

The Climax of a Love Song

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Preacher: Paul Dudley

[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 8th of February 2004.

The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled The Climax of a Love Song and is based on Solomon chapter 7 verse 1 through to chapter 8 verse 7.

Where is love dead? Well, I guess not seeing this here today. In today's paper, in the Sunday Alive section, I think it's called, Sunday Life, they have an article looking at where is love.

And it has this paragraph to start with. It says, where is love dead? The figures are decidedly unromantic. The divorce rate may have stabilised, but it's still 400% greater than it was 40 years ago.

The marriage rate is the lowest in the century. Demographers predict that one third of Australians will forgo a waltz down the aisle. There have never been more people living alone.

[1 : 19] And those who do choose to get married are putting it off, procrastinating until the last possible moment. The article then goes on to give six creative, they've got six creative minds to try and give love a bit of a marketing boost.

I should have just come along here to this sermon series. We've been following this love poem, a great love poem, the greatest of all songs it claims to be.

And in it we've seen a couple, a man and a wife, I'm sorry, a man and a woman. As we've been going through though, there's been this tension. Will they consummate their relationship?

Will they get married? Will they finally be united as one? Will they be united as one of us?

Will be united as one of us. It leads the woman to the refrain that we hear many times through the book. Do not awaken love. Do not stir it up.

[2 : 45] A refrain that she says at key moments in the book. Reminding people of the dangerous nature of love. That it is not something to be entered into lightly.

It is a powerful thing. but as we read through it it also suggests that the two are moving steadily towards consummation despite separation and hostility and interference from others every time we read it we know we're moving that step closer today we look at the climax of a love song and as we begin why don't I pray for us that we may hear God's word and put it into into our lives father we do indeed thank you for this book this song of love we pray that we may learn more of yourself and of each other and how we should be treating each other we pray that you open our hearts and minds to it and that we may apply it to our lives in our different situations and we pray this in your son's name amen well as I said last week we finished off it'd be good for you to open up your bibles to page 547 page 547 last week we finished off the end of her dreams where the daughters of jerusalem this this group of people that are group of women that are throughout the book they call to her to return from her dreams return from her fantasies and her her dreaming of her wedding day and the love that will follow her they say in chapter 6 verse 13 return return no sure might return that we may look upon you and she responds she responds by saying why should you look upon a sure might as upon a dance before two armies she protests at their leers she protests at them leering at her and looking at her as a common dancer but she is mesmerizing she is beautiful we have this picture here of her being a dancer before two armies the picture is as two armies that meet on a battlefield and we're looking over the top of it and we're watching their moves and their counter moves the attack and the defense and the the armies moving around and we're mesmerized by what's happening watching with intensity such as the beauty of the sure might everyone that looks are looks upon her or struck and she doesn't want people leering at her well responding to this protest of people leering at her the man then affirms his love for her in chapter 7 he declares her beauty her physical beauty which will later become a duet so have a look there in verse 1 he starts with her feet and her hips he starts perhaps there because of the illusion of her being a dancer it's a

thing that attracts him is seeing this this light and swift movement of this lady moving before him how graceful are your feet in sandals oh queenly maiden your rounded thighs are like jewels the work of a master hand he continues her praise of her moving up from the thighs he there describes subtly and tastefully alluding to the intimacies of sex of the images with the navel and the belly your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine your belly is a heap of wheat encircled with lilies moving up further he speaks of her breasts your breasts your two breasts are like two fawns twins of a gazelle in verse 4 he moves up yet further to her neck he likens her neck to an ivory tower that is it's not a long thick fat neck like a football player but perhaps a neck that is grand strong dignified and perhaps elegant her eyes her eyes there are described as pools in heshbon by the gate of bath ribbon her nose her nose is somewhat prominent your nose is like the tower of lebanon overlooking damascus somewhat of a prominent nose i guess i guess a part of that culture a prominent nose was something that was elegant and attractive he then moves up to her hair speaking of it as that as carmel your head crowns you like carmel and your flowing locks are like purple a king is held captive in the tresses here we see that the carmel range are a beautiful range mountain range and alluding to the fact that she she stands tall and dignified the purple imagery that we have there is the the purple of a queen she is like a queen to him fit for a king stunning beauty that cannot be resisted in verse six he expresses his admiration of the woman with a general affirmation of her beauty how fair and pleasant you are oh loved one delectable maiden well again it's not really the the words that we use to our ones in a restaurant you know sitting there but in this culture these are beautiful words in verse seven he continues but there is a change he changes the tact he continues to describe her beauty but he's also describing his passion and desire for her a passion to consummate their relationship he likens her to a palm tree we see in verse seven you are stately as a palm tree and your breasts are like the clusters here we see she's like this palm tree slender and beautiful her breasts like the fruit of the palm the sensuousness of this of this reference is exploit is exploited in the next few verses i say i will climb climb the palm tree and lay hold of its branches he then speaks of uh of her breasts may your breasts be like clusters of of the wine and the scent of your breath like apples and your kisses like the best wine that goes down smoothly gliding over lips and teeth feel the passionate desire that he has for her feel the longing the desire to be united to her to consummate their relationship the woman's response to all this beautiful talk verse 10 i am my beloved's and his desire is for me she affirms her mutual affection for him in verse 11 through to 13 she then invites him to be with her she invites him to join with her in the vineyard to see the awakening of nature it is springtime with all the fresh smells and the pleasant temperatures of that season it is springtime the time of love and love making she invites him to herself and to that of love making come my beloved let us go forth into the fields and lodge in the villages let us go out early in the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded whether the great blossoms have opened the pomegranates are in bloom there i will give you my love again she states her desire to give her love to to her lover in verse 13 but symbolically the mandrakes give forth fragrance and over our doors are all choice fruits new as well as old which i have laid up for you oh my beloved she continues to express this deep desire that she has for him the desire to be together but this time we see in the beginning of chapter 8 she expresses this by wishing that he were a brother to her oh that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother's breast if i met you outside i would kiss you and no one would despise me it seems odd that he should describe her to be like a brother why be like a a brother i mean that seems i guess a little perverse in our culture for her she wants to be with him she wants to be out in public she doesn't want to have her relationship closed behind doors where where no one can see it she wants the world to know that she's in love with him she wants to be able to hold hands in public but it's quite clear that this is frowned upon in this culture it's frowned upon because of their situation it's frowned upon because of either the brothers who are trying to hold back the relationship it's held back because of all whatever different reasons but her desire is that they would make public their relationship and so to be like a brother she could hold his hand she could give him a kiss in public because people would only think there was only brother and sister in verses 2 and 3 she fantasizes perhaps the result of her frustrated desire about the intimate rendezvous she will have with her lover a note here that she again speaks like last week about taking her lover back to her mother's room a place here might seem weird in our own culture but in this cultural setting and in this book we see that it is a place of security and intimacy is there that she asks of him to taste of her sweet juices is there that she wishes to be together

