

**Song of Solomon 1: 12; "The Fragrance of the Spikenard", Sermon # 13
in the series - "I am my Beloved's", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
August 30th, 2009, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

I think that when good and godly men disqualify the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon that they believe that they are doing so for good reasons. They are usually very practical men, and as such, they believe that to delve through all the pictures that are found here is an unprofitable experience for themselves and those whom they preach to. They believe it is liable to gross misunderstanding. They know the dangers of allegorizing the Scriptures and so will not consider the thousands of word pictures which are found in the word of God from anything other than a literal physical standpoint. They will usually take the approach that this book is some sort of book on how marriage can be strengthened and improved. Well, I certainly believe that principles of how marriage can be improved and strengthened can be found in this book. I will however, continue to attempt to disprove this thesis that the Allegorical approach to this book is unprofitable and impractical. I believe that an allegorical interpretation becomes dangerous when a person's imagination superimposes a meaning upon the text that is at variance with the rest of Scripture. It is when a person is taking the unwarranted liberty to himself to make the Scriptures into some fabulous story book because he wants to confuse the facts of what historically happened to real people, God's people, in the Old Testament narratives. Or, he wants to find some meaning in the particular words of Scripture which changes the plain and obvious meaning, or goes beyond the meaning that God intended when He had men write them. God intends to reveal Christ in all the Scriptures. But there is nothing more practical, spiritually speaking, than this book of Song of Solomon in terms of developing a heart religion with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is out of a flourishing heart religion that a practical Christianity develops and blossoms. It is because the heart is fired in devotion to Jesus Christ, the King and heavenly Bridegroom, that the ardent believer who so loves His Lord will proceed from devotion to sanctification, and on to practical good works. I hope that this will lead not a few of those who take the other approach, to re-consider this one. Come back and discover the depths and the riches of the word of God! Throw away your wooden literalism and develop your spiritual relationship with Christ! The Bible is not a self-help manual for marriage or for living the rest of the Christian life. It is a book for the cultivation of a heart relationship with the One who loved me and died for me!

Now the picture that we are brought to this afternoon is one of our Bridegroom King sitting at His table. And while He is sitting at His table, He observes something very precious and wonderful. What comes to Him is the fragrance of the perfume worn by the one whom He loves. He is able to observe His Bride and to smell the fragrance of her love and devotion to Him. It is His table, the King's table, which is set up in the heart of the believer. And what wonderful devotion and fellowship is to take place, as they dine together there, and speak of their love for one another. Dear

believer, do you this afternoon consciously sit at this table with your Lord Jesus? Does your heart go out to Him in the spiritual language of devotion to Him? If it does not, perhaps after hearing this sermon, your heart will go out to Him. There are 2 ways that the Bride expresses her love for her Bridegroom-King. Let me mention them, and then develop them for you. First - The Bride expresses her love by remembering that her King is at His table, and she herself comes to that table. And second - The Bride expresses her love for her Lord by having with her a Spikenard perfume, and sending forth its fragrance. May our devotion to Christ be deepened by considering these truths.

1st of all - The Bride expresses her love by remembering that her King is at His table, and she herself comes to this table.

"While the king sat at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance." Now if this fragrance, which is mentioned here, is not speaking of devotion to Christ for what He has done for believers in living His life for them and laying it down for them at the cross; I do not know what. "The Lord is sitting at His table." Last week we looked at the gold ornaments of devotion that the believer proudly wears because of the grace that Christ has given them. This week we are speaking of the fragrance of spikenard and myrrh and Henna blossoms which the believer has and wears. All of these scented things we should associate with the life and ministry; the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. "We are to walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." (Ephesians 5: 2) It is from His person and His blessed work that all fragrance and all sweetness comes to our souls and our lives. Let us think for a few moments of how this "table" which the Lord is sitting at, came to into being. This table is the place where the whole family of believers in heaven and earth gathers and sits down to have fellowship and take spiritual nourishment together. It is here called the King's table. It is called "his" table because He made all the preparations for this time of fellowship that we have with Him, by faith, in our time here upon the earth as believers. He, because of the power of His life and death and the love wherewith He loves us, also gathers all of those who have believed in Him to heaven when they die. He gathers them to Himself, to that glorious place around the throne of grace, until the resurrection of the dead; for those who have died and have gone into heaven before us. For those of us still living upon the earth, this table is made more real to us by our coming to the Lord's table at church once each month to eat His Supper. For we know that it is on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross, that all the benefits of His death and resurrection come to our lives as believers. This is why we observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; because He would have us to remember Him; His love, His work, and death for us as sinners. We remember His burial where all of our sins were buried with Him. And we remember His resurrection when with mighty power, God raised Him from the dead. And then as we remember Christ, we ought to remember where He is seated now. He is seated at the right hand of God, in the heavenly places, far above all

principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.

The thing to remember here this afternoon is that we, as believers, are seated there, spiritually, with our Lord at His table. Turn with me to the book of Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 4, and you will see this. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together (with Him), and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Since Christ is there at the right hand of God, He has fellowship and communion with all believers in heaven and earth and that fellowship and communion are pictured here in verse 12 as being seated with Him. We should not have a problem seeing a table there, even if it is a spiritual table. This is a spiritual table of fellowship and nourishment for the souls of all believers and it will stand until the end of the world, and on into eternity. Although, then we shall see Him face to face. Now we see only see Him in a mirror dimly. Now we behold Him by faith, even though we do not see Him with our physical eyes, as it says in 1st Peter 1: 8: "Though now you do not see Christ, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls." When Christ returns, at the end of the world, then we will see Him face to face and sit at the literal table with Him. Do you remember the words of Luke Chapter 22, verses 29 and 30? "And I bestow upon you a kingdom," Jesus said to the Apostles, "just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In that fellowship around His table, then, we will be glorified and we will not need the kind of fellowship of faith that is so poetically and spiritually spoken of here in the verse that we are studying.

So even though we are separated dimensionally, Christ being in heaven at the right hand of the Father, and we being here upon the earth, we still have close spiritual communion and fellowship around His table. You will remember the familiar words of Revelation 3: 20 - "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Now if the saints are to dine with Christ; where else but at a table will they do it? Spiritual dining takes place at a spiritual table which has been prepared with many good spiritual things laid upon it. Proverbs Chapter 9, verse 1 says, "Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has slaughtered her meat, she has mixed her wine, she has also furnished her table. Wisdom's table is Christ's table, because all the riches of wisdom and understanding are found in Him. Verses 5 and 6 say, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed." "Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding." This is to sit down at the table with Christ. Those of you who do not know Christ should come to this table by faith in Him, even now; to find the meaning of life and the understanding to live wisely.

As a believer, when you sit down at the table with Christ, your beloved; His very presence causes the graces that He has given you, to work in your life; your heart goes out to him; your feelings are strong to know more of Him and His power to change and motivate your life, so that you are caught up in love with Him. He becomes your chief delight. You are walking with Him and serving Him as your closest companion, then your spikenard sends forth its fragrance to Him. All of the graces of the Holy Spirit that He has first placed in your heart are now moved into exercise for Him. You remember what He has done for you in giving you grace, in opening your mind to the truth, in opening your heart to love God and to desire all of His ways. Everything good in your life, dear believer, has the fragrance of Christ about it; so much so, that it becomes something that He takes great delight in, and even people around you begin to notice. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians Chapter 2, verse 12. Paul is talking here about his desire to be faithful to Christ and to preach His gospel. "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia." "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place." "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." "To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life." "And who is sufficient for these things?" The Apostle Paul carried with him this sweet perfume of the gospel, as an apostle and a missionary. And out of his love to Christ, knowing that the truth of why Christ died would not smell good to some, but it would to others who saw themselves as sinners in God's sight; he put it on himself and he poured it out in his preaching, for others. This leads us to our second point which is:

2ndly - The Bride expresses her love for her Lord by having with her a Spikenard perfume, and sending forth its fragrance.

