

The Seeking Saint and the Deserting Saviour

Song of Solomon 5:4-8

24 October 2021

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

Introduction:

Today we are continuing our sermon series in the Song of Solomon.

- The Song of Solomon presents to us the relationship that we, the church, have with Jesus Christ as our husband.
 - He is presented that way throughout the Bible.
- In the Old Testament, the Lord speaks of Israel's departing from Him as adultery and harlotry. He chastises her, but then promises to graciously restore her to Himself.
 - The entire book of Hosea carries this theme, and many passages in the other prophets (like Isaiah and Ezekiel) speak of it.
- In the New Testament, Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11:2 that: **"I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."**
 - He is urging them to be faithful to the Jesus, their betrothed husband.
 - A betrothed woman in the Bible was considered married, only her marriage was not yet consummated.
 - The New Testament speaks of the great marriage day that will come at the end.
 - Christ will return in glory, and we will be presented as His bride, adorned for Him.
- But the Song of Solomon stands out in a special way in the Canon of Scripture because of the way that it speaks of our marriage to Christ.
 - It presents the intimacy of our relationship with Him.
 - It does it in a very tasteful way that is rich in application and encouragement.
 - We are given a very realistic picture of the ups and downs of our relationship with Him—sometimes showing us overcome with rapturous delight, and other times showing us deeply distressed because we cannot find Him; and at still other times, much too indifferent about Him...
 - But it should be noted that the Song of Solomon does not speak about the church as a bride that as a whole rejects the Lord (the way Hosea presents her).
 - In the Song of Solomon we see the faithful remnant of the church that always continues to believe—those like Daniel and his friends in the exile.
 - It shows us what is taught throughout the Bible, that there is always a remnant that has true faith, a remnant according to election that God preserves even though she often struggles with her faith.
- Last week, in 5:2-4, we saw in the Song that Jesus was presented as coming to us and calling us to open to Him, but that we resisted Him.
 - We did not want to be bothered.
 - It seemed like too much trouble—for in coming to Him to be intimate with Him, it calls for us to clothe ourselves with His righteousness, and it requires us to deal honestly with the sin that is in us.

- When we are spiritually sluggish and lethargic, we prefer to enjoy Him at a distance rather than drawing near to Him. We are asleep even though our heart is awake.
- Though He spoke very sweetly to us, even presenting Himself as out in the weather as long as we shut Him out.
 - Yet, we continued to put up a very ugly, ungrateful, rude resistance.
 - We even went so far as to charge Him with being unreasonable to request intimacy with us when we were already settled in our bed.
 - While it is true that husbands can be inconsiderate of their wives in this way, sometimes wives can sinfully resist their husbands.
 - The Lord Jesus Christ is never inconsiderate in His advances. When we resist His advances, we are always the ones who are in the wrong.
- We saw, however, that He intervened. He put forth His hand to the door of our heart, as it were, and touched us with His powerful grace.
 - I showed you how we, the bride, were stirred so that we arose to open to Him...
 - I told you that we would look further at this next week, which is today.

So let's take up our reading again, beginning with what we covered last week (chapter 5, vv. 2-4) and reading the portion that we will be looking at this week (vv. 4-8).

- Please, then, give your attention to the reading of God's holy word:

Song of Solomon 5:2-8: I sleep, but my heart is awake; *it is* the voice of my beloved! He knocks, *saying*, "Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night." ³ I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on *again*? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them? ⁴ My beloved put his hand by the latch *of the door*, and my heart yearned for him. ⁵ I arose to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped *with* myrrh, my fingers with liquid

myrrh, on the handles of the lock. ⁶ I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away *and* was gone. My heart leaped up when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. ⁷ The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took my veil away from me. ⁸ I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I *am* lovesick!

May the Lord bless the reading and the preaching of His holy and infallible word.

You see that there is something very disturbing here.

- The Song speaks here of our husband deserting us!
 - We are going to look at this experience that characterises us as believers.
 - Let's begin by looking at:

I. The change He makes in you, His bride, when you have been sluggish and He comes to wake you up from your spiritual slumbers.

