

A Springtime Rhapsody
United Church of Broomfield
July 5, 2020

Song of Songs 2:8-13 (NRSV)

⁸The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains bounding over the hills.

⁹My 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.

¹⁰My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;

¹¹for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

¹²The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

¹³The 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.

Acts 2:41-47 (NRSV)

⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds^[a] to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home^[b] and ate their food with glad and generous^[c] hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

¹The date and time of your next meeting is set: outside a movie theater/a retail store, on such a street at such a time on Friday, or whenever. There you are, waiting, perhaps forgetting that the building often has more than one door. You wonder if your intended is ever going to show up: when, suddenly, you hear that familiar voice.

Imagine the relief: "The Voice of my Beloved!" So begins the story of love.

Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon) is rarely offered up in the lectionary or read during worship because it's received as too *suggestive*. It's poetry and flowery, emotive descriptions of love are intimate – we see it as the kind of erotic love between two lovers, which is certainly can be. This kind of love is often excluded from worship and in a Holy sanctuary. But it is also the intimate love between Jesus and the church, savior and saved, the creator and us.

"He comes leaping over mountains, skipping over hills" to be with you. His impending arrival enthuses you, and you 'know His Voice.'² As it is for the Creator, They will let nothing prevent Them from loving us³.

¹ Holdsworth, Christopher. *The Springtime of My Love*. October 13, 2008.

² John 10:4-5

³ Hebrews 10:5-7

Can you imagine what it must have been like for the Old Testament saints, like Simeon and Anna, waiting for the coming of Messiah? Simeon was not going to depart this world 'in peace'⁴ until he encountered Jesus, 'the consolation of Israel'⁵. Neither should anyone be ready to leave this earth without the equivalent spiritual encounter with our Beloved! To experience the love of our creator – like the community in Acts: committing ourselves – intimately and lovingly to the teachings, meals, prayers – a life of love, lived together⁶.

But once we have encountered Him, we might be like Paul - ready to live or die at His bidding⁷.

And so, He comes, leaping and skipping "like a gazelle or a young stag." He is informed by His love for us to be cheerful in the undertaking of our salvation, despite the cost to Himself. He is as One 'whose delights are with the children of humanity'⁸.

Meantime, in the Old Testament, Jesus is hidden "behind the wall" of sacrifice and ceremony, types and shadows - and occasionally "peering through the windows, showing Himself through the lattice." A courtship of learning, risking and pledging is happening. The ceremonial law is a 'wall of partition' which is only demolished by His sacrifice⁹. He stands behind the wall erected by our sin¹⁰, waiting to be gracious and to love: and how He was determined until this work was accomplished!¹¹

In the New Testament era, we again find ourselves in waiting mode. 'Occupy until I come,' He tells His disciples¹². And, 'Behold I come quickly.'¹³ Be patient: for 'He that shall come will come and will not tarry'¹⁴. Meanwhile, we catch the occasional glimpse of Him in Word and sacraments, waiting for the fulness of the revelation¹⁵ when 'we shall see Him as He is'¹⁶. This playful love affair between Lover and Beloved is an ongoing yet forgotten part of who we are in relation to God and to one another.

Then comes the call to "rise up" and "come away."

- To the unbeliever: Arise from your deadness in trespasses and sins and come away with new life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 2:5).
- To the believer in despondency and doubt: Awake from slumber and arise from death (Ephesians 5:14), 'and Follow Me'.
- To the dead in Christ, and to those who remain until Jesus' return: Arise and come away to be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

⁴ Luke 2:29

⁵ Luke 2:25

⁶ Acts 2:42

⁷ Philippians 1:23-24

⁸ Proverbs 8:31

⁹ Ephesians 2:13-14

¹⁰ Isaiah 1:18-20

¹¹ Luke 12:50

¹² cf. Luke 19:13

¹³ Revelation 22:12

¹⁴ cf. Hebrews 10:36-37

¹⁵ cf. John 17:24

¹⁶ 1 John 3:2

The Lord calls her people “My love, My fairest.” We love the Lord because the Lord first loved us¹⁷. We did not choose God, God chose us. Metaphorically speaking, perhaps, we are made “fair”, who were hitherto darkened by sin. The LORD blots out our transgressions¹⁸ and sees us only as the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ¹⁹. Always remembering that we are loved so purely we are “in awe,” --- so in heady, overwhelming, butterflies-in-our-stomach, heart-bursting-out-of-our-chest love, that we happily will sell everything we own, to pool our resources so that our beloveds’ needs will be met. The love from my beloved is so strong an urge and desire within that I must quench it, by living in wonderful harmony with ALL, holding everything in common.

And now the Winter is gone. The Winter of unbelief. The Winter of doubt. The Winter of despair. The Winter of backsliding. The Winter of fruitless Christianity. The devil isn’t going to be permitted to rain on our parade anymore. The rain is over: the bleak, bitter, dangerous rain, and in its place the dews of blessings²⁰ herald the covenant of grace²¹.

It is Spring. A time of budding flowers, singing birds, the cooing of the turtledove. The turtledove is one of those who understands the signs of the times, even when humans do not. Our Lord has put a new song in our mouths: praise to our God. The church’s testimony to the nations shall at last cause many to revere and trust in the LORD.

The fig tree puts forth its blossoms, whereby we know that Summer is nigh. Be like the children of Issachar, who knew the signs of the times²². Be patient, be ready at all times, for our Creator comes at a time which you know not²³.

Regardless of politics or pandemics.
In the midst of anger, fear and chaos.

Love the Lord and one another with such passion and intimacy as the Lovers in Song of Songs.
Love the Lord and one with such mercy, grace and commitment as the burgeoning community in Acts – entwined in Temple prayer, celebrating meals of luscious fruits and hearty breads together, and crying out with joy and exuberance, “Praise God.”

Then you shall hear those words just once more: “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

Amen.

¹⁷ 1 John 4:19

¹⁸ Isaiah 43:25

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:21

²⁰ Genesis 27:28

²¹ Isaiah 54:9

²² 1 Chronicles 12:32, cf. Luke 12:56

²³ Luke 12:40