

Song of Solomon 3:6-5:1, Love Consummated

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Date: 07 April 2019

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[0 : 00] Our text is Song of Songs, chapter 3, verse 6, through 5-1, on page 625 in the White Bibles. And the Word of God says, What is that coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of a merchant?

Behold, it is the letter of Solomon. Around it are sixty mighty men, some of the mighty men of Israel, all of them wearing swords and expert in war, each with a sword at his thigh, against terror by night.

King Solomon has made himself a carriage from wood of Lebanon. He has made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple.

So its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem. Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.

Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead.

[1 : 21] Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young. Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely.

Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like the Tower of David, built in rolls of stone. On it hang a thousand shields, all from them shields of warriors.

Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that graze among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.

You are altogether beautiful, my love. There is no flaw in you. Come with me from Lebanon, my bride. Come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Ammanah, from the peak of the Seneir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards.

You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride. You have captivated my heart with one glance from your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride.

[2 : 32] How much better is your love than wine and the fragrance of your oils than any spice. Your lips drink nectar, my bride. Honey and milk are under your tongue.

The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. A garden locked is my sister, my bride. A spring locked, a fountain sealed. Your shoots are an orchid of pomegranate with all choicest fruits.

Henna with nard. Nard and saffron. Talamus and cinnamon. With all trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloes. With all choice spices. A garden fountain.

A well of living water. And flowing streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind. And come, and come, O south wind. Blow upon my garden. Let its spices flow.

Let my beloved come to his garden. And eat its choicest fruits. I came to my garden, my sister, my bride. I gathered my myrrh with my spice.

[3 : 32] I ate my honeycomb with my honey. I drank my wine with my milk. Eat, friends. Drink. And be drunk with love. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Just a brief prayer together.

Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord. And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

Is not your word also, Lord, like balm that heals the broken. And mends those who are falling apart.

And so, Father, we come to your word. And the great mystery of it all is it breaks some and amends others. And so, as your word goes forth this morning, would you accomplish your work for all its purposes?

[5 : 01] Would you reveal yourself to your people so that we would love you better? We ask these things for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We are continuing in. For those who may be visiting here for the first time, we have endeavored on a 15-week series through a section of literature in the Bible just known as wisdom literature.

And here we are in the Song of Solomon. This will be the second sermon I have ever heard on the Song of Solomon. And incidentally, it will be the first and possibly only time I will preach from the Song of Solomon.

But here we are. I encourage you to keep your Bibles open to Song of Solomon because it will be helpful to us in our time.

What does the Bible have to say about love? Well, it may... It's an open-ended question and invites all sorts of answers.

[6 : 18] You may be familiar with a few snippets or phrases. God is love. Or for God so loved the world that he gave his son. Or you may know this is my commandment that you love one another.

Christ loved the church and he gave himself up for her. Or the infamous passage, 1 Corinthians 13, that love is patient and love is kind.

It does not envy or boast. And when we come to the Bible, much of what is said about love is usually tethered to God, the character of God, in his saving actions.

So you often think of verses like when Paul cites in Galatians, God loved me and gave himself up for me.

This is how we think of God. This is how we think of love. This is what makes the Song of Solomon quite surprising.

[7 : 28] It fails to mention God at all in the book. Possibly in chapter 8, verse 6, though highly debated, it neglects to tell us overtly about God's love.

Rather, it shrouds it, even ignores it. Yet the book has found its way into the Christian Bible. It remains fixed in the Hebrew Bible.

And our text is staggering in that it celebrates love. It commends love to even become intoxicated with love.

But it is not divine love that it speaks of. Rather, it is a love experienced between a man and a woman. It is a love that is physically manifested, tangible, and experienced.

If the majority of the Bible attests that God's love is great, then this passage for us this morning attests that human love is good.

[8 : 32] The Bible will establish for us the goodness of love demonstrated in physical intimacy and union. The song harkens back to Genesis chapter 2.

You remember in the Garden of Eden, where Adam is called to name all the animals, and he's looking for a suitable partner, and none of the animals fit the bill.

And there, God gives him and gifts him a woman. And to his delight, the Bible tells us that they were both naked and not ashamed.

And this portion of our song this morning illustrates for us a picture of a man and a woman unashamed. They are holding fast to one another. What were once two become one.

And to let the cat out of the bag, to grab the attention of some who may have already dozed off, today's passage is about sex.

[9 : 36] It's permissibility, it's passion, and it's pleasure. Well, the text is undoubtedly poetic.

