

# Sermon Notes

“Christ’s Love”  
 Song of Songs 1:8-11  
 A Sermon Meditation Series on the Song of Songs  
 October 13, 2019

## Introduction

- 1) What, or who, do you find beautiful? Especially in another person?
  - a) External things (eye/hair color, physique type, accent, etc.)?
  - b) Personal things (intelligence, wit, charisma, etc.)?
  - c) Virtuous things (kindness, goodness, faithfulness, etc.)?
- 2) No doubt it’s a mixture of things, with the wise person putting the more important things first.
- 3) But what about God? What, or who, does God find beautiful? What does He find lovely?
- 4) Let’s ponder this with the Song of Songs (SoS), but first let us remember our guidelines:
  - a) We are reading the SoS as an allegory, following the ancient approach.
    - i) It is *not* about the literal meaning: About two lovers (a man and a woman) who are in love and want physical union with each other.  
     (Which in marriage is a good and godly thing.)
    - ii) It *is* an allegory, with the man representing Christ and the woman His church, who desire spiritual union with each other.
  - b) This is the *only* biblical book that we do not read “literally” but instead meditate on it like a great work of art, letting our thoughts and emotions drift with this masterpiece.
  - c) This requires maturity:
    - i) Not to be juvenile, silly or puerile about its earthy/romantic imagery.
    - ii) We need to have a firm biblical theological foundation to set orthodox parameters and boundaries for our musings and meditations.

## Literal Reading of SoS 1:8-11

- 1) So far, only the woman has been speaking, about her love for her beloved.
- 2) In SoS 1:7 the woman asks where her beloved pastures his flock.
  - a) She wants to come by at noon, when the sheep are resting.
  - b) So they can be together.
- 3) In SoS 1:8-10, for the first time, the man, the shepherd-king, speaks.
  - a) He calls her the “*most beautiful among women*.” SoS 1:8
  - b) He then tells her to go pasture her flock “*by the tent of the shepherds*.” SoS 1:8
- 4) After this command he returns to praising her beauty.
  - a) He states, “*To me, my darling, you are like My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.*” SoS 1:9
  - b) Throughout the SoS he equates her beauty with a mare (a female horse). SoS 1:5,9; 2:2,10,13; SoS 4:1,7; 5:2; 6:4

- c) "You remind me of my horse" doesn't sound that romantic to modern ears.
- d) However, for the ancient Egyptians, whose culture greatly influenced Solomon's Israel, horses were viewed as sleek, graceful and beautiful, and were frequently decorated and dressed up.
- e) It is interesting to note a problem in this verse.
  - i) A single mare (female horse) wouldn't be pulling Pharaoh's chariots.
  - ii) In New Kingdom Egyptian chariots would be pulled by 2+ stallions (male horses).
  - iii) Maybe the reference here is to an ancient military defense tactic.
    - One way to disrupt a chariot charge (the tanks of the ancient world) was to let a mare in heat loose to distract the stallions.
    - We have records of this being tried: At the famous Battle of Kadesh when the Hittite Empire tried it against the New Kingdom Egyptians in 1274 BC. (It didn't work, the Egyptians killed the mare.)
  - iv) King Solomon, who wrote the Song of Songs, lived after this battle and  
reigned from 970-930 BC, and had many chariots. 1Kgs 4:26  
9:19; 10:26
  - v) If this verse is making allusion to this tactic it would mean the man is saying to the woman that her beauty "drives him to distraction."
- f) The man also praises the natural beauty of her cheeks and neck,  
which is highlighted by her jewelry (earrings & necklaces). SoS 1:9; 4:9; 7:1-2
- g) The chorus of maidens chimes in to emphasize his point by declaring  
they will make the woman "*ornaments of gold with beads of silver.*"

### **Allegorical Reading of SoS 1:8-11**

- 1) Christ loves us! And finds us altogether most beautiful in His sight.
  - a) Among all of God's creation, we are the most beautiful to Him.
  - b) Can you imagine Christ saying to us, when we see Him face to face at the end of the age: "Most beautiful among" all of my Father's creation! Matt 25:21,23
  - c) However, who is the "us" that God so loves in Christ?
    - i) From the context of this book, it is clear the woman who loves her Beloved.
    - ii) She has complete faith, hope and deep love for Beloved, who is Christ.
- 2) We do not have time to get into the debate on whether Christ's loving, atoning death is only for the elect (what Calvinists believe) or for every person (what Arminians believe).
  - a) This is an important in house debate among Christians that impacts many things.
  - b) However, neither Calvinist or Arminian should ever say "God loves you" without adding, "in Christ."
  - c) God's mercy, love, forgiveness and redemption are only found in Christ.
  - d) While there is a debate how, and to whom, Christ gives mercy, all Christians affirm salvation is only found in Christ and His cross.

