 - 1. SOLOMON AND THE SHULAMITE
 - 2. THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM
 - B. WHAT THE SHULAMITE DOES IN THESE VERSES
 - 1. CONTEMPLATES/REMEMBERS SOLOMON'S LOVE OUT LOUD TO HER FRIENDS
 - A. THE PHYSICAL (v. 2, 4)
 - B. BUT, MUCH MORE, HIS NAME (v. 3)
 - 2. COMPARES SOLOMON'S LOVE TO WINE
 - 3. DESIRES HIS LOVE
- II. THE SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP SHADOWED
 - A. SOLOMON'S LOVE IS BUT A SHADOW OF CHRIST'S
 - B. THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSE IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE SHULAMITE