It's comprised of a compilation of song lyrics. It's filled with images and metaphors, many that may seem unrelated to us residing in the 21st century. Military metaphors, nature metaphors, geography we're unfamiliar with, fragrant spices and scents that few of us could identify.

Here we are situated in a metropolis, and the song invites us into the wilderness, into mountaintops, into a garden of sorts. You see, the song is telling a story, but more than telling a story, what it's trying to do is convey a feeling, a sense.

It is not merely telling you that a man and a woman are being united together, and inviting you to simply watch this day.

It is actually encouraging you, and inviting you to be part of this day. In a conversation with someone yesterday at the men's retreat, he said, what's actually happening is, the song is not inviting you simply to look.

[10 : 55] It's challenging you to linger. It's not simply a quick glance. It's a long gaze. So how are we to move through this text?

Well, there's various ways to outline it, but in our time together, I want us to see that there is a progression. The text is moving in a certain direction. How do I know it's moving?

Well, because on the heels of what was preached last week, and right before our text this morning, in chapter 3, verse 5, there's this refrain that is repeated three times in this book.

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

Contextually, it's saying, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Don't look, don't touch, don't taste. However, our text closes this morning with that refrain, eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love.

[12 : 05] It's quite a movement. And you have to ask, how do the, how does this author carry us from point A to point B? Don't touch. Be drunk.

Intoxicated with love. So this is how I'm going to attempt to do it. Four points this morning, which that's, that's already out of the box for me.

Four markers of how it moves. Anticipation, invitation, consummation, celebration.

Anticipation, invitation, consummation, celebration. Wedding ceremonies embody anticipation. Anticipation.

They are the pinnacle of tension that has built up over time. Courtships and romantic relationships create this natural tension.

[13 : 07] Because for couples, they know the hardships that have been overcome, the decisions that have been made, the romance, the affection, the love that has been cultivated.

The summation of all of that in that relationship represents this heightened tension that translates into anticipation. This is why, if you have an opportunity to participate in the wedding, at least on the guy's side, usually you'll hear something like, bro, dude, you're getting married.

like, you're getting married. Why? Because, well, one, your friend, or the guy friend, is usually like, I can't believe someone's going to marry you, first of all.

But it's this tension that has built. The friend or the groomsmen have watched this from afar. You'll hear on that day, maybe the mom or the dad or the bride saying, my little girl is getting married.

She was this tall and now this tall and he's taking her. All that anticipation, and even the groom himself is saying, is this real?

[14 : 27] Can this actually be happening? Because so much has transpired leading up to that day. So much tension has built up. Whether from loved ones, from the couple themselves, whether from challenges or difficulty or romance and affection that has, it's all building up to this day.

Plans were set. Arrangements were made. Colors were chosen. Dresses were picked. Decor was decided upon for a single day, a single occasion, a wedding.

And the text is trying to convey this to you and I. You see this anticipatory element. It opens up in verse 6. What is that coming from the wilderness?

Better put, who is that coming from the wilderness? It's a spectacular and awe-inspiring picture. It is the glory of the groom.

The glory of the groom. Columns of smoke, fog lights of sorts, I guess. perfume that is comprised of expensive and rare spices depict this noteworthy approach of the groom.

[15 : 38] It's the arrival of the man. Possibly Solomon. But in reality, I'd like to make the case it's any groom.

Any groom on their wedding day appears in regal splendor. whether it be a literal entourage of 60 mighty men or 60 groomsmen depicting power and authority and security, we are to a sense that the groom has arrived in splendor, dignity, power, and poise.

The groom has arrived and it is glorious. Behold, verse 7 tells us, so much so that the woman, the bride, I believe, speaking says, hey, go look at him.

Go out, daughters of Jerusalem. Daughters of Zion, verse 11, go check him out. He's mine. And there it is.

The groom, majestic, crowned in splendor, garbed in glory. It is the day of his wedding, according to verse 11, the day of the gladness of his heart.

[16 : 56] Well, if chapter 3, verses 7 to 11 charge the reader to behold the glory of the groom, when we transition chapter 4, the reader is now invited to behold the beauty of the bride.

We see the glory of the groom. Now let's take a look at the beauty of the bride. The groom's declaration in verses 1 to 7 of chapter 4 is not only describing what she looks like, but how he feels when he sees her.

Her beauty is mesmerizing. But the language is going beyond just trying to convey appearance. It's trying to convey the deep emotion that when she steps out, this is how he feels.

He is enthralled by her. I mean, he starts your eyes and then he moves your hair, your teeth, your lips, your cheeks, your neck, your breasts.

So much so, you begin to say, like, does he have something for every feature of her? Absolutely. He could tell you about her ears.