**Acts 4:12** – *"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*

- e) Even the Arminians' favorite verse, John 3:16, teaches this.
- i) **John 3:16** – “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*”
  - ii) There is perishing, however, for who? Those who do not have faith in Christ.
- f) Yes, we are to love our neighbor, who is everyone, including our enemies. Just as the Lord Jesus did to even those who rejected Him.
- Matt 5:43-55; 22:36-40  
Mark 10:21-27  
Luke 10:25-37
- 3) Yet throughout the Scriptures we hear how much Christ loves especially His people, the church, the elect, His bride. To cite but a few verses . . .
- a) *“I (Jesus) in them (the church) and You (Father) in Me (Jesus), that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”* – John 17:23
  - b) *“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.”* – John 15:9
  - c) *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* – Rom 5:8
  - d) *“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”* – John 15:13
  - e) *“Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”* – John 13:1b
  - f) *“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”* – 1 John 4:9-10
  - g) *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”* – Eph 2:4-5
  - h) *“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood”* – Rev 1:5
  - i) *“and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”* – Eph 5:2
  - j) *“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* – Rom 8:37-39
- 4) Why does the Bridegroom so love the bride? What makes her so beautiful in His eyes?
- a) For all the woman's problems in SoS (see SoS 1:5-6), she has one thing: She has complete trust in her Beloved, which gives her hope and creates in her great love for Him.
  - b) So what makes us so beautiful to Christ? One thing: Biblical faith.
  - c) Biblical, saving/justifying, faith has three things:
    - i) To intellectually know the facts about Christ and His cross.
    - ii) To intellectually assent (or agree, or believe) to the knowledge about Christ's Gospel.
    - iii) To daily willfully trust and place one's life in Christ's Gospel.
- Acts 8:30-35;  
Rom 10:14-15
- John 6:28-29; Heb 11:1;  
Rom 1:16-17; 5:1-2;
- Rom 4:16-22; 10:10; Eph 3:12;  
Heb 4:16; 10:38; 11:7-10; James 1:6

- d) Biblical saving faith is never alone, it always produces good works. Eph 2:8-10; Titus 3:8
- i) Especially the fruit of the Spirit. Rom 8:23; Gal 5:22-26
  - ii) Which is supremely seen in faith, hope and love.<sup>1</sup>
    - Daily turning from this world, sin, Satan and self, to trusting in Christ will create in us hope (assurance and confidence of a good final future outcome).
    - And faith & hope will produce in us love, that movement of the will that desires and does good to God, His people and all our neighbors.
  - iii) Because, “*above all, keep fervent in your love for one another (the church), because love covers a multitude of sins.*” – 1Pet 4:8
- 5) But where do we find Christ on this earth?
- a) Let us ask/pray like the woman speaks, “*Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, Where do You pasture your flock?*” – SoS 1:7a
  - b) Hear the answer of our Beloved, “*If you yourself do not know, most beautiful among women, go forth on the trail of the flock and pasture your young goats by the tents of the shepherds.*” – SoS 1:8
  - c) So we have to go down the correct trail, which of course is Christ Himself.
    - i) We are to be careful to follow the correct path of the Lord Prov 4:26; 5:21; Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-5; Heb 12:13
    - ii) Because Christ is the only Way. John 14:4,6; Heb 10:20
    - iii) He alone is the door and the narrow gate. Matt 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; John 10:1,9
    - iv) He, Christ, is the supreme Shepherd Is 40:11; 63:11; Ezek 34:11-16,23; John 10:11,14; Heb 13:20; 1Pet 2:25; 5:4; Rev 7:17
    - v) And His religion, called “Christianity” is “*The Way*.” Acts 9:2; 11:26; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14,22; Acts 26:28; Heb 10:20; 1Pet 4:16; James 1:26
  - d) Biblical saving faith makes you a Christian, but all Christians must affirm that Christianity is the one true religion and that we must be active members in a local church.
    - i) Our hyper-individualistic world, including many in pop-Evangelicalism, hates the idea of organized religion, of being a member in a local church, submitting to its authority; however, such things are clearly taught in Christ’s Word.
    - ii) The church is Christ’s spiritual body on earth. 1Cor 12:27; Eph 1:22-23; Eph 4:12; Col 1:18, 24
    - iii) It is staffed by under-shepherds (“pastor” literally means “shepherd”) who feed, protect and correct the sheep with the Gospel. Acts 20:17-30; 1Cor 16:16; Eph 5:11-12; 1Thes 5:12-13; 2Tim 3:14-4:5; Heb 13:17; 1Pet 5:1-4
  - e) In the SoS the Bridegroom (Christ) commands the woman to go to His flock, and she greatly loves and desires this command because He is among them.
    - i) Mature biblical faith loves Christ’s church!
    - ii) If you do despise and reject Christ’s spiritual body on earth, and His command to be in her, you hardly can claim to trust in Christ, let alone love Him.

