

Song of Solomon 2: 1; “I am the Rose of Sharon”; Sermon # 19 in the series – “I am My Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 15th, 2009, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

There has been some amount of difficulty, among Commentators, in determining who it is that is speaking here in this first verse of Chapter 2. Is it the Bride speaking of herself, or is it Christ speaking of Himself. To me, it seems evident that verse 1 is being spoken by Christ concerning Himself. The Bride has spoken of herself in verse 5 of Chapter 1 as dark but lovely, but still it is a statement well made when John Gill says, “...for self-commendation does not so well agree with the church as with Him.” Indeed, it says in Proverbs Chapter 27, verse 2 – “Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”

So, to me, it seems inappropriate for the Bride to be calling herself a rose except in the context of what Christ's grace has made her into. It is much more appropriate, indeed it is always appropriate, for the pure and perfect Lord Jesus to be saying of Himself, “I am the Rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” In the gospels, you find the Lord Jesus commending Himself not only to believers, but also to needy sinners everywhere by saying – I am the good shepherd, I am the vine, I am the way, the truth, and the life; I am the bread of life and the water of life.

If this is so, why cannot He say of Himself – I am the Rose of Sharon? After all; He is God and no sinful creature. Whatever He says of Himself is not an empty boast. It is rather a declaration of His divine glory. Charles Spurgeon says, " For the creature to praise itself is vanity, but for the Creator to praise Himself, for the Lord God to manifest and show forth his own glory is becoming and proper." I believe that in the case of the verses that we are looking at here, that it is a declaration of His love.

As you read verses 1 and 2, they easily flow together as coming from the lips of the heavenly Bridegroom. “I am the Rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” “Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.” The second verse is His obviously speaking of what His beloved is like. The first verse is His speaking of what He is. He is something which she is like. Both are lilies, but the first is the original from which the second derives her likeness. Christ has given Himself as a bouquet of beautiful flowers to His Church. These flowers represent the loveliness of His love and His humility to us as believers. The second flower, the lily, is what the Bride has also become because of His grace.

Therefore this is how we will approach these 2 verses. 1st of all – The loveliness of Christ is well-represented in His earthly life and in His death by the Rose. And 2nd – The loveliness of Christ is well-represented in His present position in heaven by the lily. And then next Sunday, Lord willing, we shall look at – The loveliness of the Church, which is well represented by the lily, as she is presently seen by Christ in her humble position of being situated among the thorns. May the Lord help us to better grasp the beauty of both the Rose and the Lily here this afternoon.

1st of all - The Loveliness of Christ is well-represented in His earthly life and death, by the Rose.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of Kings, and the Rose is the King of flowers. Even as a rose commands attention from those looking upon it, so the Lord Jesus has commanded the attention of the World, even in the prophecies that were spoken about Him. Turn with me to Isaiah Chapter 11 and you will see a prophecy of the beginning of this Rose. Verse 1 says, “There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” “His delight is in the fear of the Lord....”

What kind of beauty is the beauty that we behold as we look at this Rose? It is true spiritual beauty. Even though He came forth as a shoot from the stem of Jesse, He was a different kind of Rose than his forefather Jesse. He was the Rose of Sharon. Sharon was the valley where the best of roses were found and gathered, in all the land of Judea. Of all men, the Lord Jesus is by far the most excellent. He is the fairest of the fair. When He was born in Bethlehem's stable, but He did not have the blight of Adam's sin upon Him. His was a root out of dry ground. He grew up before God as a tender plant. He had no form or beauty in an earthly sense that we should desire Him.

But the beauty of His heart was beyond compare. He was not disfigured by the disobedience to the commandments of God's perfect and holy Law like we are. He did not fall short of God's glory in any way. The Lord Jesus was descended from David and from Jesse but He had the fullness of the Holy Spirit without measure. You may be the most intelligent man in the world and have the highest I.Q. among men and still not have one iota of true spiritual discernment, because you do not have the Spirit. You cannot have the spiritual discernment, even of a little child unless you have come to see the beauty of this Rose.