[18 : 15] He could tell you about her hands, her shoulders. Why? Because he's mesmerized. He's in love. He's enthralled. That he, the summation of her just overwhelms him.

What he is doing poetically is he's trying to attempt to do what guys do these days, write these wedding vows that I don't know what to say, but I need to say something because I am obsessed with her.

It's the joy that's evoked in a man when he sees his bride. And note this, every human imperfection disappears.

the physical flaws all go away. The pimple on your wedding day is overlooked. It will be overlooked.

The wrinkle on your wedding day is hidden. The flaw you feel you have is somehow covered up in the eyes of your lover.

[19 : 22] What you have perceived as a blemish is blotted out. For the bride, we've seen the word last week used the insecurity of her extended hours in the sun.

Maybe sunspots on her face. Maybe the wrinkle that comes from long exposure. And she would have thought my eyes, my complexion, my face, my nose, my hair is not this way, not that way.

But the writer wants us to know that there is no physical deficiency. You see that. She is so beautiful. chapter 4, verse 1.

You are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. You are so beautiful in verse 7 that there is no flaw in you.

Wow. What she was once insecure about is now being overlooked. in this sense, we affirm the popular saying, love is blind.

[20 : 27] The power of love covers the perceived insufficiencies and even the inadequacies of its object. And you see, the attractive force of love is at work.

You feel the anticipation, don't you? It's drawing the couple closer, him approaching from the wilderness. wilderness. And now you see it's panning out and you see maybe the caravan and the entourage and the groomsmen.

It's a wide angle. And all of a sudden the camera turns and you're zoomed in so close to a face like eyes, just the eyes. You know, you almost need to back out a little bit.

But what you see is this, a move in proximity. What was once far is now being brought closer and closer and closer and closer and they're standing before one another.

Well, teenage, adolescence, you young men know the feeling, right? It's the tension you have when you see that girl cross the hall and you kind of have the feelings for each other.

[21 : 42] And you're like, oh man, she's coming this way. Don't say something. Foolish. Don't smile. I'm starting to sweat. I'm shaking.

Why? You're anticipating. You're anticipating. Well, it leads to an invitation. Chapter 4, verse 8 through 16.

The security of love leads to the extension of two invitations. I'll point that out right here on the outset. Verse 8, there's an invitation. invitation. And then in verse 16, the first half, there's another invitation.

The groom invites the woman in verse 8, who interestingly has become his bride at this point, to come with him. At first, your initial reading may read, oh, come with me from Lebanon, my bride.

Come with me from Lebanon. You picture a rendezvous. Hey, let's go sneak out. Middle of the night. But it's not what's actually happening. What is being pictured here is that up to this point, physical intimacy has been deferred.

[22 : 56] We know that because the song has warned us not to hasten love or initiate it prematurely. It's fascinating here, this Solomonic voice or the guy speaking, he invites the bride to come with him, to depart from Lebanon, from the peak of Amman, from the peak of Samir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains and leopards.

It's not a rendezvous he's proposing. What he's inviting her to do is, you have been entirely inaccessible to me. These mountains are far north in Israel.

Who's going to walk near a den of a lion? Nobody. Who's going to go to the mountains where the leopards are? Nobody. What the groom is doing is he's inviting the bride to come engage with me.

You've been inaccessible. You've withheld yourself from me. The encouragement, the invitation here is to engage physically.

In a short few verses, you will find that. It'll be consummated, but the groom here is expressing his desire to consummate.

[24 : 14] They have not engaged in premarital sexual intimacy. She has remained chaste. She has preserved herself up to this point. And therefore, the groom extends an invitation to engage with him intimately.

See, the phrase there is no flaw in you is the same language that in Leviticus the sacrifice carried that same, when you brought a sacrifice to the Lord, it was flawless.

Why? It wasn't crippled and it was pure. It was clean. It was set apart, both physically and morally. And you see the poetry begins to heighten, the intimacy intensifies.

The Hebrew now describes the bride as a sister. verses 9, 10, 12, 5, verse 1. It's possibly an honorific term, but it definitely, it's a change of status.

It's an intimacy marker. It escalates. What was once the gaze of the groom on the bride has now intensified to touch and embrace.

[25 : 17] You see in chapter 4, verse 3, your lips are like a scarlet thread. It's analogous. When I see it, it's like a scarlet thread, red.

In chapter 4, verse 11, it's no longer like a scarlet thread. Your lips drip nectar, my bride. Honey and milk are under your tongue.

It is safe to presume that they are now lip locked. Their tongues are certainly touching. Their physical proximity is so close that the fragrance of her garments are consuming him.

