

Invitation Accepted

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the intimate communion between Christ and believers, portraying the believer's life as a garden cultivated for His presence and pleasure.

Duration: 26:58

Topics: "Accepted"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of communion with God and with one another. He emphasizes the importance of having faith, hope, and love in order to experience true communion. The sermon is based on the Song of Solomon, specifically chapter 4 verse 16 and chapter 5 verse 1. The preacher encourages the congregation to invite Jesus into their lives and surrender themselves completely to him, allowing him to choose and guide their actions. The sermon concludes with a reminder that Jesus desires to have a deep and intimate relationship with his followers, not just a superficial participation in religious rituals.

Transcript

At least, our Lord would have it so, though I'm sure that you are aware, as I am, that it is possible for what is meant to be a communion season to be anything other than real, deep communion with God and with one another. That is a possibility. But where there is faith and hope and love, it ought never to be so.

And my text this morning is taken from a portion of scripture which describes the ardent yearning of one who loves and the response of the lover to the beloved. I want to take as the basis of our meditation the closing half of verse sixteen in the Song of Solomon, in chapter four, and then the first half of the first verse in chapter five. These chapter divisions are all sometimes topsy-turvy, and here is a case in point.

There should be no division here. Chapter four closes with this word of invitation. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruit.

The beginning of the first verse goes like this. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I am gathering.

This is how it ought to be translated, I gather. I am gathering my myrrh with my spice. I am eating my honeycomb with my honey.

I am drinking my wine with my milk. Two main thoughts come before us then. First of all, a bride's request, and then the bridegroom's response.

We look at them in turn. The bride's request. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant or his precious fruit.

I want to notice two things in this connection. First of all, a possession that is gladly acknowledged. Let my beloved come into his garden.

Strange language, you might say, because what is implied is this. The bride looks upon herself as a garden. The property of her beloved.

The property of her beloved. She looks upon herself as the claimed property of her king lover, her kingly lover. And this, of course, is essentially a picture of the Christian church.

The Christian church has invariably understood the message of the Song of Solomon in terms of the love of the heavenly bridegroom for the church, the earthly bride. And we understand it as such this morning. And therefore what we have reflected here is what ought always to be an acknowledgment of the bride of Christ.

Namely this. We are a claimed property, the property of another. I don't propose going into the details of how this young lass in the song was sought by her kingly lover.

I don't want to go after those details this morning, but let me remind you of how the bride of Christ was sought. He came out of the ivory palaces. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost in the virgin's womb.

He was born in obscurity and he lived the loneliest of life, though sometimes in large companies. And at last he lay down his life to purchase our redemption and to procure our pardon and to woo us and whim us to himself. And the church of Jesus Christ is a people that belongs to him.

He has bought us. The price of blood is upon every redeemed child of God in this service this morning. So that the preacher in the pulpit, whoever he may be, can look into the face of every believer and say, man, woman, boy, girl, you have been bought.

You are the claimed property of another. Let my beloved come into his garden, his property. But you notice, she doesn't stop there.

Along with that, the other part, the other side of that same truth takes us further. She looks upon herself not only as his claimed property, but as his cultivated territory. Let my beloved, she says, come into his garden.

Now a garden is a garden. And I don't need to pause to explain what a garden is. It's not common ground.

It's not an ordinary field. It is a piece of land that has been hedged around by someone to whom it belongs, and then he has put a gate there and possibly a fence that's pretty high to keep everybody out, and he's begun to till. A spade has gone into the soil.

Seed has been sown. Something has been cultivated. And a garden is a very beautiful place.

There is fragrance in the properly cultivated garden. There is beauty in the garden. There is fruit in the garden.

The church of Jesus Christ, the true church, is never a wilderness. It is never common property, unfenced, unclaimed. The true church is a cultivated territory, claimed by the Redeemer himself, who by the word of the gospel and the coming of the Spirit has put his spade into the soil of the heart, turned us upside down, taken the stones out, given us new hearts of flesh, taken out the weeds, sown his word there.

And there is some measure of order and some measure of beauty in the garden of the Lord. And this dear bride of the text, she looks to her beloved and she says, you've made something of me that I wasn't before. When your love came into my heart, things began to happen.

Things began to bloom. Hopes began to show themselves that were never there before. And I'm a different person.

Do you acknowledge yourself today to be the Lord's claimed property, his cultivated territory? But along with that there is something else here, a presence that she earnestly desired. Listen again. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.

