

Hymns: 51 Love Lifted Me 54 Oh, How I Love Jesus
Psalm 103:1-17

Good Morning! Does anyone remember:

- I Love Lucy
- The Dating Game
- The Newlywed Game
- Love Boat

What did all of these old shows have in common? Love between a man and a woman – romantic love. That will be our topic for today. Hang on to your hats!

Review

Today we will make our last trip into something called *the theater of the mind* – in honor of those radio **serial** shows from many years ago.

You may recall from last time that our hero, the wealthy, wise King Solomon and his wife called Shulamite (or Mrs. Solomon) completed their honeymoon. When the couple emerged from their seven-day romantic encounter in the wedding chamber the most beautiful of women was seen for the **first time unveiled**. She **dazzled** everyone as the newlyweds proceeded between two bands of well wishing guests.

We left off last time with Solomon boarding his royal chariot and a strange plea coming from the Daughters of Jerusalem:

Daughters
[13] Return, return, O Shulamite;
return, return, that we may [gaze] upon thee...

The question we ended with last time: Where was the Shulamite going? Was actually one of the easier cliff-hangers that we've had on this journey. Solomon was simply taking his wife with him – as it should be. They were riding off together – waving goodbye to the legions of well wishers.

Let's pick up the action there as Solomon speaks to his beautiful wife. Keep in mind, as we previously learned regarding the Shulamite, Solomon's description of her, having known her **intimately**, is **more explicit** than ever:

Cant.7
[1] How beautiful are thy [sandaled] feet,
O prince's daughter!
the [curves] of thy [hips] are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.
[2] Thy navel is like a round goblet, which [never lacks mixed wine]:
thy belly is like a[] heap of wheat [encircled] with lilies.
[3] Thy two breasts are like [twin fawns of a gazelle].

[4] *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory;
thine eyes like the []pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim:*

Heshbon was a Moabite city 20 miles east of the Jordan river near where it enters the Dead Sea. Water is at a premium in this area and refreshing pools fed by springs are certainly precious. I've been to Engedi on the west side of the Dead Sea. There the waterfalls, streams, and pools bring an oasis of life to a hot, barren land.

What color do you think of when you envision pools? That's right, blue. Could it be Solomon's reference to pools may indicate the beautiful woman had blue eyes? Perhaps. Or maybe he was alluding to her eyes as deep, inviting, windows to her soul.

*thy nose is [like] the tower of Lebanon which look[s] toward Damascus.
[5] Thine head upon thee is like [Mount] Carmel,*

Mount Carmel is an interesting place in northern Israel. It's elevation is 1700 feet. Can anyone recall anything significant that took place there? I'll give you a hint. They have a big statue erected of a famous Old Testament prophet and a description of what he did there. That's right. Elijah mocked and defeated the prophets of Baal. This mountain stands prominently above the wide Jezreel Valley as well as the Mediterranean Sea. Perhaps this woman's stature made her prominently seen also.

*and the hair of thine head like purple;
the king is held [captive by your tresses].*

[6] *How fair and how pleasant [your are], O love, [with all your charms]!
[7] [Your] stature is like [] a palm tree,
and [your] breasts [like] clusters of grapes.
[8] I said, I will [climb] the palm tree,
I will take hold of the [fruit]:
now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,
and the [the fragrance of thy breath] like apples;*

With that, Solomon spoke his last words in this song (with the exception of just a few at the end), but we have much more from the beautiful woman. Let's hear her:

*Woman
[9] And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for **my beloved**,
that goeth down sweetly,
[flowing gently over lips and teeth].*

*[10] I am **my beloved's**,
and his desire is toward me.*

*[11] Come, **my beloved**,
let us go forth into the field;
let us lodge in the villages.
[12] Let us get up early to the vineyards;*

let us see **if** the vine [has budded],
whether the tender grape[s] appear,
and the pomegranates [are in bloom]:

there will I give thee my love[].

[13] The mandrakes [send out their fragrance],
and **at our** [doors] are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old,
which I have laid up for thee,
O **my beloved**.

While the honeymoon has ended, this couple is still madly in love with each other. The beautiful woman has done a lot of dreaming and day dreaming in this song. Here she drops into that mode again:

Cant.8

[1] O that thou wert **as** my brother,
that sucked the breasts of my mother!
when I should find thee [outside],
I would kiss thee;
yea, I should not be despised.

What's bothering her here? She's stifled **in** her ability to **openly express her love to her husband**. In her culture, she couldn't kiss him in public, but it was fine to kiss her child.

Next, she expresses her desire to **nurture** her husband:

[2] I would **lead thee**,
and bring thee into my mother's house, who instruct[ed] me:
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

She just expressed her desire to take the lead, but in the next verse, she transitions to imagine her husband initiating his expression of love to her with some phrases used previously in this song:

[3] **His** left hand should be under my head,
and **his** right hand should embrace me.
[4] I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
that ye stir not up, nor awake[n] **my love**, until **he** please.

Daughters

[5] Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
leaning upon her beloved?

Of course, it's the beautiful woman, the Shulamite. She speaks again:

Woman

I [aroused] thee under the apple tree:

Clearly she knows when **he's** ready to be awakened and can think of no better **one** to do it than **his** lover. Next we learn that they went to the exact location where Solomon was born.

*there **thy mother** brought thee forth:
there she brought thee forth that **bare** thee.*

We now have reached a very significant place in this song. The woman is moving from talking to her beloved, dreaming, and talking to the Daughters of Jerusalem to a soliloquy reaching to the depths of human emotions and understanding. In my view, these are two of the most significant verses in the Song of Solomon.