The scene is intensifying and moving forward toward consummation. And here two images now emerge to the forefront of the song.

There's a garden repeated at least five times beginning in chapter 4, verse 12, and a spring of water. The garden becomes a central metaphor, and now you begin to see the artistic move of the writer or the composer.

[26 : 26] The bride's body is now compared to a garden and a spring. The garden is luscious, an orchard of pomegranates filled with the choicest fruits, an abundance of choice spices, a plethora of trees.

Her body is a spring, a well of living water, a fountain. yet for the groom, both are locked, inaccessible.

You see it in verse 12, don't you? The garden is locked. The spring is locked. The fountain is sealed. And here it is.

Before him are the prospects of pleasure and enjoyment, but they are inaccessible to him. he doesn't have the key. She does.

And therefore, she must extend an invitation. At this point, physical pleasure has been lying dormant, and it is now summoned to awake in verse 16.

[27 : 40] Before the refrain was, do not awaken or stir up love, now in verse 16, awaken it. Well, the love is awakened.

She reciprocates the invitation extended to her by him in verse 8. He invited her to come with him, and now she invites him to come to her.

What was once locked and sealed is now accessible. He is granted entry into the garden, freedom to consume its fruits.

What we must note here is this is a consensual act. The invitation comes from both parties. It is not the man imposing himself on the woman.

it is not the woman seducing the man. And the text offers us or gives to us mutual invitations, mutual acceptances.

[28 : 48] But the text gives us a forewarning that there is a natural desire to hasten love, hasten physical intimacy prematurely.

there is a restraint that has to be exercised. You see, there's a tension in this. That is to say, the way you handle physical intimacy in non-covenant relationships, you can handle it in a way that it is untimely and not good.

when you engage in touch with somebody that you have an affection for, that you have a romantic desire for, you begin a process that is very, very difficult to reverse or halt.

You can ask pretty much probably every male in this room. You know the metaphor, possibly dated, the physical contact is somehow compared to the game of baseball.

First base, second base, third base, home plate. How far did you go is depicted by which base you're standing upon in a baseball diamond.

[30 : 19] But the devil's deception lies at the heart of this game. You see, the goal of the game, of course, is to make it around all the bases. When you step up to the plate, you've already begun a process that is nearly impossible to stop unless you stop playing the game.

People will say, hey, it's first base. Am I safe? Am I safe at first base? I was only second. I got the third, but that's it, that's it.

I did it. Let me forewarn you. When you stand in that batter's box, the pool is so great to make it all the way around.

And you, in your mind, whether irreligious or religious, there are many people who hit home runs and lose games.

Be forewarned. once the process starts, unless you quit the game, chances are, you're moving in a way that the writer has said, whoa, whoa, whoa.

[31 : 46] Don't awaken that. Well, whoo! Well, I don't know what I'm talking Anticipation.

Invitation. Thirdly, very quickly, consummation. Well, 5-1 is the culmination of their physical union and consummation.

A groom and a bride united together. What was once two are now joined together as one. You see it in chapter 5, verse 1.

The husband enters his garden, gathers to his delight. That which was described as locked, he is now granted access and entrance. And we are to envision him eating the garden's choicest fruits.

I came, I gathered, I ate, I drank. And let, oh, my notes say, let's stop here and linger. And I'm like, really? Do I really want to say this? Yeah, it's getting hot in here.

[32 : 53] but, um, we're going to linger here. Why? Because it is actually the centerpiece of the book. Preceding it is the exact same number of verses that follow it.

Structurally, it's the book's emphasis. The book is saying, stare at chapter 5, verse 1. And consider the imagery. Myrrh, honey, milk.

milk. Interestingly, for students of the Bible, those are all very rich and wealthy images of Old Testament things.

You may or may not know myrrh is the primary ingredient to the oil that was fashioned for God's holy place, the tabernacle or temple.

And when God gave the instructions to Moses, he said, you're going to make this concoction, this oil. It is primarily myrrh. And whatever it touches, it becomes holy.

[34 : 00] And you think of milk, and you think of honey, and you may or may not know that these are the primary descriptors of the land of promise. God says to his people, I'm going to bring you into a place and it flows with milk and honey.

Why? Because there's abundance and there is security. There. Of course, the garden we know is linked to Genesis chapter 2. And I don't think it is a mere coincidence that all these images compiled together depict the picture of consummation.

Why? Because there is a holy act taking place, emblematic of security in a garden, representing a couple naked and unashamed.

