

**A Picture of Mature Love:  
Song of Songs 5:2-16  
Ilse Gomez • February 27—28, 2021**

**Review of what we've covered so far:**

Song of Songs is a book that illustrates the beauty and depth of love between a king and his bride, a bride that comes from an unexpected place and (in the eyes of many) doesn't deserve a place in the royal family.

There are many ways to interpret this book, but as a church we are joining with many of Jesus' followers who saw this book as the story between God and his people — the story of Jesus, the bridegroom king, and his bride, the church.

The first half of the book, we got to see a glimpse of the beginning of a love story: We see a king who is absolutely confident in his love over his beloved, and a Shulamite woman who is discovering her identity.

They have a beautiful love encounter where they just lavish each other with love, the king invites her to rise from her place of comfort and she doesn't go initially, but in chapter 3 she repents and rises from her bed to find him. She seeks him and she finds him! He affirms her and their love grows deeper, and then she prays a dangerous prayer: *"Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits."*

This is the prayer we talked about last week and it's a dangerous one. She's basically saying: **do whatever you have to do, bring whatever you have to bring so my love can be as deep as yours** — so I can love you the way that you have loved me. She's saying, "Do whatever it takes for me to love you in the way you are worthy!" — She is desperate not just for him to love her, but seeing and living his love has caused her to cry out for that same kind of love to be produced in her heart.

Mature love is born after the original high of infatuation. **Mature love is born out of perseverance**, and in some ways it can be said that she is saying, "Put my love to the test, put me in a place where my love has to grow! I don't care what it takes, I want to fight for you!" — She wants to love him for him, not what he can give or for how good he has made her life. She's experienced his deep love and her heart cry is to love him back that same exact way.

This is the moment where the story shifts, and where we could all relate to the broken place of mistakes and repentance the Shulamite has been in up until this point, here we see a glimpse of the goal, the way

God is longing for us to respond: that our love would come to maturity, that we would come to an equal partnership where the depth of our love matches the depth of his love — where compromise and lukewarmness is swallowed up by the ache in our hearts to love him wholeheartedly no matter what the circumstances.

**This is the kind of love I want to have**, that I wouldn't see my circumstances as bad or good. That my heart wouldn't accuse God and say, "Oh if you loved me then why..." But that I would get to the point of maturity where I can say "**Whatever you do, whatever happens, let it produce more love in me!**" - Any opportunity to be offended, any obstacle or persecution, any misfortune or calamity that my heart response would be, "Let it produce more love in me!" — And that's where the Lord wants to take the church even for the end times, not that we would worry about the little details or get consumed by the chaos in the world, but that we would look eyes with Jesus and say, "Whatever happens, I love you. Whatever happens, I want to love you most at the end of the story."

So out of that place, we get chapter 5. The king invites his friends to come and eat of her garden, and then she goes to try and rest and something unexpected happens:

<i>2 I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night." 3 I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?</i>	<i>my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. 6 I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer. 7 The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls.</i>
<i>4 My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. 5 I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh,</i>	<i>8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.</i>

When I first read this story, this is not where I expected it to go. I thought they would ride off and live happily ever after. I thought that maturity looked like everything working out for them, but honestly the first time I read this I felt like the king was playing “ding dong ditch,” I thought he was playing a game and being cruel, but actually that is so far from the truth.

He shows up in disarray: **“my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night...”** (vs. 2) This was a common state for shepherd who would stay out all night caring for the sheep and if we peer into the New Testament for an interpretation, we see that this is the picture of Jesus as the man of sorrows in Gethsemane. We see the scene where he is facing death and darkness and asks for his friends to stay awake and be with him. In this scene, we could say **he is inviting her to suffer with Him** —to be his partner in the things that are difficult and painful for his heart just as she has been with him in the joy and delight of their love. He wants to be the **goal of her life**, not just the stepping stone to her agenda of success and happiness

She has been longing for him, so she hears his voice, and in one way she counts the cost:

*“had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them? 4 My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. 5 I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt.”* (vv. 3-5)

She has cleaned herself up, she has purified herself, but she is willing to step out into discomfort and uncertainty to meet him. She is now dripping with his fragrance: **myrrh**, which speaks of her heart commitment to embrace death in her pursuit of Jesus. — “the fragrance of suffering love” (The Passion Translation)

Here is where the plot twist happens, where it feels like the Lord is doing something that doesn’t make any sense: when she goes out to meet Him, He is nowhere to be found: *“I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.”* (vs. 6)

This is her first test: He has withdrawn His presence. She thought she would encounter Him and instead she’s met with silence. **Have you ever experienced the absence of God’s presence? What was your response?**

Her response is to go out and look for him in the city. And again, things do not go the way we would hope. She is met by the watchmen, the people who are charged with taking care of the city, but instead of caring for her and protecting her, they beat her. **The watchmen or the leaders strike and wound her**

**taking her veil (spiritual covering) so she can no longer function in ministry in the Body. Her ministry is gone. How will she respond to Him now?**

We don't necessarily have watchmen around us nowadays, but we do have leaders. We do have the church. We have the people we look to for answers in the middle of a crisis, and sometimes they do the exact opposite of what we feel like we need them to do. They punish us instead of having compassion, they respond harshly instead of listening, they hurt us deeply when we were hoping they would restore our hearts. **How do we respond to ministry wounds? What is our response to being hurt by those who are meant to protect us?** (What we're talking about here is simple human brokenness where we experience pain and disappointed from the humanity of others NOT an abusive relationship where we remain in a situation where we are belittled and harmed by the hurtful and selfish behavior of an abuser.)

The Lord is asking her, **“Will you be Mine even if I withhold the things you deeply desire? Are you Mine when you cannot feel My presence? Will you still love and trust Me when you are disappointed by circumstances?”**

**What would your response be?** I know when I first read this passage, I was angry. I didn't understand why He didn't show up, much less it felt so unfair to me that she gets beat up because she tries to look for Him. But she is not angry, her response is not to rant and complain to her friends, but rather she gives them a charge: *“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.”* (vs. 8)

**Her response is: If you find my beloved, tell Him I miss Him. Tell Him I am not offended and I'm still here, I love Him just as much as I ever did.**

The Shulamite is not consumed with herself, she is consumed with love. She does not confuse her circumstances with His love.

Do you have the kind of love and knowledge of who He is under digress that provokes your friends and neighbors to go after Him? — Her love provokes this response in her friends. That's the dream for all of us.

They ask:

*9 What is your beloved more than another beloved,*

*O most beautiful among women?*

*What is your beloved more than another beloved,*

*that you thus adjure us?*

She response with as deep of a knowledge of Him as He had of her in the last chapter — She KNOWS Him!

*10 My beloved is radiant and ruddy,  
distinguished among ten thousand.*

*11 His head is the finest gold;  
his locks are wavy,  
black as a raven.*

*12 His eyes are like doves  
beside streams of water,  
bathed in milk,  
sitting beside a full pool.*

*13 His cheeks are like beds of spices,  
mounds of sweet-smelling herbs.*

*His lips are lilies,  
dripping liquid myrrh.*

*14 His arms are rods of gold,  
set with jewels.*

*His body is polished ivory,  
bedecked with sapphires.*

*15 His legs are alabaster columns,  
set on bases of gold.*

*His appearance is like Lebanon,  
choice as the cedars.*

*16 His mouth is most sweet,  
and he is altogether desirable.*

*This is my beloved and this is my friend,  
O daughters of Jerusalem.*

The first three descriptions:

1. Radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand: I love his leadership. He leads better than any other.
2. His locks are wavy, black as a raven: I love his dedication and commitment to the law (the law is written on his head). He never lets me down
3. His eyes are like doves: He has the best discernment, He sees so clearly. He really knows me and how to lead me