

Spurgeon has called this book the Bible's Holy of Holies, for it reveals the very heart of God. This morning, we again reverently approach the Most Holy Place, the inner sanctum of the temple in the heavenly realm and approach the throne of grace to hear the perspective of heaven (Hebrews 4:16ⁱ). Like Moses before the burning bush, we might do well to take off our shoes, for we come again to holy ground (Exodus 3:3-5ⁱⁱ). Last week we read about the beauty of our Savior. This week with humble hearts we will hear of the favor God has placed on those who are in the Son, underserving though we are.

¹ *Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?* Song of Songs 6:1 The daughters of Jerusalem had asked the Shulamite why her beloved is so special. In poetic detail she describes from head to toe how wonderfully beautiful he is. She gave such a passionate description that they want to go with her to see someone so special.

We saw how this applies to Jesus. If we were as in love with Him and had such admiration for His glorious attributes would not those who inquire of us want to follow us into His presence? It reminds me of Peter's admonition. ¹⁵ *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,* 1 Peter 3:15

Have you ever tried to describe what Jesus means to you? Here is my poor attempt: Jesus is the lover of my soul. I am His and He is mine. The very thought of Him overwhelms me and brings tears of joy to my eyes. My Creator, Sustainer, the Lord of life has given Himself unconditionally to me. That He could love even me reveals the greatness of His grace and the wonder of His forgiveness. He paid my indebtedness to God by paying my penalty with His own life. That kind of love is divine. He is always with me, correcting me, guiding me to a better life and greater eternal rewards. He comforts me when I am discouraged. He strengthens me when in my weakness I ask for His help. He inspires me when I need His input. There is no flaw in Him. He is altogether desirable. Without Him, I can do nothing. He is everything to me. When He speaks to my soul, I am filled with the warmth of His love. When I am still in His presence, wave after wave of love flows over me like ocean tides. He fills my heart with songs about His perfections. He is my rock in an unstable world. A glorious wonder is that He has promised to never leave me or forsake me. In Him I am completely satisfied. I could want nothing more in heaven or on earth. He is all powerful, unchanging, ever present, and knows all things. He has showered my life with more blessings than I can count. He has promised to bring me safely to my eternal home where I will be forever with Him. I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine. He is everything to me!

I encourage you to take some time today to write a love letter to Jesus expressing as best you can what He means to you. Or do you have something more important to do? Please take the time. Do not leave this book without letting it draw you to have a deeper love for our Lord. The entire book pleads that we become more intimate with Him.

The Shulamite has asked the virgins that if they see him to relay a message of how lovesick she is (5:8ⁱⁱⁱ). She feels she repelled him when she did not answer the door when he knocked. She is desperate to tell him she is still madly in love with him.

Now they ask her where he might have gone so they can look for him with her. Her description of him has put a longing in their hearts to see him. When we give an answer for the hope that lies within us, may we do so systematically, but with such fervor that it elicits a similar response.

They call her "most beautiful among women." That is the king's description of her (1:8^{iv}). It appears that the king's gracious words have given her confidence and transformed her so that others see her as He does. God's Word transforms us too. When our minds are renewed by God's Word (Romans 12:2^v), we act in ways that are beautiful in His sight. Others see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven (1 Peter 2:12).

What does Jesus call us in Scripture? He calls us a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9^{vi}), righteous (Romans 5:19^{vii}), redeemed (Galatians 3:13^{viii}), new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17^{ix}), sons and daughters of God (2 Corinthians 6:18^x), His bride (John 3:29^{xi}), His beloved (Colossians 3:12^{xii}), His body (1 Corinthians 12:27^{xiii}), His dwelling place (John 14:23^{xiv}), His field (1 Corinthians 3:9^{xv}), His temple (1 Corinthians 3:16^{xvi}), His soldiers (2 Timothy 2:3,4^{xvii}). Have you accepted these descriptions of who you are in Christ? Has it given you new confidence to be all He has called you to be? Are we letting His declarations change us into what He sees in us?