God's good intentions in creation are revisited here. And listen closely. This is not a sinful act. This is actually a sanctified act.

not sinful, sanctified, consummation, anticipation, invitation, consummation, quickly, celebration.

[35 : 12] In response to this, the song celebrates with the declaration to eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love. This is not only to commend what has just taken place, but it is also to promote its continuation.

Keep eating, keep drinking, eat, drink, repeat so much that you're intoxicated by this. Now, you may think that physical intimacy or sexual union is the consummation of love, but it's not.

This is not the most important thing. The most important thing is actually the relationship, the forging of two to become one. And the song will give us hints of this along the way.

she's found leaning in chapter 8, leaning on her beloved. It is a drive towards actually wholeness and peace, according to chapter 8, verse 10.

God is trying to bring into completion what was broken, or he's trying to reassemble. I mean, you see it in chapter 8, verse 10, the word peace. God is trying to bring shalom to everything that is disordered, including human sexuality.

[36 : 26] So why is it being celebrated? What is actually being commended here? Well, physical union is being commended because the image portrays this life-giving, that sexual intimacy actually infuses life as the couple engages in it.

It is the source of living water. It is not only a safeguard against temptation, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, but physical intimacy is life.

It is not just procreation, but for human pleasure, to nourish the couple, to sustain them. It is a gift to be enjoyed. Anticipation, invitation, consummation, celebration.

And as I close, physical union and covenant marriage between a man and a woman are good. Human love in relationship is good.

But hear this, human love is good, but it is not perfect. the world in which we practice love is a broken world.

[37 : 39] In the world of the text, there are foxes that ransack vineyards. There is the heartache from the absence of one's lover in chapter 5, verse 6.

There is an image of even sexual violence in chapter 5, verse 7. There is the persistence of death that brings love to a halt in chapter 8, verse 6. What the book is commending is human love is good, but it is not perfect.

It is commendable. It is desirable. It is even pleasurable, but it is merely temporal. Catch this. Here is the truth of the matter. Every earthly love will disappoint you.

Every demonstration of human love will fall short. How do I know this? Because there are singles in this room that desire to be married, and there are married people in this room that desire to be single.

You're like, how does that work? Because the grass is greener, possibly. Or does it convey this, that whether you be married, whether you be single, your desire for love is insatiable.

[38 : 55] That we, according to Beth Moore on Twitter, I know, I know, it's not. We of faith are longing for someone we have never seen.

We are longing for somewhere we have never been. We are hoping to do something we have never done. It cannot be satiated here. And she writes, we can start over ten times with all different people at all sorts of places and confront the exact same feeling.

it's not here. It is not here. Well, we are recipients of good and imperfect love of one another.

But human love cannot be all that you seek. Companionship cannot be your life's aim. Marriage cannot be your idol. Why? Because they will not and cannot satisfy.

But can I give you some great news? Human love is good. But like I said before, God's love is great. Human love is temporal.

[40 : 02] God's love is eternal. Human love is fickle. God's love is steadfast. Human love or human marriage is passing. Divine marriage is everlasting.

And I don't say this out of irreverence for my covenant pledge to my wife. life. But when I've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, and I look back on these days, my greatest joy is not the fact that I pledge all of my human love to my wife.

It will not be the fact that I pledge all of my human love to my four children. My greatest joy in 10,000 years will be that God pledged his love to me.

Oh, that's why there's no marriage in heaven. That's so well. Okay, okay, okay. I got to finish. Well, well, well, well.

Well, well, well, well, well, well. I need to sit down. But I, let me, well, and here it is, right?

[41 : 27] Jesus pledges himself in covenant to you and I. That this groom overlooked this bride's blemishes, or better put, died for her deficiencies.

he suffered for her sin and set his affection on her to rescue her. And he anointed her with oil to set her apart. He brought her to the land of milk and honey so that they can dwell in security and unashamed.

And here it is, church, that he offers you a cup, a glass filled with wine and says, hey, come to the wedding. Whose wedding? Who's getting married?

Well, it's a royal king, endowed in splendor, garbed in glory. Who's the bride? She's flawless and pure. And it's you.

It's us. And you may not know it, Christian. And you may not even believe it, Christian. But you are participating in the greatest love story ever told.

[42 : 36] It will overshadow any human love story you could ever experience. and this morning, you'll be extended a glass.

And part of it is saying, hey, see you at your wedding. Oh, Father, oh, you have taken us to be yours.

And that to us compels us to love you in return. You have extended and invited us to you, to come to you.

And here we are, encouraged and exhorted to invite you. you. And if we do so, the Bible tells us that we are united to Christ by faith.

Help us for Jesus' sake. Amen.