- Before I go further, be sure that you understand that if you are not a believer, you are not His bride. The things I speak of are only true of her.
 - However, that does not mean that this has nothing to do with you. Oh no!
 - Our gracious Lord extends calls to every person to come to Him and be saved.

- You see, as members of the human race, we are all sinners who have rejected God our creator and who have fallen under His condemnation.
- He is the just judge and He tells us that our conduct is such that it calls for eternity in the place of darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- We don't see it that way—which shows the depth of the problem.
- We think it is a little thing that we have rebelled against our Creator, but He sees it with the clear eyes of holy justice.
- Those who have come to Christ to be saved have come to be reconciled.
 - By His grace, we came to see that we were guilty and need to be pardoned, and we came to see that this is the reason Christ came—that the Father sent Him to become flesh that He might represent us and redeem us.
- As one of us (in human flesh), He lived in the righteous way that God requires all people to live.
 - He also suffered on the cross to receive the just punishment of our sin.
 - He calls us to trust in Him—and in what He did—to save us from our sin.
 - As soon as we trusted Him, we became a part of His true bride whom He will bring into His Father's house in glory.
 - We are one bride with many members.
- So if you are here and you are not trusting in Him as your Saviour, you need to consider His call to come to Him to be saved as you hear me preach about His bride.
 - Never has a soul come and put themselves in His hands for salvation that He has not saved. His call to you is, "Look unto Me and be saved."

Now let's get on with looking at **the change that He makes in you who are His bride in those times you have become sluggish, and He comes to wake you up.**

- A. He completely changes you—from one who has no interest in letting Christ come near to one whose heart yearns for Him!
1. Your perception of His voice, of His knock, and of His call to open up and let him come in did not do it.
 - The word, when you know it is His word and when you know quite well that He wants you to come near to Him is not enough when you are spiritually sluggish.
 - There is His presence, there is the sweet call, but you remain in your bed.
 2. The transformation does not come until He reaches out to touch the latch on the door that you have shut up against Him.
 - This is seen in verse 4: **My beloved put his hand By the latch of the door, And my heart yearned for him.**
 - Know that it is always true.
 - Apart from the special working of His powerful grace, even after we have believed, we will be unmotivated to go to the trouble of arising, clothing ourselves in the righteous garments He provides, and washing our sins by His blood that we might come near.

- We stay at a distance—glad to be His wife as those who are born again—but not taking the effort to be intimate with Him.
 - But I say that once that all-powerful touch of His that heals lepers and raises the dead touches us, we become eager to open the door to Him.
- B. Look at the initial response here brought on by His touch.
1. We see that you arise to open to Him.
 - Verse 5: **I arose to open for my beloved.**
 - Nothing can keep you in bed now.
 - You have been aroused and you want Him.
 - You are constrained. You say as at the start of this song, “Let Him kiss me with the kissed of His mouth.”
 - He had come to show His love to you and you want to receive it.
 2. And look, your hands that were dry are now dripping with myrrh.
 - The women in the east often prepared to receive their lovers by perfuming themselves with their precious ointments.
 - In the allegory, these spices and these ointments are the fruits that you bring forth that so delight Him—
 - Your love for Him, your joy in Him, your trust in His goodness, your submission to Him, your admiration of His beauty and majesty.
 - The oil represents the anointing you have from God’s Spirit when Christ touches you with His transforming powerful touch that produces all of these delectable fruits.
 - There is such a profusion that these priceless oils are dripping off your hands as you put your hand on the latch to open the door to Him.
 3. And so you who were shut up open to Him.
 - Verse 6: **“I opened for my beloved.”**
 - He is now most welcome to come into you—the one that you shunned before.
 - Opening to Him is real faith.
 - As James Durham says, “It is the heart yielding to His call, actually consenting to be His. She wants to be mansion for Him to dwell in.”
 - She is saying, “I give myself to you to be wholly for you, to find my life in you and in your saving work.”
 - Like Ephraim is quoted to say in Hosea after he is restored, “What have I to do with idols anymore?”
 - This is such a marvellous thing,
 - Let me say to any of you who may be shutting Christ out, refusing to let Him come in... Do not continue in that way! It is a miserable way.
 - Open the door and let Him come in.
 - If you are a believer, you know how much better it is to commune with Him.
 - In your slumbers, you are deceived—you think it will be too hard—you think it is more trouble than it is worth.

