

Route Sixty-Six

*Part Twenty-Two
Song of Solomon
I Am My Beloved's
(John 5:39 Song of Solomon 6:3a)*

With Study Questions

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I Am My Beloved's

(John 5:39 Song of Solomon 6:3a)

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

I am my beloved's, And my beloved is mine (Song of Solomon 6:3a).

Introduction

During my undergraduate years I read a book by a French author/pilot named Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The name of the book was *The Little Prince*. The book was published during World War II and there is some debate as to whether it was a child's book or meant for adults. The little prince lived on Asteroid B-612, which was a planet about the size of a small truck.

The story is told from the perspective of a pilot on earth who encounters the Little Prince when his plane crashes in the desert (something that had actually happened to Saint-Exupery). It is a short book and worth reading. Although some have speculated that it is Christian allegory, it is not obviously the case. It, nonetheless, carries many thoughtful and significant themes worthy of consideration.

I open with this in our study of Song of Solomon due to a very unique relationship found in the Little Prince. On his small planet (on which there are three volcanoes and a dangerous weed called baobabs, (which some thought represented the Nazis) there was a talking rose. The rose was pretentious, petulant, given to exaggeration, a prima-donna and entitled. The little prince loved her. He built her a wind-break and put her under a glass covering. Her attributes that others might view as irritating, were appealing to him. He thought she was the only rose in the universe.

In his travels, he came to find that there were millions of roses. This saddened him because he felt like his rose had lost her uniqueness. He also felt that she had deceived him into thinking she was the only rose in

existence. As these thoughts brought him to tears in the desert, we are introduced to a fox who had a very unusual request. The fox wanted to be tamed.

In the fox's mind, something moves from being ordinary to special, and unlike all other things, when someone takes the time and effort to tame you. The little prince came to realize (really, the reader came to realize) that the Little Prince's care, love, pampering and taming of his rose truly made her rare and precious. She was not just *a* rose. She was *his* rose. And he was *her* person.

It is this type of unique relationship that we read of in Song of Solomon. To be sure, the Bible uses many metaphors to describe our relationship with Christ. He is the head and we are the body. He is the Foundation and we are the building. He is the Vine and we are the branches. He is the firstborn and we are the brethren. These are all apt and serve their purpose. But marriage is the most intimate and sublime when it comes to metaphors describing Christ and the church.

One can get lost in the body metaphor. Am I an eye or a hand? This is true also in the plant and building metaphor. I am one of many branches or part of a massive structure. But the intimacy of marriage does not allow one to get lost in a crowd. It's been argued that Christ is married to the church collectively and not the individuals within the church. But such an argument ignores the necessity of recognizing that that which is collective is made up of that which is individual.

It may be true that I am but one member of that body referred to as the bride of Christ. But I should not make the mistake that Saint-Exupery corrects, in viewing myself as lacking individual significance because I am one of a billion roses. It may be unfathomable to us, due to our limitations as creatures, to grasp this, but we are individually loved, cared for, sanctified, if you will, tamed by Christ. We are His bride collectively and individually and He is ours. Herein lies the passion and intimacy of the Song of Solomon. As the heroine expresses:

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine (Song of Solomon 6:3a).

A Survey of Song of Solomon

What is this short book about? It has been suggested that the Song of Solomon is just the opposite of Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes the world is too small to fill the heart, whereas Song of Solomon finds a heart that is filled. But what is this Song of Solomon? Is it just a natural collection of love poems as some suggest? Is it a grand allegory where everything has a separate meaning from the obvious romantic phraseology? Is the hair of the bride an allegory for the mass conversions of the nations? Or is it typological of Christ and His church and not to be thought of as instructive in terms of intimacy?

This should not be terribly difficult to answer. Since the Lord uses marital intimacy as a means by which we are to grasp the dimensions of our union with Him, it is critical that we develop a godly understanding of what constitutes that relationship in its proper sense. In other words, if marriage is going to help me better understand my association with God, it would do me well to understand how God wants marriage to work. And we have a whole book dedicated to precisely that.

Song of Solomon tells the story of Solomon meeting a fair Shulamite (a young shepherd girl), falling in love with her and making her his queen. Their affections for each other are recorded quite strongly, affectionately and poetically (though language that may not have the same force today, e.g. **“your hair is like a flock of goats...your neck is like the tower of David...your nose like the tower of Lebanon”**).

Yet many things do hold up, such as (as understood by some) the lifting of his bride over the threshold (Song of Solomon 1:4). There is also ample record of the physical enjoyment that a spouse is to have with their mate (Song of Solomon 2:6; 7:1; 8:3). There is kissing and perfume and dining and compliments. There is heartbreak when she has a dream that he is gone.

It would be difficult to walk away from Song of Solomon (recognizing marriage as a metaphor of our relationship with Christ) with a cold, stoic, detached or even unemotional view of our faith. The intimacy and affection are borderline uncomfortable.