*[6] Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
as a seal upon thine arm:
for love is strong as death;
[its] jealousy is cruel as the grave:
the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.
[7] Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can the floods drown it:
if a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
it would [be] utterly [scorned].*

Let's drop back and savor these words. The beautiful woman first asks for a permanent place in her beloved's heart and a token of that love displayed on his body. She wants full assurance of his love – both body and soul.

She states that *love is as strong as death*. Clearly many have died and would die for love of another. Then it speaks of **love's** jealousy. Can any of you recall Bible characters who faced this *jealousy* issue throughout their marriages. What about the patriarchs?

Abraham: Sarah and Hagar – the fire of that conflict still rages on today in the Middle East
Isaac: Joseph vs. his brothers
Jacob: Rachel vs. Leah – battled it out

This beautiful woman had married a man with 60 wives and 80 concubines. While Solomon pledged and demonstrated his love to her, it was understandable that she seek assurance of his undying love for her.

In verse 7 we learn that we cannot quench love. We can be thankful love is a force greater than we can fathom. And as an example, the woman states that wealth and possessions, physical things, cannot compare to love.

According to the Thayer's Lexicon, the word for *love* here was translated from Hebrew to Greek in the Septuagint as *agape*. That's the word translated *charity* in the love chapter. Let's take a look and see if we can feel the similarity:

I Corinthians 13

[3] And though I bestow **all my goods** to feed the poor,
and though I **give my body** to be **burned**,
and have not charity, it **profiteth me nothing**.

[4] Charity suffereth long,
and is kind;

charity **envieth not**;
charity vaunteth not itself,
is not puffed up,

[5] Doth not behave itself unseemly,
seek[s] not [its] own,
is not easily provoked,
think[s] no evil;

[6] Rejoice[s] not in iniquity,
but rejoice[s] in the truth;

[7] Beareth all things,
believeth all things,
hopeth all things,
endureth all things.

[8] Charity never faileth:

[13] And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Did you notice that both passages spoke of the primacy of love? They stated how it overcomes even jealousy and pride. And they expressed that material things and even physical life itself are far inferior to love.

Clearly, the Shulamite, through her union with Solomon, had gained fabulous wealth, a husband with unparalleled wisdom, and a position of authority in one of the great kingdoms of the earth. Yet when she considers these things and even life itself, she knows they cannot hold a candle to love.

Without a doubt, this woman had her priorities straight.

Was she right? Is love greater than things physical? Let's hear from a couple of very successful men:

I hate to be a failure. I hate and regret the failure of my marriages. I would gladly give all my millions for just one lasting marital success.

Who said that? None other than the first billionaire who made his fortune in the oil industry:

J. Paul Getty

While he was very successful in business, after five divorces, he finally gave up on marriage.

Here's another:

*I have made many millions, but **they** have brought me **no** happiness.*

Can anyone guess that one? Another oil tycoon, none other than:

John D. Rockefeller

Clearly the woman's words ring true down through the millennia. Now we transition into more musing by the woman. An unidentified group speaks regarding **their** sister:

Siblings

*[8] We have a little sister, and she ha[s] no breasts:
what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?*

They are referring to a young girl who is approaching the age to be given to another in marriage betrothal.

*[9] If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver:
and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.*

Here we have some rather difficult language. These terms *wall* and *door* refer to how outgoing she is toward advances from young men. Is she reserved or flirtatious? Perhaps if you think of the term “wall flower” it will help you make the connection. So if she is shy, they will decorate her with silver to attract suitors. On the other hand, if she is a *door* referring to being on the promiscuous side, they will build a barrier around her to protect her from herself.

Woman 1

*[10] I am a wall,
and my breasts like towers:*

This woman asserts that she carefully defended and preserved her purity for her husband.

then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

Her purity and devotion made her more attractive to her husband.

Next, the woman tells a little story:

*[11] Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; [location unknown]
he **let** out the vineyard [] to keepers;
every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.*

That is, Solomon leased his vineyard to keepers for roughly \$10,000 at today's prices. They would turn a profit by selling the fruit from the vineyard for something more than that.

*[12] My vineyard, [] is mine, [to give]:
[the] thousand are for you Solomon,
and two hundred [for] those that keep [its] fruit.*

The woman is using the example of Solomon's vineyard to illustrate and emphasize the precious gift of herself, her love, that she gives willingly and completely to her husband.

Solomon

[13] *Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
the companions [listen] to thy voice:
[let] me [] hear it.*

Woman

[14] *Make haste, **my beloved**,
and be thou like [] a [gazelle] or [] a young [stag] upon the mountains of spices.*

With this invitation for lovemaking, we conclude our great love song. The curtain falls and the stage lights go out. But the audience insists upon one more taste from this great story. Next time, **just two weeks from today**, we will take a look at how this work was precisely structured to help us further appreciate why this love song was aptly named the Song of Songs. Don't miss it.

Application

Patrick F. Fagan, Doctor of Psychology and Director of the Family Research Council's Marriage and Religion Research Institute, after studying the University of Chicago's National Health and Social Life Survey of 1992, found that:

the most enjoyable and most frequent sex among married people occurred with those who attended church weekly.

This should be no surprise. God invented intimacy between a husband and wife. If we don't use God's gift His way, it's not going to work right if at all. In the Song of Solomon, we see the heights to which we can soar when we follow God's way.

And lest we forget, God uses this picture of marital love as an example of how much He loves us. His love transcends all forms of love we can know. It transports us beyond the grave. It satisfies our every need. How great is our God and His love everlasting.

Benediction

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5b-6)