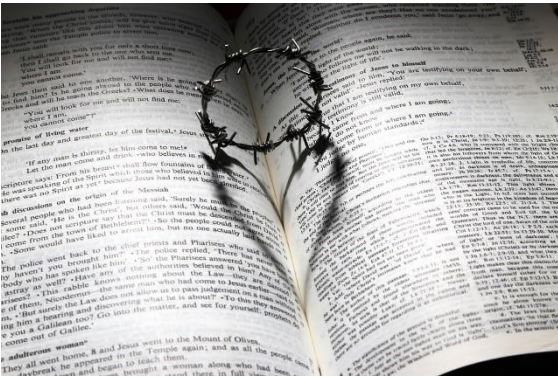


## Love, Vulnerability, and God

### Sermon for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent

Sermon Text: Song of Solomon 2:8-13



Everything in the world cries out for love. From cradle to grave, humans need love, friendship, and security. That's because humans are made this way. God created us in such a way that we have a part of Himself within us. And this portion of Himself that God created within us is essentially love. God sees a part of Himself in us and we see a part of ourselves in Him. The bond of love connects people and God in eternal harmony. All of this is confirmed by God with His word of blessing: "See, it is good!" Now, it's no longer like this. Now, we are separated from God. We are also therefore disconnected from love and fight

against it. We ask ourselves: How do young people find love in a world where lust is confused with love? And how does the grieving widow cope with lost love? What about the divorced husband? Or the single mother?

It is precisely because we have such questions about love that the Song of Solomon was written. And here, the Bible tells us a little about love in the middle of Advent. I'll now read our text from Song of Solomon 2:8-13:

*The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, <sup>11</sup> for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. <sup>12</sup> The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. <sup>13</sup> 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.*

From the Song of Solomon, three things appear to be important:

1. God knows something about love
2. Love has a time...
3. Love is personal

In these three points, the first point is the most significant, namely that "God knows something about love." That God knows something about love should actually be obvious to each one of us. After all, God invented love! And yet people have succeeded in cleanly separating the world of love from God, as if love belongs to people and God only knows about church, prayer, singing, piety, and so on. That is a grave error because if this is so, we have banished God from the most important and private part of our lives – we have banished Him from love. In the Song of Solomon, we get to know a different God. Without any shyness, the Song of Solomon explains and compares the very practical aspects of marriage and love with God's love and tells us: "Just like two people who are head over heels in love, that's how God loves us too!" And throughout the Bible, we come to know just such a God who is in love with us: God loves us deeply. In the words of the Song of Solomon, it's explained like this: God comes like a leaping gazelle and whispers in our ear: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away." Since the first day, when Adam and Eve fell from paradise, we have come to know a God who loves so sincerely. He loves so deeply that no path is too far for Him! And His path always goes down – to us! God wants to share our suffering with us. He wants to go to the very places where love is destroyed, where people are hurt by love, where people are isolated, and where they have lost trust in one another. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 ESV) If God comes so close to us, it's precisely because of love! For God is not a God in the clouds, who surveys the

entire mess from above, but He comes to us. And God doesn't want only our Sunday masks, but our whole life. That's because God truly loves us. He loves not only the beautiful parts of our lives, He doesn't just love the heroes or the famous people, but He loves us, totally and completely.

And yet, love has a time and place. In the Song of Solomon, the bride compares the coming of the groom with the blossoming of spring. That's why she sings: *"for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth."*

Yes, even God's love for people has a winter and a summer. The people of Israel waited a long time for the Messiah. They lived with the law for a long time. They tried to keep the commandments for a long time and still couldn't do it. The people of Israel consequently experienced times of drought – for example, wandering in the desert for 40 years or the Babylonian captivity. For them, the time was like a separation from God and consequently a separation from that love. Even Job cried out to heaven about being completely forsaken by God. "God, why do You allow this?" Every couple in love also experiences separation and distance. The winter times come – times of misunderstanding, times when you can no longer love the other person, times when trust is lost. That is normal and belongs to an important part of every relationship, even relationship to God. We know times when our spiritual life is like a tree that has lost all its leaves in winter. Now we stand there bare and naked. We don't know if God can love us. We can't believe anymore because the soul's nourishment is missing and it becomes cold in and around us... But these same times of drought can be fruitful times. They can be times where one is hurt by love but becomes more mature. So too with the people of Israel. In such times of separation and drought, the most beautiful psalms and prophetic words were written. On the one hand, the Psalms sang and inquired after their suffering: "God, why have You forgotten us?" But on the other hand, they looked to the future with great hope. The prophets spoke with clear and bright words about the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. And then He came! He made His home among us! Through His coming, He has shown that He has come very close to us. Above all, Jesus' coming showed that His love is real because it is vulnerable. Anyone who has ever been in love knows that when you are in love, you can be hurt more than in any other human relationship. That's because you give yourself entirely to the other person. Only those who truly give their all and love completely can be vulnerable. Our Jesus is just such a person who loves completely. It is precisely because Jesus loves so much that He was so cruelly and deeply hurt and became famous for being the one wounded on the cross. The greatest love was revealed in the most bitter suffering and being forsaken by God on the cross. So we know Jesus and His love are not just for appearances! He didn't just pretend to love but truly loved, with all the consequences. But right on this cross, there is new life and growth. The Song of Solomon sings about it and says: "The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance." God didn't leave Jesus in death, but raised Him from the dead. And we are the fruits. We may also hope in new life! We too can hope and believe that we will not only experience death, despair, and hopelessness, but also new life. The fruits of the cross can grow in each one of us. In every tragedy, in every disappointment in love, in every cruelty, the blossoms of the resurrection and of growth can be seen.

And with this, we come to the third important point, namely that God loves you personally. One of the most beautiful things about love is that the loved one gets to know. "My beloved loves only me!" He prefers me over everyone else! Did you know that this means you here? Yes, God wants to be completely there for you! Yes, you heard that correctly: God finds you worthy of love! God thinks you are beautiful! And therefore, would like to be with you. His heart beats for you! You are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit! The salvation that Jesus Christ has won for the whole world is meant for you! And when you take the body and blood of Jesus Christ today, He comes to you and says to you: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come to me!" Amen.