² *My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies.* ³ *I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.* Song of Songs 6:2,3 She could not find him in the city, but when the women ask her where he might be, it seems that it suddenly dawns on her where he is. She says that he must be in his garden among the beds of spices. Then she uses the expression "grazing among the lilies" again. Either it is the stag metaphor implying that He has returned to consummate his love for her, or it is referring to pasturing his flocks, or it is literal. In 5:1^{xviii} the garden refers to the bride's body. Grazing among the lilies has been used to refer to the couple's intimacy. It may be a poetic way to say that he is going about his business as king, shepherding the flock of Israel. The context however is the Shulammitte telling the women where she thinks he has gone. That is why I prefer to interpret this as a literal garden. Solomon's literal gardens are mentioned in Ecclesiastes 2:5^{xix}. However, the wording may imply that in her mind there is the hope of his return to being intimate with her, and as she belongs to him, she could say "his garden."

Grazing is repeated again in verse 3, perhaps eating the first ripe garden produce. The passage says he is "gathering lilies." It could be that she realized he did not run away in anger but instead went to bring back a token of his love. I like that translation and its implication as it lines up more with the analogy of our Lord never leaving us and always breaking through our hardness of heart with His love (Hebrews 13:5^{xx}).

The expression that follows would seem to confirm that translation as it is on the wedding *hupa* (tent like covering) of Jewish weddings and on rings. "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." It is a reversal of the order in 2:16a^{xxi}, "My beloved is mine, and I am his. It seems to be a declaration that she has found him. **Belonging to one another is the deepest kind of companionship and is like the divine call to each of us.** She again finds peace and is secure in their oneness. Guzik comment, *Some people note that in the first the emphasis is on what belongs to her; in the second the emphasis is on whom she belongs to. Perhaps she found it was a more wonderful thing for her to belong to him than for her to "have" him.*^{xxii} Are you His beloved? Is He yours?

Some commentators have noticed the similarity with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had been anointed with nard the week before. He would then descend not to a garden but into hell for us. Nicodemus embalmed him with spices. The disciples felt they were separated from Him (Luke 24:21^{xxiii}). The women came to search for Him in the tomb to anoint Him with more spices but did not find Him (Luke 23:56^{xxiv}; 24:3^{xxv}). That Mary Magdalene found him in the garden at first thought he was the gardener, which parallels this song. The women's love for Jesus and His for them made them feel as if they were the most beautiful among women. And what flowers do we display on Easter to symbolize His resurrection but lilies.

In this fallen world there is still so much beauty. But when the One who has not fallen came with all the perfection of heaven, all that He did had an Edenic beauty. He has made us His garden. That is where we find Him, walking in His garden like He walked with Adam and Eve (Revelation 2:1^{xxvi}). In another sense, He has departed from us when He ascended into heaven. But that was so that He and the Father might be even closer to us, making their home in us by the imparted Holy Spirit who helps us experience the belonging, the oneness, in a greater intimacy than Solomon and the Shulammite experienced (John 14:18-20^{xxvii}).

⁴ *You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners.* Song of Songs 6:4 We have come to the second passage that address the beauty of the Shulammite's physical body. In the Middle Ages, Song of Songs had more commentaries written about it than either John or Romans. Nearly all took the perspective that one should ignore the physical and see the book as entirely spiritual. It is partly because of an attitude that existed in the early church and promoted by Augustine that the body is evil and physical desires are sinful. While I am focusing on the spiritual, we should not ignore the physical. The pleasures of intimacy within the confines of marriage are a gift from God. Nowhere in Scripture is sex within marriage referred to in a negative light. Paul exhorts couples to have intimacy regularly so they will not be tempted (1 Corinthians 7:5^{xxviii}). Passion within marriage is a blessing. Sensuality in the proper place is a gift from God. God designed our bodies to have sensations. What will holy, heavenly sensations be like? They will certainly surpass what we experience in this life.

The king again describes His bride, reinforcing her understanding of how he sees her. He relates it to cities that were beautiful to see, or an army in formation with banners flying above. Hebrew does not have the word troops or army - it might be better translated as "a sight to behold."^{xxix} Solomon is again encouraging her to have confidence that he sees her as desirable. Believers often need to hear that encouragement from the Lord. We see that throughout this book.