Jesus excels all the other roses among men in their beauty because, as the Rose of Sharon, His true spiritual beauty is seen in His righteousness and faithfulness to God and His love to men. Verse 5 of this Chapter 11 of Isaiah says, "Righteousness shall be the belt of His lions, and faithfulness the belt of His waist." That first hymn that we sang in the service says, "Behold, a branch is growing of loveliest form and grace, as prophets sung, fore-knowing; it springs from Jesse's race." "And bears one little Flower." "In midst of coldest winter, at deepest midnight hour." "This flower whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air; dispels with glorious splendor, the darkness everywhere." "True Man, yet very God; from sin and death he saves us and lightens every load."

Flowers are meant for delight. And the Rose is meant to be the chief of delights among flowers, whether they are for display or whether they are given as gifts. Sometimes as you go to a park or to a person's back yard, even; they have grown hundreds of them. They are of a wonderful fragrance. They are a beautiful sight. You must ask yourself if this is one Rose, Christ, who excels them all, is spiritually your delight? Do you see the display of Christ's beauty in the way that He lived His life? Every aspect of His life, every petal of this flower was a thing of beauty in the eyes of the Father.

It is the same in the heart of a sinner when they realize that there is One person who has done all things well. All men may be liars, but Christ is the truth. All men may be fickle but Jesus Christ was consistent in holiness, and consistent in His love, and consistent in righteousness. Christ Jesus is the delight of every sinner who trusts in Him for salvation. He never fails to make His glory and His beauty and His grace known to the one who comes to Him seeking salvation. The fragrance of His holy life and beauty of Him giving Himself to suffer on the cross have had, and they will continue to have eternal and everlasting results.

Roses are a thing of beauty and a joy forever, the saying goes. They are a source of joy. Smell the fragrance of His garments. They smell of myrrh and cassia and aloes; but the fragrance of His heart is that of the Rose; exceedingly sweet. When the Father in heaven gave the World His only-begotten Son, He was giving us His very heart. He was holding forth this Rose and saying, "This is My love to you." God demonstrated His great love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God displayed His love for sinners; He set Him forth as a propitiation (a wrath-removing sacrifice) (a justice satisfying sacrifice)

The Rose that He gave to the World was a Rose of the deepest red because it would be Christ's blood and His sufferings that would accomplish our redemption. The Rose is a flower whose stems that hold it up are filled with rows of thorns. So Christ's life was filled with row upon row of thorns. It was filled with sorrows and sufferings, it was filled with the opposition of

evil religious men. His life was a life filled with opposition, and conflict with the false Jewish religious leaders and finally death coming by their hateful decree. "Let Him be crucified." But still He said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Myself. It is the fragrance of Christ's life and the fragrance of His death which are sweet. It is in beholding by faith, the sweet fragrance of His life and His death and His resurrection, even as we would delight in a Rose given to us, which draws us to receive the gospel and be saved. It is a sight of His love and His compassion, and ability to really save us from our sins which calls to our heart and says, "This is the Rose which is beyond compare. He shall be my chief delight.

The knowledge of what Christ has done for us is a fragrance which diffuses itself into our lives as Christians. 2nd Corinthians 2: 14 says – "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." Let me ask you if you have a love for this Rose more than any other delight that you have in life? Have you picked this Rose and placed it in the vase of your heart? Have you smelled the fragrance of His beauty and glory?

Sharon's plain was an open plain where anyone might wander and pick the wild flowers there. This flower the Rose, was a flower of the field. Charles Spurgeon says, "Jesus is not like a rose in Solomon's garden, shut up within high walls, with broken glass all along the top." "Oh no! he says, "I am the rose of Sharon" everybody's rose, the flower for the common people to come and gather." Let us remember that His sufferings were very awful, but there was no stench in His death. He was laid in the tomb and His body wrapped in the linen burial clothes with the spices that Nicodemus and Joseph brought.

