

Guest Preacher - Rev. Kenneth M Ferguson

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 October 2023

Preacher: Rev. Kenneth M Ferguson

[0 : 00] I'd like to turn back to the book of the Song of Solomon and say a few words from chapter 2, as we find it from verses 8 onwards.

The voice of my beloved, behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.

Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me, Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

Behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

And so on. One or two thoughts on this chapter. Solomon was renowned for his wisdom.

[1 : 26] He asked the Lord to give him wisdom, feeling that he was totally inadequate to the position that the Lord had opened up for him as king.

And he asked for wisdom, and wisdom he did receive. He put his wisdom to good use in that he composed 3,000 proverbs.

The Bible tells us that he composed 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. 1,005 songs.

And he names this particular song of Solomon, the Song of Songs. Chapter 1, verse 1, the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

As if he is saying, well, I've done others, but this really is the most important one that I've composed. This is the Song of Songs.

[2 : 29] And in this Song of Songs, he has 117 verses where he highlights the love relationship between Jesus Christ and the believer.

The love relationship and the love bond and the love experiences that the believer has in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in chapter 1, at verse 2, she tells, that is, the believer or the church, says, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is better than wine.

She has tasted of moments of his love and his fellowship. And she says, it has outclassed everything else that I've ever known.

She has known many things in life, but when she has come to experience the love and fellowship and blessing of Christ, she says, there's nothing else to be compared with it.

[3 : 49] And she wants him to kiss her more and more, again and again. And then, in verse 4 of chapter 1, she says, draw me after you.

Let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers. And so on. She wants to be where he is, always to be in his company.

And then, in chapter 2, she says that he has brought her into the banqueting house and that his banner over her was love.

She is taken so good care of by this Lord who has shown her love. And that's the way the people of God are.

They taste that the Lord is gracious in a day of God's power. When the Holy Spirit applies to them the benefits of the redemption purchased by Christ, they know that the Lord has dealt with them at the very heart of their situation.

[5 : 03] He has forgiven their sins. He has given them new life through Jesus Christ. But, it's not always going to be a top-of-the-mountain experience for the people of God.

Certainly, they have a foretaste of heaven when the Lord blesses them and when blessings of the gospel come. But there are other times when things are very, very different.

I heard somebody once say at the question meeting that there is a summer and a winter in the experience of the Christian.

In other words, the summertime is when you're aware of the Lord's love and peace filling your heart and life.

but the wintertime may come when these experiences are no longer the case for you at that time.

[6 : 11] But the man of God, he had encouragement in this particular way that he knows that the Lord knows the way that he was taking and that when the Lord deals with us may be bringing a wintertime of trouble or trial or emptiness into our souls.

the Lord knows the way we're taking and when we are submissive to him it will bear much fruit in our lives.

And there are two or three things I'd like to highlight from the chapter as I come before this marvelous section of scripture today.

First of all, we see that the church is aware of certain mountains coming between her and the Savior.

This is verse 8. The voice of my beloved, behold he comes leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. Now this section is variously interpreted by commentators.

[7 : 33] But I'm taken with the idea that these mountains represent sins of various kinds.

And these mountains first became visible using that picture of sin in the Garden of Eden when Adam sinned against God and he set a distance between himself and his God by taking the forbidden fruit and eating of it.

And you know that the Lord expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden because of their sin. he showed them the way out. In other words, these mountains of sin rose up between Adam and his God.

Taking the picture forward a little, isn't this true of each one of ourselves? That each one of us is a sinner. Adam was our covenant head under the Old Testament and because he sinned and fell, we sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.

So as we survey our own situations as individuals in this world, this is where we find ourselves separated from God because of our sin.

[9 : 05] These mountains are there. Yeah. But what the Lord has done is that he has come in the fullness of times.

He promised he would do so even to Adam in the Garden of Eden when he promised that the Saviour was coming to crush or bruise the serpent's head.

And the Saviour did come, Jesus Christ. And the angels rejoiced that evening as they watched over their flocks outside of Bethlehem.

But the angels rejoiced and told the shepherds, Go and tell unto you is born this day a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.

He came leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. like a gazelle or a young stag.

- [10 : 32] The Lord Jesus when he was in this world he explained to the disciples that he was so devoted to fulfilling the task that the Father gave him to do.

He went to Jerusalem and his face was as a flint unmovable wanting to fulfill what the Father had entrusted to him in the covenant of grace in eternity.

And he came and at the cross he said, The work is finished. I have done all that the Father has entrusted to me. But bringing this picture a little closer to ourselves, those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious in our own lives, there may be some sins creeping in that will separate us, as it were, in our feelings and in our experience from the Lord.

It's as if there may be difficulties and trials come our way and sin gets the wedge into the door and sin enters.

Whatever sin it might be, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, whatever sin it might be, it comes in and wreaks havoc with our soul.

- [12 : 05] And it's as if the Lord stands back because his love will not be shared with another. He has taken sole charge of our souls and our welfare.

and when we turn aside and embrace some other lover like the world or the flesh or something else that portrays itself so attractively to us day by day, the Lord says, I'm standing back.

