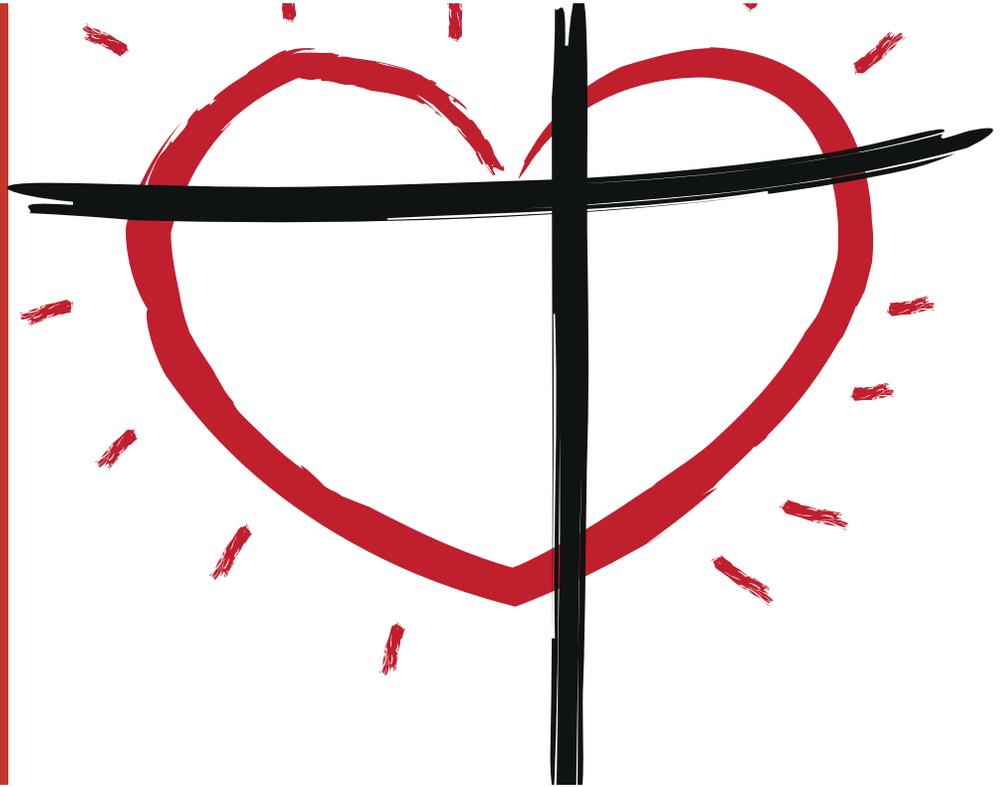


PRAYER JOURNAL

January 8, 2021

"God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there is anyone who understands, who seeks after God"

Psalm 53:2



Chapter Six

Unrelenting Love

The bible describes our relationship with Christ in strong, symbolic pictures of oneness: He is head of a body, husband

of a wife, God in His temple. In spite of these powerful metaphors, a sense of distance remains between the presence of the Lord and the spiritual consciousness of the

Church. This distance is a test. Our call is to possess that love of God that reaches into eternity and brings the glory of God and his presence into His earthly house.

Highland Village Church

Prayer and Fasting 2021

Those Who Seek After God

"God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there is anyone who understands, who seeks after God" (Ps. 53:2).

We simply must have more of Jesus. In the face of increasing wickedness in the world, our programs and ideas have fallen short. We need God. Those who understand the hour we face are seeking Him. The wise know that Christ Himself is our only strategy and hope.

You may ask, "How does this message fit in the context of building the Lord's house?" If just one believer truly attains the hope of this devotional, that individual will change his or her world.

This message is about seeking the Lord. Our primary text will be from Song of Solomon 3:1-4, for here we find a bride and bridegroom who both are intolerant of the distance between them. The bride in the passage symbolizes the Church in her deepest longings for Jesus; the bridegroom symbolizes Christ. We will start with verse 1; the bride is speaking.

"On my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves."

True seeking of God is born of love. Our quest for God is not a matter of discipline but of desire. It is not a question of sacrifice but of undistracted love. Your sleep is gone because your beloved is gone. You

must seek Him, for such is the nature of love.

