

The Trysting Place

Song of Solomon 6:1-3

14 November 2021

11:00 AM (Halifax); 3:00 PM (Glenholme & Livestream)

Introduction:

Today in our series on the Song of Solomon, we come to chapter 6.

- It is very much a continuation of the story that began in chapter 5, verse 2, where the bride resisted her husband's advances only to regret it afterward.

In going through the Song of Solomon, we have seen that it is meant to be understood as an allegory of the church's relationship with Jesus Christ.

- In this Song, He is the bridegroom, the husband, and the church is His bride, His wife.
 - Although many modern commentators are squeamish about this interpretation, for the better part of three millennia, the allegorical interpretation has been dominant.
- Granted, for us moderns, it takes some getting used to for our relationship with Christ to be illustrated by the marriage act, but we need to accept this.
 - As we saw recently, even the Apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians, speaks of the one flesh aspect of marriage as revealing in a mystery the relationship of Christ and the church. See Ephesians 5:30-32.

So in the allegory revealed in chapter 5, we have the bride of Christ resisting His advances to be intimate—she is spiritually sluggish and does not want to open her door to Him, though He appeals sweetly to her.

- Then He reaches his hand beside her door and His transforming touch arouses her so that she stirs herself to open the door to Him with myrrh dripping from her fingers.
 - But when she does, to her great dismay, she finds that He is gone.
 - She does not go back to bed, but out into the night to look for Him. His touch has stirred her.
- She goes to the watchmen of the city of God—the ministers of the church—only to be roughly treated by them.
 - Undaunted, she goes to the ordinary members of the church who are called “the daughters of Jerusalem” and asks them to tell Him how eager she is to be with Him should they find Him.
- They are quite impressed with how eager she is to find Him, and they want to know why. How is her beloved better than another beloved?
 - It was an excellent question.
- Last week (vv 9-16), we saw her beautiful response to the daughters of Jerusalem.
 - In short, she told them that He was “chief among ten thousand” and “altogether lovely.”
 - She also went into particulars—about ten of them—showing how He is superior to all others.
 - She presented Him as a monument so as to exhibit His beautiful divine qualities that make Him a husband beyond comparison with any other.
- She ended this powerful discourse with the words of chapter 5, verse 16, where she begins by declaring that His mouth is most sweet.

- She is thinking about His kisses no doubt—that is, the manifestation of His love to her which she described before as “better than wine.”
 - Then, in the rest of verse 16, she says: **“Yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!”**
 - Indeed, she has made her case and made it well that He is like no other.

In the verses we are looking at today, starting with chapter 6, we see that the daughters of Jerusalem are ready to join the bride in her eager search for Jesus.

- They ask for direction, and she gives it to them as we shall see.
 - We will begin in Song of Solomon chapter 6 verse 1 and read to verse 3:
 - Pay careful attention because this is the word of God.

Song of Solomon 6:1-3: Where has your beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with you? ² My beloved has gone to his garden, To the beds of spices, to feed *his flock* in the gardens, and to gather lilies. ³ I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feeds *his flock* among the lilies.

And there we end the reading of God's Word.

I. See in verse 1 how the daughters of Jerusalem ask the bride where her beloved may be found!

- They say: 6:1: **Where has your beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with you?**
- A. The bride's description of His loveliness has made them want to seek Him too.
1. Her praise of Him made them realise that they do not know Him like she does.
 - But now, having heard about Him, they want to know Him like that.
 - Hearing about her relationship with Him makes them realise that they have been missing out.
 2. You can tell that they are very eager about this.
 - a. They show this by repeating themselves:
 - “Where has your beloved gone?” “Where has your beloved turned aside?”
 - They have taken up her distress about being absent from Him.
 - b. And look! They are ready to drop everything and go searching for Him too.
 - They say so: “Where has He gone **that we may seek Him with you.**”
 - They are not just curious. They are ready for action. They are ready to go out looking for Him with their friend.
 - They want to enjoy intimacy with Him along with her.
 - This works beautifully in the allegory—where the bride stirs up her own members to seek her husband.
 - That's just the way it works in the church.
 - c. And don't miss the fact that they call her “the fairest among women” again.
 - They are right—the church's devotion to Christ makes her beautiful.
 - It is right for her to have such devotion. It makes her radiant.