I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother and into the chamber of the one who bore me I would give you spiced wine to drink the juice of my pomegranates oh that his left hand were under my head and that his right hand embraced me there's a a book that was written a while ago for Christians about the intimacy of relationships and in it there it suggests from this last verse that the woman should therefore sleep on the left hand side of the no the man should sleep on the left hand side of the bed I don't think we can actually say that from this verse it's meant to be a picture there of them embracing of her desiring to be with her lover again we hear the refrain that we hear throughout the book the warning but this time it is the shortened form it's a warning not to arouse love until the right moment

[14:19] I adieu you oh daughters of Jerusalem do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready the time is ready turn over and look at verse 5 who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning leaning upon her beloved the daughters of Jerusalem have noticed the two coming up from the wilderness flip back a page two pages to chapter 3 verse 6 if you remember last week in the dream sequence there was a reference to Solomon coming up from the wilderness it's a reference there of the wedding day of them being married here it is in reality the passion that they have to be together has finally arrived we have here a most powerful section of the book the woman's fantasies all her dreams of her lover of her wedding day and all those things at last has become a reality it is clear from this picture that we see there of them coming up from the wilderness together that they have a consummated relationship under the apple tree I awakened you there your mother there your mother was in labour with you there she bore you as you was in labour here is a picture of them in a consummated relationship they have reached the climax the lovers walk arm in arm perfectly at ease at each other at last in each other's company fearing no one's censure fearing no one's rebukes or criticisms and as they approach the girl's home she reminisces happily about the past about the way that she awakened love in him under the apple trees the way that they fell in love at her home in the country a place probably where she was born the anxiousness of anticipation has given way to the happy reminisce they are at last man and wife but notice here there is no torrid sex scene there is no graphic description of what happens for true consummation of love is not sex but relationship the sort of relationship that is described in this little picture here of the two of them walking together as they walk she leans upon her beloved it's a little cameo I guess a little picture of the married relationship that is both envisaged both in the old testament and in the new testament the woman at this point appeals to a man to confirm his undying commitment to her in verse six set me as a seal upon your heart as a seal upon your arm she wants him to set a seal upon her to take ownership of her she wants him to affirm that she is the only one for him that there is no other he wants him to do it wholeheartedly both with the arm and the heart referring both to the outer and the inner she then gives the motive why she wants him to affirm his love for her because of the nature of love here we see a beautiful picture a striking picture for love is as strong as death passion fierce as the grave it flashes up it flashes up flashes of fire a raging flame many waters cannot quench love neither can

floods drown it here we see a picture of the power of love it is as strong as death in my time here over the last two and a bit years I've done a few funerals and I'm struck by the finality of death the certainty of it the separation of it the irresistible inevitable force that it is nothing can stop it even our best human efforts to try and stop death cannot it is as guaranteed as taxes yet love is stronger it is its equal it is irresistible resolute and unshakable its passion is such that it is like that of the unyielding grave such is the jealousy of love here we see both here and throughout the Old Testament and New Testament that there are two places where jealousy is affirmed in a positive sense