- But you are grossly mistaken. You are making misery for yourself as long as you resist Him.

TRANS> Now I would like to tell you that if you open to Him, you will immediately find Him, but this is not always true.

- The next thing we need to look at from our text is this:

II. Sometimes you will open to Christ only to find that He has deserted you.

A. That is exactly what is described in verse 6: desertion.

- **Song 5:6: I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away *and* was gone.**

1. Everything has reversed.

- Before He was pursuing you and you rudely resisting, but now you are pursuing Him and it is He that is nowhere to be found.
- Is this a cruel joke? He touches you and arouses you and then He disappears!

2. What a great disappointment!

- You were ready to commune with Him, but now He is gone—gone...
 - That is the language here... there is a repetition...
 - My beloved had turned away and was gone. Gone gone!
- You remember how your heart had gone out to Him when you finally heard His voice with faith—when His powerful touch opened your heart to receive His call to open to Him.
 - **“My heart [or my soul] leaped up [or went out of me] when He spoke.”**
 - You were all in. You were ready to come near to Him.
 - But now He is gone.

B. This is a reality of the Christian life.

1. David certainly knew all about this.

- The saddest notes in the psalms are his laments that the Lord has deserted him.
- How often does he cry out to the Lord to return to him, to lift up the light of his countenance upon him?
- Our Lord Jesus Himself had to bear this.
 - The voice of David in the Psalms is ultimately His voice.
 - He cried out to the Father when He bore our sins and cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

2. What are these desertions?

a. Certainly, it is not that He has ceased to be omnipresent.

- There is nowhere we can go that God is not there.
- Nor is it that His Spirit is no longer dwelling in you. If you are believer, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.

- If the Spirit was gone, you would not be yearning for Him and seeking Him—you would be utterly rejecting Him—not just as a sluggish sleeper, but as an angry apostate—a rejector of the gentle Saviour.
 - It is not that He has removed His covenant or His promise that He is your God and the you are His own child—or His promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you.
 - It is certainly not the withdrawal of His love or His mercy and grace.
- No, the desertion here is not that.
- b. The desertion spoken about here has to do with the sense of His presence.
- It is the sweet communion we have when we are able to fully enjoy Him, to perceive Him, to delight in Him and sense His smile upon us.
 - It is what Jesus referred to in John 14 when He promised that He and the Father would come to us and manifest themselves to us when we love Him and keep His commandments.
 - Poole calls it the removal of “His comfortable presence.”
 - You are unable to connect with Him.
- But why? Why does He desert us?
- C. Know that He has good reasons for deserting us.
1. First of all, He deserts us to chasten us.
- That’s right, those He loves He chastens.
 - If we are going to grow, we need to see clearly the wrong that we have done.
 - We have resisted the call of our dear husband who came to commune with us.
 - We have rudely turned Him away, left Him out in the night, declaring that we don’t want to be bothered—we want to take a rest from Him.
 - By arousing us and then withdrawing, He strikes us in the most effective way possible.
 - It causes the wrong of what we have done (and perhaps wanted to gloss over) to sink in.
2. Second, all this is to humble us.
- We are much too proud.
 - We forget that we are not worthy of the least of His mercies.
 - We forget that we deserve to perish in the Lake of Fire forever.
 - By deserting us for a while, we are able to see how unworthy we are.
 - Humility is actually very sweet to you if you are a true believer.
 - It draws your eyes away from your own merit to look upon the beauty of your dear Saviour who loved you and gave Himself for you.

