Arise & Come with Me

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*The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. **9** My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. **10** My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; **11** for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. **12** The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. **13** The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*. (Song of Solomon 2:8-13)

1. Song of Solomon

Today's scripture is from Song of Solomon. This book is also called Song of Songs. Song of Songs is one of the most difficult books of the Old Testament. As you can see, the name of God does not appear in this passage. In the whole book, the name of God is not found even once. The book describes the love between a man (Solomon) and a woman (Shulamite).

People ask the question whether this book ought to be included in the canon of Holy Scriptures. However, such a question has never arisen with the Israelites. Song of Solomon is read on the eighth day of the Passover. It means Song of Solomon reminds the Israelites of God's genuine love for them and their commitment to God on Mount Sinai.

In Exodus 19:5, God asks Israel. "***if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples***." When they say yes, God gives them the Ten Commandments which is a sort of wedding vows and rings between God and Israel. These commandments are a certificate of marriage through which Israel experiences the most intimate relationship with God.

Isaiah 54:5 says, "***For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; the God of the whole earth he is called."*** God is clearly described as the Hebrew's "true husband." In the New Testament, Ephesians 5:22 says, "***Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord***." The relationship between Jesus and the church is described as the relationship between a husband and a wife.

Although some have doubted that Solomon is the author of the book, the first verse attributes him as the author. According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon wrote more than 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. Only this song has been preserved and is considered the best of those songs.

Why is this song so important? Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). But he did not seem to be satisfied. Only one Shulammite girl gave him the love, joy, and happiness he was looking for. In Song of Songs, we see the conversation between these two along with their conversations with other people.

How could king Solomon fall in love with this woman? Solomon frequently visited the various parts of his kingdom. One day, as he was visiting some royal vineyards in the north, where he met a beautiful Shulammite woman tending the vines. She was embarrassed by her tan skin and ran away. But Solomon could not forget her. Solomon later disguised himself as a shepherd and returned to the vineyards and won her love. Then, he told the woman that he was the king and asked her to return to Jerusalem with him. They were married in the palace.

Song of Songs is a very interesting book. However, have you ever heard a sermon from the Song of Solomon? I have been preaching for over 30 years, but I do not remember even once preaching on Song of Solomon.

Why do you think many preachers do not preach on this book? I believe it's because we may feel like there isn't a lot we can learn from the book of the Bible. However, I believe there are something we can learn from Song of Solomon.

The main theme of the book is genuine love. What do you think is the theme of the Bible? The theme of the Bible is love. Song of Solomon helps us to experience the love of God through hearing, seeing, tasting, touching, and smelling.

2. Mutual Love

Let us discuss what Song of Songs says. 1:2 says, "***Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine***." The Shulammite woman expresses her strong desire for Solomon's affection. We learn that the woman is embarrassed that she had dark skin, which was a sign of a lack of beauty. However, she is praised for her beauty by Solomon.

In Chapter 2:8 and 10 (NIV), the woman says, "***Listen! My beloved! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills….. My beloved spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me***." As Solomon approaches his lover's home, she gets excited about his coming. Solomon asks his darling to go for a walk in the countryside. In verses 11 and 12, the season of spring is described. Such a description of the season probably means more than the beauty of the season. Like spring when they fall in love, they feel everything seems fresh and new.

Their relationship isn't perfect. Verse 15 reads "***Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards***." Foxes were a symbol for crop destruction and would have been an image for problems in the relationship.

Yet Chapter 2:16 says, "***My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies.***" We see that although there were problems, the woman and Solomon continue to love each other. Do we experience this kind of love today with God? Do we hear God's voice or do we feel like God is sometimes absent?

3. Silence of God

There are moments in life when we feel like God may be absent or silent. Last Friday, Craig, Cheryl and Pat Frost lost their mother and mother-in-law. Although she was in her mid 80s, we did not think she would leave us Last Friday morning. We know in these moments, we feel a sense of God's absence. But we pray and support Craig, Cheryl, and Pat Frost because we believe that God is always with us and that in all moments God is present and active in our lives.

In the Book of Job, Job spoke to the Lord in a time when he felt God was not responding to his prayers. Job says, "***I cry to you for help and you do not answer me; I stand, and you only look at me***" (Job 30:20). You may know what king David similarly prayed in Psalm 22:1-2. "***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? [2] O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest."*** We see the same prayer when Jesus prayed on the cross (Matthew 27:46).

Have you ever experienced a similar situation? We may know intellectually of God's promises, but we all feel moments where we aren't sure about God's love for us or our loved ones in this life. We remember that Abraham was promised a son at age 75 but did not receive a son even at 86 when he conceived his son Ishmael through Hagar. Genesis 17 tells us that Abraham was 99 years old when God promised him he would have a son again. Ishmael was 13 at the time, but for 13 years there was nothing from God. There is not a word of encouragement. God does not remind him of his promises. The moments of waiting on the Lord are not easy, even for the forefathers of the faith. In these moments, bad things can happen and we can be discouraged waiting on the move of God.

Many of us may remember a friend and colleague of mine Rev. Moon who came from Virginia did a concert in August, 2016. I learned that he passed away suddenly while I was in England. He was young and left behind his wife and two daughters. In these moments, we don't understand what God was doing or may feel like God was silent when he died. But when these things happen, does this mean that God stops loving his people? No, the Bible reminds us that even in these situations, God is real and continues to love us with an everlasting love.

4. God's Love Letter

I said, the theme of Song of Solomon is love. The book describes that God's love is like a love of bridegroom for his bride. Song of Songs is like God's love letter for us. That is why the Israelites read Song of Songs at the Passover celebration. Isaiah 43:1 also says, "***thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine***." Every one of the over 7 billion people on the planet are known by God and loved by God. The Bible tells us that God knows our names and that we are his.

5. God became a Human

John's Gospel says that the creator God came to this world as a human being. John 1:14 says, "***The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth***." John describes that the eternal Logos, who is God, came to earth as a human being because God loves us. As God dwelt with the people of Israel in the wilderness, Jesus was born to live with God's people. As Solomon visited his lover, God came to dwell among us. Through becoming a human being God shows us how much he loves us.

6. Conclusion

There are moments in life when we become lonely. We may be alone and may feel like we never want our loved ones to ever leave us. In these moments, we can find ourselves asking where God is. We can feel God is far away from us forsaking his children. However, Song of Songs tells us that God does not leave us alone. God would love to be near us always as a lover yearns his darling.

7. Application

Verse 9 says, "***Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice****."* Do you see him? Can you feel, taste, smell, and touch the Lord as new married couples do in their bed?

I pray that you and I hear God's still small voice calling us, "***Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me,"*** when we are awake every morning. May we hold God's hand as we walk with him and follow after his directions every day of our lives. Amen.