Some will say, "But I already know the Lord. I have found Him." In truth, it was He who found us. Our salvation rests securely upon this fact. But while many are resting upon Christ's finding us, His bride arises now to find Him. In the very love that He inspired, she pursues her beloved.

We must see that there is still much more to learn and discover about our Lord. At the end of Moses's life, after being used by God to confront and defeat the gods of Egypt, after dwelling in the Lord's glory for forty years, he prays, *"Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand" (Deut. 3:24)*. For all we think we know, we have seen but a glimpse of His glory. The apostle Paul wrote, *"As many as are perfect, have this attitude" (Phil. 3:15)*. To seek and know Christ is the attitude of the mature; it is the singular obsession of Christ's bride.

In this maturation process there will come a point when, within your heart, love for God will take ascendancy over mere intellectual or doctrinal understanding. The bride of Christ cannot contain her longing or patronize her aching heart by saying, "I will feel better in the morning." There is simply no reconciling the passion of her soul with the absence of her beloved.

Note also there is an unfolding dimension to seeking the Lord that we must embrace. *Genuine love for God*

is an unrelenting hunger. As you would die without food, so you feel you will die without Him. She says, *"Night after night I sought him."* The knowledge of what her beloved has done in the past, a "religion" about Him, will provide little solace for the bride. She wants Him!

Overcoming Resistance

There are many obstacles that hinder us from truly finding the Lord. The bride mourns, *"I sought him whom my soul loves. I sought him but did not find him."* Her first attempts at seeking her beloved prove fruitless, yet, unlike most of us, she does not terminate her quest. *Augustine said it well: "God is not on the surface."* There is indeed a "secret place of the Most High." Although hidden, it is accessible.

One common but undiscerned deterrent is the preliminary effect drawing near can have upon our hearts. We become satisfied with the blessings upon the foothills of God, but we never climb the mountain of God. We must guard against these signposts becoming our final destination. We must not be deterred by goose bumps or tears, edification or comfort. We are searching for Jesus Himself.

Let us also understand we will not find His fullness by seeking Him merely in

convenient times and comfortable places. Rather, our quest is a determined, continual pilgrimage that will not end until He is disclosed to us. (See *John 14:21*; *Philippians 3:12*.) We are confident, though, for He has promised that, in the day we seek Him with our whole hearts, we shall find Him (*Jer. 29:13*).

Christ Our Life

For many, Christianity is simply the religion into which they were born. For others, although Jesus is truly their Savior, their relationship with Him is hardly more than a history lesson, a study of what He did in the past. For those who attain His presence, however, Christ is Savior and more: He is their very life (*Col. 3:4*). When Jesus is your life, you cannot go on without Him.

There is a story of a man in search of God who came to study at the feet of an old teacher. The sage brought this young man to a lake and led him out into shoulder-deep water. Thinking he was about to experience a baptism of sorts, the young man relaxed as the prophet put his hands upon his pupil's head and pushed him down into the water. The old man remained resolute and continued holding down his young initiate until the disciple, feeling he was surely drowning,

pushed with all his strength against the old man's hands. In shock and confusion the young man burst to the surface. "What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. His teacher looked him in the eyes and said, "When you desire God as you desired air, you shall find Him."

This was the attitude of the psalmist when he wrote, *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God"* (*Ps. 42:1*). The question here is not only of desire but also of survival. I need Him as a drowning man needs air and as a parched deer needs water. How can I exist without abiding in the living Christ?

Such is the attitude of the bride. Having not initially found Christ, she determines, *"I must arise now and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I must seek him whom my soul loves"* (*Song of Sol. 3:2*).

This inexorable woman has risen from the security of her own bed. She has left the comfort of her warm house and now is seeking her beloved in the streets and in the squares. Be aware: not all who wander from congregation to congregation are uncommitted or superficial Christians. A significant number are honestly searching for Christ. They are asking, "Have you seen Him?"

Not only is the bride in the

Unrelenting Love Highland Village Church

streets and squares of Christianity, but she is also facing the force and the power of darkness as well. Yet nothing stops her—not her own need of sleep or her fear of the night. The love of Christ compels her.

However, again she is disappointed. “I sought him but did not find him” (v. 2).