- It is actually the right perspective, and when you are seeing things as you ought to see them, you see what is beautiful better because you are seeing correctly.
 - You are seeing the glory of the LORD more clearly because you are seeing the truth about what you are before Him—a lowly wretch, a sinner, but a sinner saved by grace.
 - It also humbles you to realise that you are not the one who decides when He will and when He will not commune with you.
 - If you resist Him when He comes, He might not be available whenever you might decide to go to Him.
 - He is your Lord, you are not His Lord.
 - He ordinarily graciously receives us whenever we come to Him, but if we come to think we need not respond to His call, we need a lesson in humility.
3. Third, His desertions are given to test and prove your love for Him.
 - You rebuffed Him—now you claim that your heart yearns for Him.
 - Does it really?
 - Have you really been changed?
 - Or will you go back to bed when you find that He had gone?
 - You now have an opportunity to show Him how much He means to you.
 - An opportunity to show others how much you desire Him.
 - An opportunity to see for yourself how much He means to you.
 4. Forth, His desertions actually help you to love Him more.
 - As the old saying goes, absence makes the heart grow fonder.
 - When He deserts you after you have resisted Him and then been transformed so that you yearn for Him, you realise just how wonderful He is.
 - You miss Him and you begin to think about all that He is and all that He is to you—your affection for Him is increased.
 - We will see more of this in future sermons when we get further on in the passage.
 5. Fifth, His desertions prepare you for the joy of His return.
 - He will return to you.
 - And how much sweeter it will be when He does after a time of desertion than it would have been if He had been there for you when you first decided that you would come to Him.
 6. Sixth, in a similar way, His desertions prepare you for heaven.
 - When you cannot find Him in this world, it causes you to set your affection on the hope of glory when we will never be separated from Him again.
 - It prepares you even for a greater enjoyment of heaven when it comes.

TRANS> So you see, His desertions are not without purpose. They are full of purpose. They are for our own good and they are for His glory.

III. When He has done a transforming work in you to restore the yearning of your heart for Him, you will continue to seek Him even though He has deserted you.

- This is ironic. Even though He has deserted you as far as a sense of His presence, He is actually the one who is sustaining you by His powerful grace.
 - That's right.
 - The only reason you keep seeking Him is because He is powerfully at work in you.

A. See what you did as soon as you opened the door and saw that He was gone.

- We are told from the middle of verse 6: **"I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer."**
- Instead of going back to bed because He was gone,
 - You went on a quest to find Him.

1. How do you seek Him?

- You go to His word to learn of Him and His ways.
- Your goal is not just to get information, but to hear His voice, to see Him revealed, to have communion with Him, to know Him as He is, to see His glory.
- None of that check off the list reading, but that "Lord, I want to know you" reading.
 - There is a great deal of difference you know.

2. And how do you call to Him?

- By prayer of course—you plead with Him to come to you and have communion with you.
 - You plead with Him to show you His glory, to reveal Himself to you.
- You search your heart and pour out your confessions and your cries for renewal.
 - You pray for Him to come and minister to you, to deliver you, to comfort and encourage you.
- It is not just saying your prayers—rattling them off.
 - It is a true seeking of Him in prayer—a genuine heart cry.

TRANS> And even though you at first seek and do not find, and cry and do not have the blessing of His answer,

- You still don't go back to bed.
- His work of grace continues so that your seeking goes on.