- And now these daughters of Jerusalem want to be like her.
3. It's rather ironic that they ask *her* where to find Him when her very purpose in coming to them was because she could not find Him.
 - But this is really quite natural.
 - If someone asks you to help them find a lost pet or something, you ask them where it often goes, where did they last see it, and such questions.
 - This is especially the case in the case of the daughters of Jerusalem.
 - They had not really experienced the intimacy that she describes.
 - They don't know where the trysting place is because they have never been there, but they know that she has—so they ask her where He can be found.

TRANS> The daughters of Jerusalem have been moved with earnest desire to find Him that they might have communion with Him too.

- B. Perhaps after going through chapter 5, you also want to go with the bride to enjoy intimacy with Christ in the trysting place.
 1. Perhaps like the daughters of Jerusalem, you have come to see that you have not known Christ the way the bride describes, either—
 - Perhaps you are one of these daughters of Jerusalem—a member of the church.
 - And exactly like them, you have heard the bride speaking of her beloved in this passage and it has stirred you up to seek Him too.
 - You have heard her, and you have said, “I don't know Him like she does, either.
 - “I want to know where to find Him to so I can see His beauty and experience His love. Where can I find Him?”
 - I am not saying that you are not a true believer.
 - You may be, or you may not. That is not what is important.
 - What is important is that the Lord is calling you to come to Him and walk with Him as your husband who gave Himself for you, not only that you might be forgiven, but also that you might have communion with Him in His Father's house as His bride.
 - I hope all of you have been stirred up by what we have seen in chapter 5 to yearn for intimacy with Christ.
 2. Perhaps some of you can identify more with the bride than with the daughters of Jerusalem—but still the result is the same—you want intimacy with Him too.
 - Over the years, you have often experienced intimacy with Christ, but this passage has made you realise that your love has turned cold.
 - Like the church at Ephesus that Jesus rebuked for losing their first love, you have lost that love that you used to have for him.
 - And now you realise that you need to arise and open to Him—and help the daughters of Jerusalem to find Him too.

3. Or maybe you were someone who was already enjoying regular intimacy with Christ—but again, you too want to continue to experience Him like this
 - You are one who delights in regular communion with Christ, and you lament when you see many that have become cold, and want to help them.
 - You don't need to feel like you are being proud if this is the case—if you are having true communion with Christ, you are not proud about it, you are thankful for His sustaining grace.
 - But like Paul, you can honestly say that you are constrained by His love, and you enjoy rich communion with Him on a regular basis.

TRANS> I am very pleased if God has used this sermon series to stir you up to pursue intimacy with Christ—to love Him and to know His love.

- C. If you follow through with seeking Him, it will be quite a wonderful thing.
 1. The world, your own flesh, and the Devil will all try to discourage you.
 - To say that Christ cannot be known in an intimate way like that—
 - that it is just emotionalism...
 - or that the apostles Peter & Paul, King David, Barnabas, Ruth, or the widow Dorcas were all just super Christians and that such nearness to the Lord is not for ordinary Christians like you.
 2. The world, the flesh, and the Devil will all try to divert you away from Christ, as perhaps they have done in the past...
 - To fill you with distractions, with love for other things that grab your heart and your time from Christ—making you think that you don't have time for the most important thing and reason to even live!
 - Or to discourage you that you have too much sin and guilt, and to make you forget that forgiveness is in Christ crucified.
 - Or they will make you think that it is too much trouble to earnestly seek Christ—that it is so hard that it's not worth it—forgetting that it is by His grace that we are enabled to pursue the Lord.
 - Or they will fill you with envy and resentment so that instead of seeing the good example of others, you will be bitter that they know Him and you don't.
 - Or maybe they will draw you away with sinful lust, drunkenness, drugs, or entertainment...
 - Or try to consume you with anxiety, fear, depression, bitterness.
 3. But no, my friend—if you have been stirred up to seek Christ, let nothing stop you.
 - What will it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What could possibly be more important than Christ? What could possibly make you happier than communion with Him?
 - Some of you may not have even seen this at all yet.
 - Oh, that you would stop being so stubborn!