God's jealousy of his relationship with us and the jealousy that a man should have between and a woman that they should have between each other it is to be an exclusive relationship humans are to have only one God man is to only have one spouse she is single minded a devotion that tolerates no rivals it is a blazing fire such as the power and energy of love I've seen so many bushfires when we lived we had 19,000 hectares a pine forest around our farm and to see the raging fires just rip through the forest with such intensity and heat nothing being able to stop it there such is the passion of love but in these descriptions of death grave and fire we get a hint of the dark and destructive possibilities that love has and hence the woman's asking for the man to declare his faithfulness to her to set a seal upon her she needs this reassurance well it is like the fire as we've described an abundance of water is insufficient to be able to handle this bright flame such as the

endurance of love but we finally conclude this great song of love lastly closing on this positive note that all the man's wealth of a man's house is contemptible compared to value of love it is beyond price if one offered for love all the wealth of one's house it would be utterly scorned money will bring you many things but it cannot bring you love love is not able to be bought bought even to try and bring even to try and bring money for it bring shame all the money of one's possessions will fail in this cameo we have a beautiful picture a picture where they have reached climax it is the climax of the song and hence why we have in verses 6 and 7 this little reflection time a time where we can reflect on the nature itself the woman as she speaks to the man she actually speaks the words of the author to us it's the only one point where the nature of love is reflected upon and allows us to reflect upon it but in these two verses there is also a veiled reference to God it says there that its flashes flashes of fire the

Hebrew here literally is the flame of Yah which is the abbreviated form of Yahweh this is the flame of Yahweh love is the very part of his nature it is very much a part the ultimate source of all love is found in God but in keeping with the book the exquisite indirectness of this powerful point is not forced upon us crudely but is there in the background the source of love is God is love dead no love is not dead the source of love is found in God a God who has shown his love in a fantastic way in a way that is so clearly seen in him dying on a cross for us and taking the punishment so that we can be a part of his family today is international day of marriage appropriate day

I guess to have such a reading it is also a day of Douglas' and Bell's 60th wedding anniversary the song here presents for us a time to reflect on the nature of marriage it presents for us both a celebration but also a warning that this most intense and fragile of all human emotions romantic love and its physical expression sexuality is something to be cared for nothing brings more comfort this side of heaven than an intimate relationship with another marriage is indeed the most intimate of all human relationships yet as we heard from the very beginning is also a gift that is so easily abused we want to turn it around and abuse it for our own uses let me make a few points about this the first is we live in a society that wants to affirm homosexual marriage this song the bible romans one affirms that that is not the way it is to be marriage is between a male and a female it is not between a male and a male society has also turned human love and sex into an idol we know it and advertisers know it look around at the advertisement all around you they know what sells and they use it to full effect to many life without sex is a life not worth living not just sex but with all the constraints taken away the song reminds us of the dangers and powers of sexuality to make sex the center of one's life is to devote oneself to a capricious and dangerous

[25 : 38] God love and sex have important roles in our lives but they should always be subordinate love love love and sex are not the final answers to life's troubles or even to find the greatest meaning there but it is something that is wonderful that is something that is powerful and the right place to express this this powerful gift the only place to express this gift is in marriage although marriage is the most intimate of all relationships the song also has a word to say about our friendships we can be reminded of the blessings of the friendships that we can have the way that we can care for others in a difficult and hard world it also reminds us that we can also be very callous in our relationships they can also disturb and trouble our relationships the song serves us well in this area to think about these things notice also here the way that that lovemaking is not just sex it is time spent with each other it is the words that we use did you hear the beginning of today's passage the way that he described her beauty

God has made us people who are to relate verbally emotionally and physically a good sexual relationship is one that is a good relationship we ought not to expect then that that if we damage each other with our words during the day that we should expect to love each other at night indeed the way we use our words is probably a far better barometer for our love for each other the picture here is a holistic love it's important for us to know this for singles building up platonic relationships words of love and appreciation can be important words for marriage the way that we speak to other can pep up our marriage lives it can increase our desire for one another we need to love people with our words a number of years ago we received a single red rose on our doorstep hand delivered with a little note on it saying to a special lady it was valentine's day but I didn't send the flower well michelle was quite delighted to have this rose and I tried to share my enthusiasm for her but inside I was jealous who sent this rose to my wife I hadn't sent her anything I found out later it was my father my father started a tradition a number of years ago where on every valentine's day he would send a single red rose to each of his daughters and to his daughter in law my wife saying to them to

a special lady I think my mum actually got a few more roses but she received some as well when I was going out with Michelle I told Michelle very early on in our relationship that I wouldn't be celebrating Valentine's Day I just thought Valentine's Day we should be loving each other all the time not just on one day but I guess there are times that we do need to be reminded that we do need to love each other so can I encourage you at this

Valentine's Day or any day let's go out of our way to show a bit of love I was thinking of perhaps offering a box of rose chocolates for the most romantic thing that someone does next Saturday and we could announce it on up here next week but I thought no probably not marriage is a wonderful thing love is a wonderful thing may God help us with his spirit to love each other the way that we ought to Amen God Amen God God God God God God

God God