I would like you to see that this study is very practical, so turn with me to John 12, verse 1. "Then six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raise from the dead." "There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him." "Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair." "And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil." "But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?'" "This he said not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it." "But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial.'" "For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always." Now here is a literal example in a believer, working out in their Christian life, the meaning of our text in Song of Solomon. Martha, Lazarus, and Mary are thankful that Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead, and so they decide to make Him a supper. Martha served, it

says, but Lazarus was sitting at the table with Jesus. It is good to serve the Lord Jesus when you can, and while you can. If you love Jesus you will serve Jesus; you will be thinking of what you, yourself, can do for him. And you will go about to do it. Martha was gifted in this way, and she was very zealous to be going about and doing very practical things, and tasks to serve her Master and Lord. Lazarus, her brother is one of those who sat at the table with Jesus. He had recently been physically raised from the dead and had become a marvel to many. Some, when they saw that Lazarus had been raised from the dead, believed in Jesus, and yet the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because Jesus had raised him from the dead. Wonderful; how when Jesus takes a man who has been four days dead, and should have stank, as Martha so wonderfully stated to Jesus before He raised him from the dead; it is wonderful in the extreme that he should now be so full of life, and his resurrection spiritually smell so good to some of those looking on, that they would believe in Jesus. But how strange, how terribly strange, that it was because Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, that not only Jesus, but Lazarus whom he raised from the dead, should be plotted against, to also be put to death. Mary knew this truth, and that is why she literally took spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus. Yes, she was thankful for the miracle that Jesus had done for her brother in raising him from the dead; but it was more. She was beginning to understand how she should respond to such extravagant love as Jesus had shown to her. She knew that He was endangering His own life in order that Lazarus could be brought back from the dead. She was going to do something that a legalist would never understand. She was going to do something that would seem very wasteful to Judas. But it was something which was very pleasing and significant to Jesus. She was going to send forth the fragrance of her Spikenard. She was going to show the people around her how much she loved and appreciated Jesus for doing what He alone could do. She was beginning to see and understand that Christ was going to lay down his life for his friends. And she also was beginning to see that His was a costly love. There would be many Jewish people of that day who did not believe that Jesus should give help to sinners or become their friend, to save their souls. There would be those who would hate all those who loved Jesus for saving them. Mary understood this very well. Jesus' rescuing Lazarus from death; being willing to endure the reproach and anger of the Pharisees and other self-righteous legalistic Jews to do so; was a preview of what He would do at the cross for all those who would believe in Him. Mary was beginning to understand this, and in her own way she wanted to give Jesus thanks for all that He had done for her and all that He would do for her.

That is why she took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. She knew that there were some things that only Jesus could do. No other man could raise the dead by His own power. No other man could take away the sins of others by His suffering for them. She didn't understand everything about the atonement that He would render on the cross in a few days, but she did understand His love for her and her brother and sister. Jesus had loved them in this extravagant way; He raised Lazarus from the dead, but she

had known and heard Him say at various points that He would Himself die at the hands of the chief priests and the scribes and Pharisees. And she wanted to show forth her love to Him during the time of His sufferings and death. She had this spikenard that she had been saving. She had wanted to wait until a later time. But she now understood that this was the time to show Him her love, and to do what she could do; what she had purposed to do for him. And so she did it. She poured out the fragrant Spikenard and its scent filled the whole house. What she did, in Mark 14: 6 is mentioned by Christ as "doing a good work for Me." What is the application for you and I? It is that you and I would show our love for Jesus and we would do extravagant things to anoint the work of our service to Christ with this Spikenard of devotion. Since Christ is now in heaven we are His hands and His feet. The spikenard draws attention to the relationship that we have with Jesus. He has loved us with an extravagant love. He died for us on the cross and has raised us from the dead spiritually by His resurrection power. Now we must ask ourselves; what can we do for Him out of love. We don't sit back and make excuses for why we can't do anything to help his reputation. We go about to do extravagant works out of love for Him. We think of what we can do. We do all of our good works so that attention might be drawn to the most important thing. His love to us in dying for our sins is the most important thing. But our love being shown back to Him, being shown forth in good works for His name's sake, is very attractive to Him and to others who know what His grace and His love are all about. Help the poor and needy. Help those who are helpless. Give them the gospel in word and deed. Let your life have the scent of Christ's sacrifice, the spikenard of His grace upon it. Then they will know what Jesus has done and is doing for you. And then the fragrance of your devotion will be sent forth to your King and He will be pleased. And it will be sent forth to others, and it will be a fragrance of life unto life to some.