- You are suppressing the truth about Him—unbelievers have to work hard to resist the truth and make excuses.

TRANS> So I hope that all of you earnestly desire to seek regular intimacy with Christ.

II. In verse 2, we have the church's answer about the place Christ is to be found—what we might call the trysting place for Him and His bride.

- A trysting place is a place where lovers go to express their love to each other.
 - That is what the daughters of Jerusalem want as members of the bride.

A. It is grand to see that the bride has become their guide.

1. She is the one who had shunned Him before and was herself trying to find Him, but now she is leading the daughters of Jerusalem to Him!
 - This is the way it is in the church.
 - Those who minister to others do not have their sufficiency in themselves, but they are made sufficient ministers by the working of the Spirit of God.
 - Elders and pastors can often feel discouraged. Yes, they have been placed in office because they meet the qualification given in scripture for office,
 - but they know how inadequate they are and sometimes they have to tell others how to find Christ when they themselves feel far away from Him.
 - Paul tells us that God uses ministers, not *even though* they are mere clay (earthen vessels), but *because* they are mere clay—
 - **2 Co 4:7: But we have this treasure (of ministry) in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.**
 - God wants us to know that the ministry that the bride has by which she edifies herself in love is because of His gracious work in her by His Spirit.
 - He wants us to know that it is also an expression of His love and power.
2. Look at the bride! She knows how to answer the daughters of Jerusalem.
 - She is able to direct them to the trysting place even though she herself did not presently find Him there.
 - She is able to help others even though she needs help, and in fact, helping others will prove to be the best help for her...
 - Isn't it true?
 - When you help others even though you are struggling, you end up being helped more than if you had withdrawn into yourself.
3. I heard a beautiful story from Robert McCurdy of the Free Church of Scotland about a couple of famous ministers in the Free Church of Scotland in the 19th century—one was a professor of Hebrew, a very godly man, who was often called Rabbi Duncan, and the other was the pastor of the church Duncan attended, Pastor Alexander Stewart.

- Rabbi Duncan was one who deeply loved Christ, but often struggled with assurance. One Saturday morning when Pastor Stewart was busy preparing for the Lord's Day, he looked out the window and saw Duncan coming, and realised that his morning would be stolen by Duncan's struggles.
 - But before Duncan came to the door, Stewart opened the door and called out to him, telling him of man he had spoken to earlier that morning in a carriage who struggled to know how Christ could save him.
 - Duncan said, "Which way did he go?" and immediately went after him, eager to minister to him.
 - Stewart was pleased that he got his morning back, Duncan got his assurance back, and a sinner got to hear the gospel.
 - That is the way God works.
- So where does the bride tell the daughters of Jerusalem to go?
- B. The bride tells them that her beloved can be found in His garden—with His people.
- She says (verse 2): **My beloved has gone to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies.**
1. This is where He told her He'd be back at the beginning of chapter 5.
 - In 5:1, He said, **I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.** [And then to His friends He said] **Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!**
 - Just before this, at the end of chapter 4, He had praised His bride for her beauty, and He had described her as a garden—an enclosed garden—the same word that is used in our verse.
 - So she is His garden.
 - He speaks much at toward the end of chapter 4 about all the wonderful fruits that she brings forth as His garden—precious spices that bring Him great pleasure.
 - Chief among these fruits is her love for Him,
 - Remember in 4:9 how He said that she had ravished His heart with one look of her eye?
 - And in verse 10 how he exclaimed, "How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse!"
 2. From this we can see that His garden sanctuary is His bride, the church gathered.
 - The garden where He has gone that the bride speaks of in verse 2 is the visible church.
 - The beds of spices in the garden are the individual congregations that make up His church, each of them composed of members.
 - Last week we read from Revelation chapter 1 of our Lord walking among the golden lampstands, which John was told were the churches.