The description awesome as an army with banners is especially applicable to the church. The church is the kingdom of God on earth. The banner over us is love (2:4^{xxx}), and the greatest display of that love is the cross (John 15:13^{xxxi}). It is where Christ demonstrated how desirable we are to Him, the extent to which He would go to make us His bride. So, in that sense the banner over us is the cross. We go forward with spiritual weapons to deliver those in bondage to the kingdom of the evil one. The gates of hell will not prevail against us (Matthew 16:18^{xxxii}). While the world persecutes and mocks us, they are only displaying the fear they have that we are right in declaring a day of judgment. That is why they have such a fear of death. Their weapons are carnal, and they

can only harm our bodies, but the truth marches on. They only assist in our graduation into glory. Our prayers and our proclamation cannot be stopped. That is why nations persecute kind and gentle Christians. They do not fear a rebellion from us, but they fear our words will conquer souls and those souls will put God above the ruler of the state. Spurgeon writes, *If there is real goodness in us — if we really, fervently, zealously, love the right, and hate the evil — the outflow of our life almost without a word will judge the ungodly — it will condemn them in their heart of hearts.*

^{5a} *Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me*—Song of Songs 6:5a Previously he said she had captivated him with one glance of her eyes (4:9^{xxxiii}). This seems to express a deepening of his love for her. Here he asks her to turn her eyes away for they are overwhelming him. Can you imagine Jesus saying that to you? It is because He loves you so. I can imagine saying it to Him. I have no doubt that His eyes would overwhelm me. How would you feel? We must realize He loves us more than we could ever love Him. As we do, we can rest with assurance in that love.

^{5b} *Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead* ⁶ *Your teeth are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing; all of them bear twins; not one among them has lost its young.* ⁷ *Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.* Song of Songs 6:5b-7 These verses repeat 4:1b-3b. I will not restate what I shared in that sermon. The main point is not in each detail, but in the fact that Jesus sees the church in its great variety around the world as beautiful. There is so much variety both in expressions and in service. The African church can go on praising God for hours while they dance about. The Anglicans in England stand straight and motionless while they sing on key and with the perfect harmonies. In closed countries the church meets quietly whispering their songs or finds a remote location where they can shout their praises. Some serve the bodies of the poor, repairing cleft lips or disfigurement from war while being sure the recipient knows they do so because of the love of Jesus. The inner-city church serves the homeless meals and prays for healing for those with drug addled minds. The evangelist goes to college campuses and engages the students with the gospel. There are even those who dare to enter the dark halls of politics to bring the light of the gospel to the powerful whose motives are often greed. All are beautiful to Jesus!

Where do you add beauty to the bride? Perhaps you share the love of Jesus by serving your neighbors, wash dishes for the night we feed the homeless, write emails to loved ones and friends and always adding a touch of Jesus' love in each. We even have those who while serving people in their business look for opportunities to share Jesus. Some of us have gone to meet needs in the third world as they share the good news of Jesus. Know that the Lord looks upon you and admires the beauty that He sees. That is because it is a reflection of His beauty. Can you hear Him say, "Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me"?

One point I made in chapter 4 that I would like to repeat. Remember our parallel in Psalm 45 told us that if we want the king to desire us, we should forget our people and our father's house (Psalm 45:10,11^{xxxiv}). The beauty He sees in us is our passion for Him that surpasses all other affections, even that of family. He is the beautiful One (Psalm 45:2^{xxxv}), for every attribute of His is perfection, like a flawless diamond with each facet illuminating others. So, if there is beauty in us, it is our resemblance to His glorious

attributes. Though not all of His attributes are communicable, the ones that can be brought out in us are summed up in the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23^{xxxvi}).

⁸ *There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number.* ⁹ *My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.* Song of Songs 6:8,9 Of all the women this man has ever seen, she is to him the perfect one. This verse is another reason I think this is Solomon, as these queens and concubines must be his. However, she is to him the special one among them all. These women recognize what he sees in her and calls her blessed and praises her (Psalm 45:9^{xxxvii}, 14^{xxxviii}).