And sometimes that's why we feel so empty and feel so cold in our own souls. If you were to ask the Lord, Lord, what is it that's causing this?

Well, it's not the Lord's fault, although he may be testing us at some points. Nevertheless, very often it is our own fault that we have taken a step aside or a step back from our commitment to the Lord Jesus.

us. And another mountain may be trials and afflictions in our providence.

- [13 : 22] Maybe illness, maybe sickness, maybe death in the family. It's as if these are mountains in your experience.

I cannot get over them, but the Lord is able to get over them. And it says here that he comes bounding over the hills, leaping over the mountains.

He comes to our help. And regarding our spiritual state, he comes in grace.

He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. What an amazing picture that is. he wasn't willing to leave us in our lost condition.

He came in order to bring life, and to bring life more abundantly. He came in order to bring light and joy and blessing.

- [14 : 30] things. This was true regarding our first conversion experience. You may think back to the time when you were under conviction of sin.

The world was so dark. Things were so hard. Things were so discouraging. sinned. But you kept coming to the house of God.

You kept listening to the gospel. And one day or one evening there was a word that hit you at the very, very point of your need.

And that word alerted you to the preciousness of the Savior and his willingness to receive sinners and his encouragement of you to call upon that you might be saved.

Look unto me and be saved. And you were able to respond. And you knew what it was to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart.

- [15 : 41] Sometimes we feel that our circumstances as Christians are difficult for us to bear. But the Lord knows what we're suffering.

And he is not going to allow you to suffer beyond what you're able to bear. But he will with the temptation also provide a way of escape. He will open the way.

The sun will rise. The blessings will come. He speaks a word in season to the souls of his people at the right time.

Just in order to give you that peace that you stand in need of. He comes in grace.

He comes in peace. peace. But then he comes with an amazing encouragement. See what it says.

[16 : 52] My beloved speaks in verse 10 and says to me, arise my love, my beautiful one, and come away. And then he gives the encouragement to arise.

Behold, the winter is past. The rain is over and gone. The winter that brings cold. That's what she was experiencing.

The mountains, as it were, separated her from him. And then the cold of worldliness set in.

But when he comes, he changes the temperature. He changes the climate. He changes things radically for your soul.

And he says, the winter is past. The rain is over and gone. I remember hearing one of the older elders in Bach long ago, shortly after we started following in 1970.

[18 : 05] And he was relating his own experience in the few years leading up to that time of revival. well. And he said, well, he said, we were almost giving up. Things had gone cold so far as he was concerned.

Nobody was coming to the prayer meeting at noon. It's as if everything had gone quiet. But then when the Lord came, people's head lifted up.

There was a new blessing to be felt among the people. And this is where the church, I believe, is here. The winter is past.

The rain is over and gone. That's what we pray for in our congregations, in our communities. That the winter of worldliness may not continue.

[19 : 09] That the rain of sin may not continue. flowers will start appearing on the earth. People will start showing forth an interest in the gospel, coming under the sound of the gospel, hungry and thirsting for the salvation that's so freely offered through Jesus Christ.

The time of singing has come. singing. It's interesting that this word singing is also used in the scripture elsewhere for pruning.

Or pruning the dead shoots of the plant. And that's what I would like to highlight from this particular verse.

Consider your own life, and I consider mine. is there anything that needs to be pruned off your life? Things that you don't need to be carrying with you on the journey of life.

Well, maybe each one of us has something that comes into that category. I don't know. But when the Lord comes, when the winter is past and the rain is over and gone, and the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of singing or pruning has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

[20 : 44] I remember once being in company with an older minister, and he was talking about this particular verse, the voice of the turtle dove heard in our land, and he was highlighting the fact that the turtle dove, or the dove, dove, it's got a very sad-sounding song.

I remember that myself listening to it. I was doing some painting a number of months ago, outside of our wooden fence, and there was this dove on the electric wire above, and he just said, coo, coo, all the time, and it became so repetitive and uninteresting, in comparison with the skylark, or some of the other birds that we hear around us, the turtle dove is a kind of a dismal, sad sound.

And this old minister said, that's the way it is sometimes at a time of revival. It's a time of singing, yes, but it's also a time of sadness, when people mourn over their sin, mourn over their shortcomings, mourn over the things in their lives that they don't want to have in their lives at all, and they want to bring them to the Lord Jesus, confess them, and ask forgiveness.

The voice of the turtle dove heard in our land. Then it says, the fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom.

They give forth fragrance, arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. Despite the fact that she has found herself in these difficult situations, the eye of the Lord Jesus is upon her, and he asks her, arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

[22 : 48] how is it that she is so lovely and beautiful in his eyes? Well, it says in Psalm 149 at verse 4, the Lord takes pleasure in his people.

He adorns the humble with salvation. him. The Lord has come into her life, and he places his own image upon her, the image of holiness, the image that is a new image, not the image of the world, but the image of the new life that she has in Christ Jesus.