- Furthermore, from Genesis to Revelation, we see that the Lord often meets with His people in the garden—beginning with the garden of Eden and ending with the garden restored in Revelation 22 with the tree of life and its fountain of living water.
 - This garden theme is all through the Song of Solomon, but we also see it in the temple and its furnishings, with decorations of symbols of pomegranates, lilies, and olive trees.
 - In the New Testament, the assembly of God’s people is the temple, the garden sanctuary, where the Lord visits His people and comes among them.
 - So the bride teaches the daughters of Jerusalem to seek Him in the garden sanctuary of His people, among the gathering of the saints.
 - The church assembled together for worship is His trysting place.
- C. What the beloved does at His garden (the trysting place) is described in verse 2.
1. He has gone to His garden to feed.
 - **6:2: My beloved has gone to his garden, To the beds of spices, to feed *his flock* in the gardens, and to gather lilies.**
 - a. The word feed is used both of feeding others and of feeding oneself in the Song.
 - Notice carefully, the words *his flock* are in italics which means that these words have been added by the translators—and not without reason.
 - The word *feed* is a word that shares the same root as the word shepherd, and of course the chief work of a shepherd is to feed the flock.
 - And as I say, the Song of Solomon uses this word *feed* (raw-aw’) both to refer to feeding others and to eating...
 - For example, in 1:8, the bride is told to feed her little goats, but in 4:5, her breasts are described as resembling two fawns that feed among the lilies.
 - In 1:8 she goes to feed others, giving them something to eat; and in 4:5, she is the one who is eating—feeding to satisfy her own hunger.
 - We have examples in the Song of Solomon of the bridegroom feeding Himself and feeding others...
 - In 5:1, we saw Him going to His garden to eat the fruit that His bride produces—the spices, the honey, the wine, and the milk.
 - He goes to the garden to enjoy the delicious fruit that His garden—that is, His bride—has produced by His nurture and tender care.
 - b. So as the gardener, He indeed goes to feed His garden (to tend it) but He also goes to partake of the fruits that come forth.
 - Every gardener does this—

- He feeds his garden in that he plants his seeds, fertilizes, waters, weeds, heals what is sick, supports what is weak, and exterminates pests and drives away wild animals—
 - But he also feeds from his garden in that he gathers the fruit, takes in the beauty of the flowers and their fragrance, and gathers them—as it says here, He gathers the lilies.
 - It seems that no matter how you look at it, He goes to His bride both to feed her and to feed upon her precious fruits that give Him so much delight—for they are the works of His hands.
- His garden sanctuary, His bride assembled, is His trysting place with her.
2. My brothers and sisters, you need to see how important the Christian worship service is.
- God has appointed the holy convocation, that gathering of His people, the assembly, the church, and we not to forsake this assembly.
 - To put it in the language of marriage, you are to come to make love to Him and He comes here to make love to you in the garden, the *ecclesia*.
 - You need to think about this.
- a. As His bride, you make love to Him by adoring Him and giving yourself to Him.
- You come with an offering—the offering of yourself.
 - With the fruit of your lips, you are to give thanks to His name, singing praise to Him and responding with delight when He is revealed in His word and sacraments.
 - In the assembly, more than anywhere else, you praise Him.
 - You behold His excellent beautiful person, His sweet promises, His grace, His commandments, and His work.
 - You are to love Him here—to cherish Him.
 - Your love is very precious to Him.
 - And you come before Him to give yourself over to Him afresh.
 - And always, you come delighting in what He has done on the cross to secure the pardon of your sins.
 - You come as a happy bride who is very thankful to have such a kind husband who has turned your life around and given you so much.
- b. As the bridegroom, He makes love to you by adoring you and by pouring Himself out for you.
- He takes pleasure in your love, in your devotion, in the fruit that He has produced in you by His saving work.
 - Every gardener loves to see and enjoy the produce of his garden.
 - Think of what is in this garden!
 - People who were lost and ruined—completely so when it comes to any fitness whatsoever to appear before our holy God—

- And He, by His intense labour and sacrifice on the cross has secured our pardon.
- And further, by the powerful working of His Spirit, He has made us new creations in Christ that are blossoming with new life, with love for Him where there was no love before.
 - He comes and He sees the new lily blossoms and He gathers them to Himself.
 - He sees the changes in us, and He knows that we will grow to perfection.
- His very large, very loving heart that is more loving than any other heart, rejoices over His work.