I mention this recognizing that we are not all wired the same way. And even if we are wired a certain way, the years tend to have an effect upon the wires. Nonetheless, there should be a very unique warmth pursued in marriages all the days of our lives. The appreciation,

encouragement, tenderness and devotion that we read of in Song of Solomon should be reflected in the covenant of marriage and enjoyed in the covenant of grace.

We are to love as we have been loved.

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12).

We are to forgive as we have been forgiven.

...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do* (Colossians 3:13).

We are to serve as we have been served.

If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you (John 13:14, 15).

Though we do not hold to foot-washing as a sacrament (Jesus here provides an example of servitude which should characterize our general dispositions), nonetheless, there is a humble, uncomfortable intimacy to anyone who has done this for another.

I have seemed here to move away from marriage to Christians relationships in general. And there is something to be said and learned. At the same time, Song of Solomon seems to be dialing in on the exclusive relationship of marriage. But I mention these more general attributes for a couple of reasons:

First, because we tend to be better at serving strangers (or at least people we're not married to) than serving than serving our spouse. With greater ease do we forgive strangers than do we forgive our spouse. In a certain sense, it is easier to love others than it is to love our spouse. I've seen it in myself and in others-we have much kinder and patient words for the acquaintance than we do for the woman of our vows. Why is that? This leads to a second explanation.

There is a comfort and history with the spouse. Our display of patience with the stranger (or a mere friend) is because they've only done it to us once, where our spouse does it over and over. How often in counseling are the words, "You don't know what I have to put up with" spoken, as if their spouse has reached uncharted territories of selfishness, ignorance, carnality and insensitivity.

But we must keep this in mind as we seek to enjoy this great intimacy which belongs to us as the bride of Christ. He knows us well. He is betrothed to us, not because we are beautiful. It is rather through our union with Him and due to our union with Him that our road to beauty even begins. I think it is a healthy question when we ask if we are making our spouse more beautiful.

In the Song of Solomon we see a glorious snapshot of striking marital intimacy which should elevate our understanding of the love by which we are loved. Even as Paul had prayed that we...

...may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height –¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:18, 19).

The knowledge of that love should burst forth in our worship, then be displayed toward others...first and foremost our spouses, or the spouse that we will one day have or in our thoughts of how a spouse is to be loved. We John Fawcett, it should be our aim:

Through all the ages of a blissful eternity I humbly hope to proclaim the wonders of redeeming love, and tell to listening angels what they love has done for my soul.

Christ in The Song of Solomon: His Banner, The Cleft, The Latch

I think we have already seen Christ in this short book. But I would like to finish with three brief observations.

He brought me to the banqueting house, And his banner over me *was* love (Song of Solomon 2:4).

In a Christmas movie, the young man interrupts a business meeting excited about his new found love and sing out, "I'm in love, I'm in love and I don't care who knows it." A banner was often a display of victory over an opponent. Christ has defeated the enemies of the world, the flesh and the devil. He has put His own Name upon us (Revelation 3:12; 22:4) and He is not ashamed to call us His brethren.

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,* ¹² saying: "*I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You*" (Hebrews 2:11, 12).

We may think it a small thing now to be openly acknowledged by Christ, but there will be a time when it will be gaspingly glorious.

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret *places* of the cliff, Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice; For your voice *is sweet, And your face is lovely*" (Song of Solomon 2:14).

We are familiar with the hymn Rock of Ages where we read "**Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.**" The cleft of a the rock is where the doves would find refuge from storms and predators. This great act of love includes protection. It is through the blood of Christ that we find true and eternal protection from the wrath of God. Let us ever be hidden in Christ.

**If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
⁴ When Christ *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:1-4).**

Finally, let us rejoice in Christ's effectual calling. It is during this troubling dream where the heroine hesitates to open the door for her

beloved. She finds an array of excuses to leave him outside. Then we read of this odd account.

My beloved put his hand By the latch of *the door*, And my heart yearned for him (Song of Solomon 5:4).

It is very difficult to grasp exactly what he did that changed her heart. The indications are that she saw his hand and it was sufficient.

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44).

Literally that word “**draw**” *helksye* means to pull or drag. God is quite effective at changing our heart of stone to a heart of flesh. He does this through His love, His goodness (Romans 2:4) and the Gospel (Romans 10:17).

It should be a quest in our lives to find out just what needs to happen with that latch when it comes to our beloved life-long companions in matrimony. But let us praise His name that He knew precisely what had to happen in order to win our hearts.

Questions for Study

1. What are things that make people unique? How can we take pleasure in being unique in the eyes of God (pages 2, 3)?
2. Briefly state what the Song of Solomon is about (page 4)?
3. Is the Song of Solomon an allegory, a type or merely poems on romance? Explain your answer (page 4).
4. Why is it important for us to know how we are loved, forgiven and served by Christ (pages 5, 6)?
5. Discuss the use of the banner, the cleft and the latch. What do they mean in terms of God's disposition toward us and ours toward others (pages 6-8)?