Apparently there is a distance that distresses the bride here. Now, I know as you read this, as I read it, and I'm sure as you will read it, you'll find there's a little bit of contradiction here. Apparently she's speaking to him, and yet she indicates that he's outside the garden.

He's within the range of her voice, but he's not within the range of her touch. He's not far because she can speak to him and she can hear him speak to her, but there is a distance. And you see, this is one thing that love cannot tolerate.

It's distance between the lover and the beloved. The least distance betwixt is a chasm. And love can't tolerate that distance.

And it is evidence of the bride's real affection for her bridegroom that she wants him near. He must be in the garden, not outside. It's not enough to hear his voice.

She wants him. I have no doubt at all that in days of yours as today, this bride would have had her portrait of her beloved, of her lover, perhaps as they did in those days, scribbled with a pen on a slate, I don't know. At any rate, she had her image of him in her mind, in her heart.

But what's an image? She wants him, himself. Do you know anything of this? Oh, my friend, do you know anything of the inflamed, impassioned heart of love for Jesus Christ today? That the least distance betwixt you and him grieves you, worries you, hurts you. You may hear his words.

It is here in the scriptures. And you may see that word illustrated in the broken bread and in the outpoured wine, and you thank God for it all, and you say it's all so very wonderful. But it's just like having a photograph of my beloved.

A photograph is also cold. I want him, himself. There is a distance that distresses her.

There is a delight that demands him. Nothing short, nothing less, nothing else, and there can be nothing beyond this, to have him in the garden of my heart, communing with him, sharing with him, and he with me. If God were to give the real Christian who bears this kind of love in his heart, if God were to give a

Christian like this all the riches of the ages, and say to him, look here, go into the millennium and enjoy yourself and have a good time, I believe that with all the riches of the world in his soul, he would turn to the Almighty and say, except thy presence go with me, don't let me go.

For heaven to the beloved is Jesus, because God is in Christ. Do we know anything of this? We used to sing in my young Christian days, if I have Jesus, Jesus only, then my sky will have a gem. He is the sun of brightest splendor and the star of Bethlehem.

He is the lily of the valley. He is the rose of sheer unfair. He is everything, and if he is not in communion with me, I cannot rejoice.

But where Jesus is, it is heaven there. My friend, would you know if he were present here this morning, would you be satisfied simply to hear a sermon based on Scripture and see the elements on the table and partake of them? Or is your soul so much in love with Jesus Christ that great and wonderful and necessary as all this is, you would be dissatisfied if you did not put your arms of faith around him and know that he has his arms around you. My beloved is mine, and I am here.

And that brings me to this, a pleasure which the bride is eager to impart to her beloved. Why does she want him? Why does she invite him? Well, says she, according to the record, let my beloved come into his garden and eat his choicest fruits, or his special fruits. Now, let's not miss this.

It is no selfish reason that inspires her request for the presence of her beloved in the garden of her life. On the contrary, she wants him to come because there is something she wants to give him. She looks upon her life as a garden.

She has kept it fenced in. This virgin bride has kept her life unspotted and untainted from everybody and everything. And she has kept all her pent-up emotions and gifts and graces.

She has now got everything welling up in her heart, and she wants to give everything to him. She shares it with no one else. She wants him to come, and she wants him to come into the garden and eat his pleasant fruit.

Oh, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, don't let's miss this. She doesn't tell him like this, look here, I've got a wonderful apple tree, or a pear tree, or something else, and I want you to choose a few specimens from it. She says, come into your garden and have what you like.

You choose. It's all for you. It's nothing for anyone else unless you want to share the stuff with other people.

That's all right. And she does that later on. But first of all, it's all for you.

One of the things that grieves me as a minister of the Word is this, that sometimes we have to plead with men and women to do things for Jesus Christ. To give of their substance, to give of their time, to give of their talents. And I don't think there is anything which is more incongruous with a Christian faith than this, that a minister of the Word or his fellow laborers should plead with redeemed, ransomed, blood-bought men and women to pray, to teach, to preach, to witness.

For the first of the fruits of the Spirit is love. Let my beloved come in and take what he wants. Can you find it in your heart to say that this morning? What he wants? I don't know what he wants from you.

