

Sermon Notes

Song of Songs 4:1-7

“The Beauty of the Church” (January 19, 2020)

A Sermon Meditation Series on the Song of Songs

Introduction

- 1) What do you find beautiful?
- 2) “Beautiful” is having qualities that one finds exciting and aesthetically pleasurable.
- 3) Do you find the “church” beautiful?
- 4) Be careful! One has to define “church” in its correct biblical context.
 - a) “Church” does NOT mean the building (or the stained glass, or the organ, etc.).
Though praise God for giving us this house of worship!
 - b) “Church” does NOT merely mean a gathering of Christian friends to socialize.
 - i) Now it is a great blessing to have Christian friends!
It is a wonderful byproduct of being in Christ's Church!
 - ii) However, the church is far more than just “two or three” friends gathering.
 - The “two or three” is a reference about the church. Matt 18:20
 - However, the context is about church discipline, including the excommunication of an unrepentant sinner! Matt 18:15-20
- 5) The New Testament word for church is “*ekklesia*” which means “assembly.”
 - a) This is from the word “called out.”
 - b) It refers to the official assembly of voting citizens who have gathered to do the business of the city-state. (Like an annual meeting!)
- 6) So the “church” is the gathering of the citizens of Christ's Kingdom (called “saints”) to do the King's business.
 - a) Thus the church is Christ’s spiritual body here on earth.
 - i) Through baptism we are declared members of Christ’s universal (or catholic) church: the citizenship all believers have no matter what orthodox denomination they might belong to.
 - ii) Through the Lord’s Supper we are continually declared citizens in good standing in His Kingdom.
 - b) All this (the meaning of “*ekklesia*”, the administration of the sacraments, church discipline) means the Bible requires membership in a local church.
 - c) The church’s prime business is assembling on the Lord’s Day to love God through worshipping Him centered around the ministry of the Word (preaching & sacraments).
 - d) It is the heart of obeying the first four of the Ten Commandments.
 - e) This defines the church here now on earth, call the church militant.
(Remaining faithful despite the travails of this fallen world.)
 - f) It also describes the saints now in glory: Call the church triumphant!
- 7) So do you find this church beautiful? Christ does!
 - a) Few Christians, let alone the world, do.
 - b) Ignorance, and even rejection of, “ecclesiology” (study of the church) is common.

Song of Songs 4:1-7

- 1) We are going through the Song of Songs following the old way of reading it: As an allegory of love between Christ (the Man/Bridegroom) and His church the Woman/Bride).
- 2) It is more like musing and meditating on a great work of art than studying the law.
 - a) As with all freedom, to use it appropriately requires maturity.
 - b) Maturity in not taking the Song's earthly images in a juvenile fashion.
 - c) Maturity in having a strong orthodox biblical theology, less one become heretical.
- 3) SoS 4:1-7 does highlight the dangers of taking the allegorical method too intensely, however.
 - a) The big picture of the text is clear: The Bridegroom (the Man/Christ) finds the bride (the woman/the church) altogether beautiful and lovely.
 - b) He dwells on her eyes, hair, teeth, lips, mouth, temples, neck, torso which are "*altogether beautiful.*" SoS 4:7
 - c) Trying to sink each body part up with some exact allegorical meaning (like many medieval theologians did) might be stretching things a bit.
 - d) However, Christ does find us (the church) "*altogether beautiful,*" every part of us.
 - e) Both as individual members and more important as a collective whole. 1Cor 12:12-25
- 5) But why does He find us beautiful? And what in particular does He find lovely in us?
 - a) The "why" is simple: the church/the saints/the elect have been washed by His blood, as seen by those who live by faith, hope and love in Him alone.
 - b) The what He "finds lovely" are the expressions of faith, hope & love in Him by His church.
- 6) Do you love the things Christ loves? In order they would be . . .
 - a) Do you love the public worship and gathering of the saints on the Lord's Day centered around the ministry of the Word (preaching & the sacraments)?
 - b) Be careful about defining "love".
 - i) Godly love (called *agape*, love the other) isn't primarily about emotions but the will knowing, focusing on, and doing good to what it finds important (beautiful).
 - ii) Watching the Super Bowl is more amusing (literally "to cease thinking") than a sermon, or the annual meeting, but it should never be more important.
 - c) Do you find the things that support this ministry of the Word beautiful?
 - i) First and foremost, Scripture, especially God's Law and Christ's Gospel.
 - ii) The heritage and teaching of the church throughout history (the creeds, etc.).
 - d) Do you prioritize this worship above one's feelings? (Over things/people you don't like.)
 - e) Do you love (find beautiful) the power and authority the church has?
 - i) To positively train, teach and support the saints.
 - ii) And if necessary to correct those who go astray. (This is a real test of love!)
 - f) Do you love the church's labors of evangelism and charity?
 - g) Do you love the fellowship of the saints? Both formally and informally in this life, and await that perfect fellowship in the next? (More so than family or friends.)
- 7) Know today, what we do (assembling), if done in faith, is all together beautiful in our Lord's eyes!