We might think that after so valiant an effort—and in the face of the seeming reluctance of heaven to answer her cry—she would feel justified to return home. But she does not. We too must guard against becoming satisfied with our opinion of ourselves: “We prayed; we waited; we searched for God. We did more than other men.” This false reward fills the soul with self-exaltation. If we truly want to find Him, we must stay empty and hungry for God alone.

“The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, and I said, ‘Have you seen him whom my soul loves?’ ” (v. 3).

From her bed, to the streets, and now to the watchmen, the bride is seeking her lover. Notice that the watchmen found her. The watchmen are the modern-day prophetic ministries. Their highest calling is to find the

searching bride and direct her to Jesus. While many may come to the seers for a word of encouragement or revelation, the bride is looking for Jesus. Her singleness of purpose is undistracted. She asks the watchmen, “Have you seen Him?”

“Scarcely had I left them when I found him whom my soul loves” (v. 4). This is the greatest motivation for seeking the Lord: the time will come when you find Him! You will pass your tests and overcome the obstacles; you will be secure in the embrace of Christ.

She says, “I held on to him and would not let him go” (v. 4). I am reminded of Mary at the empty tomb of Christ. The disciples came, looked in the cave, and went away astounded. But Mary came to the tomb and lingered, weeping. The death of Christ was horrible, but the empty tomb was unbearable. She had to find Him whom her soul loved!

Scripture says that Jesus Himself came to her, but in her sorrow she did not recognize Him. He said, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Can we see the connection here between Mary’s weeping and her seeking Christ? Blinded by her

tears, she supposes He is the gardener: “ ‘Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means, Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father’ ” (John 20:15-17).

The instant Mary saw the Lord she clung to Him. Love is the highest, most powerful law of God’s kingdom. When you expend your energies, your nights, your heart—when you overcome your fears out of love for Jesus—you will find Him and never let Him go. Mary found Him whom her soul loved. She continued in her pursuit, remaining in sorrow until she found Him. The disciples had gone home. To whom did Jesus appear first? He appeared to the one who had the highest passion for Him. And she was “clinging” to Him.

Bringing Jesus to Our Mother’s House

“I found him whom my soul loves; I held on to him and would not let him go, until I had brought him to my mother’s house, and into the room of her who conceived

Prayer and Fasting '21 Highland Village Church

mother's house, and into the room of her who conceived me" (Song of Sol. 3:4).

You have laid hold of Jesus; you have found fulfillment. But has this seeking of God been only for you? No. For the bride brings Him to the house of her mother, which is the Church. She brings Him back to the needy and hurting, to her brothers and sisters.

We all want the Lord, but only the bride will go so far as to find Him and bring Him back to the house. I want to charge you to find Jesus. Do not merely talk about how dead your life or congregation is—find Him! Pass through your fears. Overcome passivity and lay hold of Him. The Church and our cities need people who are anointed with the presence of Jesus.

You Have Made His Heart Beat Faster

Finally, the question arises: where was Jesus throughout the time of the bride's searching? Was He aloof, indifferent, sitting in heaven? From the beginning He had been watching, actually longing, for His bride to find Him. He now speaks:

*"You have made my heart
beat faster, my sister, my bride;
You have made my heart
beat faster with a
single glance of your
eyes,
With a single strand of your
necklace.*

Song of Solomon 4:9

You are His bride. He is returning from heaven for you! The single glance of your eyes toward Him makes His heart beat faster. Such love is inconceivable. He sees your repentance as your preparation for Him—His bride making herself ready! He beholds you kneeling, weeping at your bedside. He shares your painful longing. He has been watching. And the bridegroom says, "The glance of your eyes has made my heart beat faster."

The Lord has a promise for His bride. He said there will be a fresh and overwhelming baptism of love that will surpass all our knowledge of Him. We will know the height and depth, the width and the breadth of His love. While yet here on Earth, we will be filled with His fullness.

We have many tasks, even responsibilities, that have come from heaven. However, the need of our soul is to be with Jesus. The areas of sin in our lives exist simply because

we have lived too far from Him. Let us commit our hearts to seeking our God. Let us find Him whom our soul loves and draw back closer to Him!

"[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!" (Eph. 3:19, amp).

My Prayer of Application

Lord, even now we lift our eyes toward You. Jesus, grace and truth are realized in You. Grant us grace that the truth of this message will change our lives and compel us in unrelenting love to You! In Jesus name, Amen.