I am unsure of the parallel to Jesus and the bride, but we might say that of all the women the world honors, Jesus sees His bride alone as the perfect one, pure to her who bore her (the church). In the final resurrection the one the world will praise and will call "blessed" is the church, the bride of Christ (1 Peter 2:12^{xxxix})! It is that upside down kingdom again. Once despised by the world, they will then see the honor given to her.

Men, though this woman is acknowledged by other women as beautiful, our definition of beauty should not be made by culture but by the woman we marry. She should be our standard to which none other compares. This is one reason pornography is so damaging. It sets another standard with airbrushed perfection that none measure up to. Our own wife should be the standard of beauty we set so that no one can compete.

¹⁰ *"Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?"* Song of Songs 6:10 Solomon adds his last two descriptions: her radiance and the awe she inspires in him. The church is compared to the moon, reflecting the light of the sun, which is typologically the Light of the world. That is why Jesus also calls us the light of the world (Matthew 5:14^{xl}). We reflect His light. The description ends as it began with a description in verse 4, *awesome as an army with banners*. The sense is being overwhelmed at the sight of her. Throughout the letter the bride of Christ is encouraged to see ourselves the way our King sees us. May we always reflect the goodness and truth of our Savior. May we always faithfully represent Him as we go forth as an awesome army with banners, setting captives free with our weapons of the gospel and the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4,5^{xli}). Please do not forget to take time today to write of the beauty you see in your Savior. It will help you be prepared to answer those who ask you for the reason of the hope they see in you.

Questions:

- 1 Why do the virgins want to find him?
- 2 Share your love letter to Jesus.
- 3 What do the Scripture call Jesus' followers?
- 4 What are the various interpretations for verse 2?
- 5 Do you agree with Guzik's comment on verse 3?
- 6 Review the parallel with the Garden of Gethsemane.
- 7 How do we see the church in verse 4?
- 8 Can you imagine verse 5a?
- 9 What are some of the beautiful expressions of the church around the world?
- 10 Why are we compared to the moon?

ⁱ **Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

ⁱⁱ **Exodus 3:3-5 (ESV)**

³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

ⁱⁱⁱ **Song of Songs 5:8 (ESV)**

⁸ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.

^{iv} **Song of Songs 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents.

^v **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

^{vi} **1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)**

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

^{vii} **Romans 5:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

^{viii} **Romans 5:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

^{ix} **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

^x **2 Corinthians 6:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

^{xi} **John 3:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

^{xii} **Colossians 3:12 (ESV)**

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

^{xiii} **1 Corinthians 12:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

^{xiv} **John 14:23 (ESV)**

²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

^{xv} **1 Corinthians 3:9 (ESV)**

⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

^{xvi} **1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

^{xvii} **2 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)**

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

^{xviii} **Song of Songs 5:1 (ESV)**

¹ I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk. Others: Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!

^{xix} **Ecclesiastes 2:5 (ESV)**

⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

^{xx} **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

^{xxi} **Song of Songs 2:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.

^{xxii} David Guzik, *Song of Solomon*, David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013)

^{xxiii} **Luke 24:21 (ESV)**

²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.

^{xxiv} **Luke 23:56 (ESV)**

⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

^{xxv} **Luke 24:3 (ESV)**

³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

^{xxvi} **Revelation 2:1 (ESV)**

¹ "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

^{xxvii} **John 14:18-20 (ESV)**

¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

^{xxviii} **2 Corinthians 7:5 (ESV)**

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within.

^{xxix} -The Bible Speaks Today commentary

^{xxx} **Song of Songs 2:4 (ESV)**

⁴ He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

^{xxxi} **John 15:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

^{xxxii} **Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

^{xxxiii} **Song of Songs 4:9 (ESV)**

⁹ You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

^{xxxiv} **Psalms 45:10-11 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, ¹¹ and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him.

^{xxxv} **Psalms 45:2 (ESV)**

² You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever.

^{xxxvi} **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)**

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

^{xxxvii} **Psalms 45:9 (ESV)**

⁹ daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

^{xxxviii} **Psalms 45:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her.

¹⁵ With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.

^{xxxix} **1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)**

¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

^{xl} **Matthew 5:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

^{xli} **2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (ESV)**

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,