<sup>1</sup> See: Rom 5:1-5; 1Cor 13:4,7,13; Gal 5:5-6; Col 1:4-5,23; 1Thes 1:3-5; 5:8; 2Thes 2:13-16; Heb 10:23-25; 1Pet 1:20-23.

6) To those who truly love Christ, however, we are precious to Him, His “darling.”

a) We even drive Him to “distraction” as it were.

b) Though fully God, the eternal Word of God, He took on flesh, and was tortured to death all because He loves us.

*“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” – 2Cor 8:9*

c) And know He reigns in heaven, interceding for the saints and doing us good.

Rom 8:26-27; 33-35;

Heb 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 7:25

Heb 7:25 – *“Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”*

7) Because of the faith in Christ God has given us, all our features are beautiful to Him.

a) Not about physical appearance but our good works.

i) He loves us not as the world loves fleeting and false beauty.

ii) But He loves us by that faith that dwells in us and produces good works.

b) Outside of Christ, all good works are but filthy rags to God because they have not been sanctified and are still done in selfish rebellion against God.<sup>2</sup>

c) But in Christ, even our most feeble good work is precious and lovely.

i) *“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” – Luke 15:10*

ii) With Christ’s work He has sanctified us, cleansing us *“by the washing of water (Sacrament of baptism) with the word (preaching of the Gospel), that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”* – Eph 5:26b-27

d) We adorn ourselves by these good works done in faith, like beautiful jewelry adorning a gorgeous woman.

e) Note the passages about woman and physical jewelry . . .

i) **1Tim 2:9-10** – *“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.”*

ii) **1Pet 3:3-4** – *“Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”*

f) This advice is for women, warning about the dangers of focusing too much on worldly beauty and costly jewelry.

Is 3:16-22; Ezek 16:12,17; 23:40;

Hos 2:13; 1Tim 2:9-10; 1Pet 3:1-4

i) But remember the woman in the SoS is the church!

ii) The Bride of Christ is all Christians, male & female.

iii) What advantage do women have in this area, that they should desire to be beautiful to Christ.

<sup>2</sup> See: Is 64:6; Rom 7:7-13; 12:1-2; Eph 2:8-10; 5:26-27; 1Thes 5:23; 1Tim 2:9-10; 2Tim 2:21; Titus 2:14; 3:8; Heb 10:10,14; 1Pet 1:2,7; 2:4-7; 3:3-4

- iv) Because men too are beautiful to Christ by their good works.
  - g) Even then angels themselves, in some mysterious way,  
assist us in our good works.
- Ps 104:4;  
Matt 18:10

## **Conclusion**

- 1) The woman, the bride, the elect, the church is exceeding beautiful to Christ.
  - a) Why?
  - b) Because she has faith, which gives hope and produces good works of love.
  - c) *"And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* – 1Pet 2:4-5
- 2) And all the good works that God has adorned us with by His grace in this life are preparation for that enteral union that awaits the saints in heaven, where we love Him perfectly.

*"And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.' And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created'"* – Rev 4:8-11