I may have some indication of what he's asking from me. Do you love him? As he asked Peter of old, lovest thou me more than these? Whatever that refers to for the moment. Is there anything in your life that you love more than him? Or can you not find grace to say, let my beloved come into his garden, his claimed property, his cultivated territory, and take it all? You know, if we can say that, that's the beginning of communion, a bride's request.

Now we turn for a moment to the bridegroom's response. How does he react, this kingly, this royal, this sovereign lover, how does he react to a plea of this kind? Well, you may wonder, unless you have read and read on. But if you have read and read on into this passage, well, then you know the answer already.

Listen to the text. He acknowledges his acceptance of the garden as his own property, and he rewards the love that so honours him in these words. I've come, he says, I'm here.

Before you asked me, I was there. I've come into my garden, my sister, my bride. I'm in already.

I'm here. First of all, he recognizes the yielded life as his property. Now I find this exceedingly precious.

She said, notice, let my beloved come into his garden. He said, I am come into my garden. Which means this, you see, the little bit of garden that she handed over to him, he was a king, he had a vast royal estate, her little garden was tiny.

But when she handed over her tiny little garden to him, he added it to his vast estate, and he said, mine. It's mine forevermore. I accept it, however little it is, however insignificant it is.

It is my garden. And he does just that. Some of us may feel this morning that we've got so little to give him.

My friend, it doesn't matter how little your life may be, how mean in your own sight, or in the sight of others, for that matter. The little garden property that is handed over to him in love and with a desire to please him, he accepts, and he makes it part of his royal and eternal kingdom, and it becomes his. And he says, I'm come into my garden.

But notice, not only does he recognize the yielded life as his property, he rewards the life that is yielded to him. I'm come into my garden, he says, my sister, my bride. Do you realize the significance of those words? You might have thought, you see, that by giving up her life, the bride had lost something.

I tell you, she lost nothing at all. What he took with one hand, he gave back with the other, because you notice what he does. Oh yes, he says, I'm come into my garden, you've given yourself to me, you are mine, you are my beloved, all right.

But now, you're my sister and you're my bride. And thereby he addresses her in terms of the closest relationship and of a committed responsibility. My sister, not a chattel to be used, but a sister to be cherished.

My bride, my bride, one with myself, bearing my name, sharing my life, sharing my destiny. You see, there's a difference between being merely loved and being the bride. We hear of such tragedies in this world as those of broken engagements.

What we have here is a committed responsibility. He says, you're my bride. That means this, you see, that whatever she has given up to him now belongs to her still as his bride.

So she's lost nothing, because he acknowledges her as his sister and as his bride. All that she had given up is given back to her in terms of this new relationship and much else beside. Because now she has joined her with her sovereign Lord of all the vast domains that are under his name.

How very typical of what our heavenly lover longs to do at this time. Oh yes, he takes the life that is yielded to him. And he says, it is mine, you've given it over to me, it is mine.

But wonder of wonders, it's given back to us under the guise of a new relationship, and we find ourselves heir of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Nothing that is given to him is lost. And then he assures his beloved of his personal presence, I am come, he says, but I want to close with this, I can't linger longer here, precious as it is.

Can I just come to this as we close this morning? I am come, my presence, I'm here already. And he accepts the pleasure that she would give him. He accepts the offer to choose.

I am come, he says, I gather, I eat, I drink. Yes, he says, there is so much in the garden of your life that delights me. There is fruit to gather, there are certain things to eat, and there are certain things to drink.

And here in your garden, he says, I am really enjoying myself. There are things that please me and satisfy me, and I am here already. Brethren and sisters in Christ, this is what will make this service a communion.

If you and I can find grace together to open the door of our hearts so widely that we can say to him, Dear Lord, who didst love me with an everlasting love, and purchase my redemption, and thereby my life, claim your property, come right in. What do you want of me today? And he puts his finger on this, and he takes a little of that, and you don't begrudge him anything, but you give him the blank check to choose what he will. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, feast with him, and he with me. O God, grant it for his name's sake. Let us pray.

Father of all mercy and God of all comfort, we desire at this time that in the light of the greater revelation of a greater love than that which we have been considering, we may have a correspondingly greater grace for the kingly lover of our soul, that when we survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, our richest gains we count but loss, and poor contempt on all our pride. O, for the grace to say, Thine am I by all tithes. But, chiefly Thine, that in Thy sacrifice Thou, Lord, art mine, is there on earth a closer bond than this, that my beloved's mine, and I am his.

Give us grace, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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