B. You seek Him in public ordinances. You come to church.

1. I have seen a sad thing lately with some of our members that you need to pray for.

- They experience difficulties in their lives and instead of seeking God all the more, they curl up on their couch.
 - They profess that it is too hard for them to go to church, too painful.
 - Indeed, a sign that they need the transforming touch of Christ to restore them.
 - Those who have His grace at work are drawn to both private and public ordinances...
 - They come to find Him whom their soul loves in the assembly where He loves to meet with His people and to make Himself known.
 - They don't come just to do their time at church. They come to meet the bridegroom because they know that the assembly is a place where He often makes Himself known—through the word, sacraments, and prayer.
 - They are not legalists who find His ordinances burdensome and condemning—
 - Remember the prodigal son's elder brother?
 - He saw service in his father's house as a burden to be borne, a duty that beat him down instead of a soul-renewing place of refreshment where comfort and joyful communion is to be found.
2. See here how that, as the bride of Christ, you know God as a God of grace.
- Even though you cannot find Him at first in the public assembly—at church—you know that public ordinances are a place He is to be sought.
 - In verse 7, we are told of the bad experience that you, the bride, have with the watchmen.
 - These are the ministers in the church who are often called watchmen.
 - Your testimony is this: **The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took my veil away from me.**
 - It appears that these watchmen saw you in your distress and instead of ministering to you, accused you.
 - They saw you wondering about in search of Christ and they took you to be a harlot, looking for love in one other than your husband.
 - They wound you, they strike you, they take away your veil as if you are a loose woman who has no right to wear a veil.
 - They call into question your profession, even though you are earnestly seeking Christ alone.
 - It is a mistake like Eli made when he accused Hannah of drunkenness when she was crying out to God in the temple.
 - It is the mistake that Jesus' disciples (and not just Judas) made when they accused the woman who poured out the precious oil to anoint Jesus of being prodigal.
 - In God's providence, this is part of the Lord's chastisement of His bride.

- These shepherds ought to have rebuked you when you were sleeping, but they did not do it then—
- Now, when you came seeking Him so zealously, they took you as an unhinged fanatic who is not genuine, and they rebuked you.
- It was an error on their part to not grasp that you were seeking your husband.

TRANS> But look at the exemplary response of the bride who touched by the Lord's transforming grace to seek Him.

C. The bride's beautiful, unyielding quest is seen in her conversation with her friends, the young disciples in the church who are called "the daughters of Jerusalem."

- In verse 8, she charges them.
 - She says: **I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I *am* lovesick!**
- 1. Do you see? She is about one thing—finding Him whom her soul loves.
 - She does not complain that He did her wrong by deserting her.
 - She does not complain that the watchmen wounded her and took away her veil, marking her out as an ungodly woman.
 - Those things are not important to her.
 - What matters to her is finding her husband.
- 2. And so she solemnly charges these fellow church members.
 - She tells them that if they should find her beloved, that they must intercede for her—that they must tell Him that she is lovesick.
 - This is like being homesick.
 - When you are homesick, you are sick because you are away from home.
 - The bride of Christ is lovesick because she is away from the one she loves.
 - This is just what you will do as the bride of Christ when you love Christ and cannot find Him.
 - You will ask others to pray for you.
 - Yes, you will be humble enough to tell your Christian friends, not of how you have been wronged, but of how you are estranged from Christ and want to find Him again.
 - You will ask them to pray for you—perhaps some of them will have the access to Him that you seem to lack right now, so you will ask them to pray for you.
 - And let me tell you.
 - If a fellow believer, a fellow member of the bride of Christ, ever asks you to pray for them, you ought to take that to heart!
 - Especially when their prayer request is that they are away from Christ and want to be restored to Him.
 - If you don't pray for them, you have done a great wrong to them.
 - We need each other's prayers.

- We need to ask for them—for real prayers...
- And we need to offer them—real prayers for our brothers and sisters.

TRANS> Next time, we will look at how these daughters of Jerusalem respond to her—not very helpfully—

- But we will also see the beautiful outcome.

Conclusion: But what we have seen today is also very beautiful.

- Even though the bride is still estranged from Christ her husband, she has been marvellously transformed from a sleeping bride who excuses herself from drawing near to Christ to one who is truly seeking Him with all her heart.
 - It is not her, but the grace of God in her that has brought this about.
 - Yes, the one who deserted her has given her this grace to seek Him and He has deserted her because by His desertion of her, He will make her love stronger than ever before.
 - What a wise and gracious husband He is.
 - See that you cherish Him as His true bride, and when He has deserted you, make it your single aim to find Him.
 - You will be edified and He will be glorified.