And when he looks at her, he sees his own image in her. And little wonder, he says, arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

Where does he take her? Well, he takes her into his own fellowship more and more. In chapter 8 here, we see the picture of the church coming up through the wilderness, or from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved.

And that's what he wants us to do today. To hear his voice, to respond to his invitation to come to him, and to lean upon him.

[24 : 25] To lean upon him. him. I wonder if she stalled a bit at the end of verse 13. Because in verse 14, he addresses her again.

And he addresses her using these words, O my dove, in the clefts of the rock. She is his dove. She is the one that he has given a new song to.

That is, she sings of his praises, yes, and his glories, but she also has a song of mourning over her sins. O my dove.

And he says, I can see you in the clefts of the rock. What does this mean, really? I mean, he's not just talking about a dove in the clefts of a rock.

He's talking about what the believer has done in coming to Jesus Christ, who is the rock of ages.

[25 : 34] He has come into the shadow of the great rock in a weary land. He has come and taken shelter in Christ Jesus, the only saviour, trusting in the only saviour of sinners, trusting in the God-man mediator, trusting for time and eternity in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose love is as firm as a rock and who is as steadfast as the rocks around us.

She's in the crannies of the cleft, and he says, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

She doesn't think herself very lovely. There's a picture in chapter one, and she says, do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me.

She feels herself so unbecoming, and so far from what she would want to be. But he says, let me see your face, let me see your face.

It's got the loveliness of Christ upon it. The outlook you have, the voice you have is a sweet voice. You are the one that I have saved by my saving power, and I am going to bring you at last into the glory that I have prepared for you.

[27 : 25] Isn't it amazing that moments, maybe under the preaching of the gospel, or moments reading the word of God or in prayer, they become heavenly, and you sense a heavenly peace from time to time.

That is just an earnest that they say are a foretaste of the wonderful wedding supper of the Lamb that Christ has prepared for his people in heaven.

And ultimately, this is what he is saying. Oh, come, my love, my beautiful one, arise and come away.

At the end of life's journey, the people of God are to be gathered into the nearer presence of their Savior. He has gone to prepare a place for them.

Isn't that what he says in John 14? I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

[28 : 44] But maybe you're saying here this morning, I don't feel ready to go there. But I'm sure you don't feel ready. But he who has undertaken your spiritual affairs for time and eternity, he's the one who makes you ready.

He sends his Holy Spirit to sanctify you, and when the moment comes, he makes you ready, ready to receive the crown of life.

The Apostle Paul was saying that when he was in prison in Rome. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge will give me at that day, and not to me only, but also unto all them who love his appearing.

The Church of Christ, sin wants to dominate her. Difficulties want to overwhelm her.

But the Lord Jesus has taken her interest to heart. Even from all eternity, his eye was upon her. His delight was with the sons of men.

[30 : 02] When he came into the world, he suffered and died in a room and place. And now that he has gone to heaven, he is encouraging her by his word and spirit to live for him in the world, so that when the time comes for her to leave this world, she will go into his presence with the joy that he bestows upon his people when they go in with gladness great and mirth on every side into the palace of the king.

And there they shall abide. Have you tasted any of this sweetness for yourself?

Well, the scripture says, oh, taste and see that God is good. He is ready and willing to forgive those who truly call upon him.

what an encouragement that is that he will not turn away any who truly come confessing their sin and seeking salvation. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray again. Help us, oh Lord, to be thankful that we are in possession of the scriptures scriptures. And we confess that we have a constant need of being led and enlightened by your Holy Spirit as we deal with such marvellous matters as the salvation of souls.

[31 : 44] We thank you that you ultimately are the one who deals with the souls of men, but you are willing to use the feeble efforts of people like yourselves to bring the word of God before our fellow men.

We pray for your blessing to be upon each one of us according to our needs today, that you would undertake for us and that you would lead us and guide us in every detail of this day and every day.

Protect us from all evil, we pray, and forgive our sins freely. In Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. I will bring your worship to our close singing from Psalm 45 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 45 and verses 10 to 13. And this is the first version of the psalm.

Common meter. O daughter, hearken and regard and do thy near incline. Likewise forget thy father's house and people that are thine. Then of the king desired shall be thy beauty vehemently, because he is thy lord, do thou him worship reverently.

[33 : 13] thee, the daughter there of Tyre shall be with gifts and offerings great, those of the people that are which thy favour shall entreat.

Behold, the daughter of the king, all glorious is within, and with embroideries of gold, her garments wrought have been. These verses 10 to 13 of Psalm 45, Common Meter Version, O daughter, hearken and regard.

O daughter, harken and regard, until I hear thy life was forgiven others lives on people lives are thine.

Then no man in his heart shall be my beauty investment me because he is a lawyer to his worship reverently the The daughter, herer of Ty shall be, with gifts and offerings quail.

Those of the people at the rich, thy favorite silent feet.

[35 : 34] The bolder God, herer of the King, all glorious is within.

And with the dry heres of gold, her garments brought up in.

Amen.