But this Rose, even though He died, yet the Father would not allow Him to see corruption. He raised Him from the dead. His death had been brutal, it had been horrible and it had been ugly. And yet through it all; He remained beautiful in the sight of the Father. He had been marred more than any man, yet the Father was pleased to raise Him from the dead to a glorious resurrection. He who had His glory laid in the dust, and His form violently altered more than the sons of men was not allowed to stay in the tomb. The Father raised Him and crowned Him with glory and honor.

In His sufferings as the King of Glory He had a crown of thorns thrust down upon His sacred brow. But now crowned with the laurels of His victories He became the sweet Rose of Sharon. What joy it brings to every believer's heart. "O sacred head now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down." "Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, thine only crown; O sacred Head what glory, what bliss till now was thine!" "Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call thee mine." We know and believe that in His resurrection there was no stench of death, only the sweetness of grace and the power and beauty of a life that would never die, and a life which would give life to millions of others.

"Behold," He says, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore." "And I have the keys of Hades and Death." What can be more beautiful than this; to know that when we believe in Jesus are now led in triumph in what Christ has done for us. And what fragrance of life unto life is ours; to have and to manifest in every place! May we indeed do so by the power of His grace.

2nd – The loveliness of Christ is well-represented in His present position in heaven by the lily.

"I am the Lily of the valleys." Our Lord Jesus is very familiar with the valleys of this life. He was the Lily of the valleys in that His entrance upon His earthly life and ministry was a great stoop of condescending love towards us who were unworthy of it. He came "out of the ivory palaces, and into a world of woe." Turn with me to Psalm 45. This psalm which tells us of Christ's great love, has a heading to it that reads this way: "To the Chief Musician." "Set to The

lilies". "A Song of Love." Christ is the Chief Lily; the strength and beauty and glory of our salvation. And all those who believe in Him are His lilies; those won in the great battle with Satan and sin at the cross. They love to speak of His love for them. And speaking of their Messiah in verse 6, the sons of Korah, referring to Christ prophetically, says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom." "You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." "All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad."

What was it that made them glad? They were glad for all that Christ had given them. He had clothed them with garments of salvation. He had wrapped them with a robe of righteousness. They are glad because He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross; for them. They are so glad that He lived His life for them; and gave His life for them. He was a man of great humility, which beauty of virtue is well pictured by the lily. The Lily so pure and lovely; the lily, so distinctly and uniquely beautiful in all its glory as a flower, well represents our Lord Jesus as holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.

His whole life, as John Gill says, "was one continued series of humility." There was again, a great beauty in this, in the eyes of the Father, and it ought to be so in our minds and our hearts as we think of Him. The Lily is spoken of by our Lord Himself in His sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6, verse 28. Jesus says, "So why do you worry about clothing?" "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Jesus is speaking to those of us who worry about being clothed in an earthly sense. No person, not even Solomon, was ever better clothed than the lilies of the field which were of God's making. No man was ever better clothed spiritually than the person who believes in Jesus Christ for salvation. They need not fear going to hell if they are trusting in Him. They need not fear being provided for, both body and soul while they are here upon the earth. The Father is well-pleased with Him and will receive you for His sake, because of His perfect beauty of holy deeds on your behalf when you trust in Him.

He went deeper in humility than any man ever went before. And He being God in the flesh, was not only able to condemn sin in the flesh at the cross and purchase our salvation as the Rose of Sharon; but He also, because of His sufferings on behalf of all the sinners who believe in Him for eternal life, has been highly exalted. He is arrayed on high as the greater than Solomon; the Highest of the Kings of the earth. He is the Chief Lily, the fairest of ten thousand to my soul. Do you see His beauty by faith as He is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding on your behalf? Then rejoice greatly and by His grace learn to become more humble and more content to be like Him. We will speak more of these things next week.