III. In verse 3, the bride sums up the very essence of her relationship with Him.

- She says: **“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.”**
- A. This reflects the way that the Lord describes His marriage covenant with us from Genesis to Revelation.
1. When He established His redemptive covenant with Abraham, He said to Him, “I will be God to you and to your descendants after you and you will be my people.”
 - In Leviticus 26:12, He said: **“I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.”**
 - In Deuteronomy 26:17-19, He said: **“Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. ¹⁸ Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments, ¹⁹ and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken.”**
 - In Jeremiah 31:33, He said: **“But *this is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”**
 - In Ezekiel 36:28: **“Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”**
 - In Hosea 2:23, He says: **“And I will have mercy on *her who had* not obtained mercy; Then I will say to *those who were* not My people, ‘*You are My people!*’ And they shall say, ‘*You are my God!*’ ”**
 - In Hebrews 8:10, He says: **For *this is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**
 - And in Revelation 21:3, we have John’s window into eternity: **And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.”**

2. This is the essence of our relationship with God.
 - We belong to Him and He belongs to us.
 - He has taken us, though sinners, and redeemed us to be His bride, securing our pardon through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - He has taken us, though rebellious, and given us a new heart so we would give ourselves to Him and be His people.
 - The essence of the relationship is that He has poured Himself out for us and now we respond by pouring our life out for Him.
 - That is what happens at the trysting place.
- B. It appears that the bride has now found the one she loves.
1. Some say that when she says, “**I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine,**” she is expressing her faith over against her feelings or her sense of His love.
 - This is indeed what sustained her while she was estranged from Him.
 - It is very important when He has withdrawn, as far as His kisses, as far as the special manifestation of His love to you,
 - that you can do nothing better than to hold on to His covenant marriage promise that He is your God and that you are one of His people.
 2. There are three indications that the bride has found Him and is again enjoying intimacy with Him.
 - a. But if you look at the context, it is quite clear that she has found Him again because, in the verses that follow (6:4-10), He begins to speak to her.
 - Obviously, she has found Him.
 - And as we will see, He not only speaks to her, but He tells her how delighted He is with her, how much she pleases Him, how beautiful she is in His eyes.
 - She is His garden, and she is bringing forth fruit because He is the gardener.
 - He is enjoying the fruit that she has brought forth for Him—
 - that deep love for Him that she has been expressing to the daughters of Jerusalem when He had withdrawn.
 - He is thrilled with the beauty of her love and her other graces.
 - b. Second, look at how she repeats the line from verse 2 that “He feeds *His flock* among the lilies.”
 - Why does she do that?
 - Surely she does that because now she is giving herself to Him again...
 - She has just said it: “I am my beloved’s.”
 - In other words, “I am here for Him.”
 - “I am giving myself to my beloved.”
 - “He is here feeding upon me and gathering my lily blossoms.”
 - c. Third, notice how she speaks of her belonging to Him...
 - She adds, “and my beloved is mine,” because He is freely giving Himself to her—feeding her with the delight of His love and grace...

- But you see that she has reversed the order—back in 2:16 when He had gone for no apparent reason and come back to her, she said,
 - **2:16: My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds *his flock* among the lilies.**
- But here she reverses it, because this time, she was the one who had initially resisted Him and she wants to emphasise that she is freely giving herself to Him—so this time she says, 6:3: **“I am my beloved’s”** and then **“and my beloved is mine.”**
 - She is not going to resist Him now.

Conclusion:

My friends, see that you do not resist Him either.

- I believe that as a congregation, we need to improve our worship.
 - We need to see this as the place where we joyfully give ourselves as an offering to Him—we need to pour out ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice—
 - We need to praise Him and adore Him as we sing His word and as we hear His word preached and as we come to the Table.
- We need to assert with the whole church, **“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine. He feeds *his flock* among the lilies.”**
 - This is the trysting place where we make love to Him and He to us.