

Altogether lovely

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me now as we seek to meditate for a little time in a portion of God's word in which we have read the Song of Solomon and the fifth chapter.

And a clause which we have in the last verse of that chapter in verse 16. These words, yea, he is altogether lovely.

Song of Solomon chapter 5 and the clause in verse 16, yea, he is altogether lovely.

My aim this evening, my friends, is to commend to you, if I am able and as I am helped, the loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I suggest that in a sense there is little that one can add to the phrase I have chosen for that purpose.

[1 : 05] In one sense it is almost an impertinence to try and elaborate on such sentiments as these.

For it would need the tongues of men and of angels and of angels and of archangels to elaborate in a greater measure upon such sentiments as we have in these words.

But such words are said before us in Holy Scripture so that by the Spirit's help we might try at least to make some comment on them.

The song, as we all know, is an absolutely unique piece of literature. It is of course based on the wedded love of Solomon and his bride.

Solomon himself is the author of this remarkable song and this is stated in the opening words in chapter 1. The form of the song is dramatic wherein several parts of it are uttered by or in the name of several persons.

[2 : 28] And these persons are chiefly four. There is the bridegroom and there is the bride. And there are the friends or the companions of the one or the other of the bridegroom or the bride.

Nor is it declared throughout the book. Nor is it declared specifically which one of them is speaking at any given time.

But what is said is couched, I think, in such terms as that the prudent and discerning reader will usually tell which of the parties are speaking to us or addressing us.

The design of the song in general is to describe the fervent love and happy marriage of two persons and their mutual satisfaction the one in the other and the blessed fruit and effect of that union.

But this, we believe, is not the principal purpose of it. To elevate and admire and commend marital love, however noble that state is.

[3 : 43] But rather is intended to present us with a rare picture of the mutual love subsisting between Christ and his church.

This is sufficiently evident from the descriptions of the bridegroom and the bride, which are such as could not with decency and with decorum be used or meant concerning Solomon and his bride.

And that this interpretation of the song, that it is a spiritual rather than a purely physical song, is a proper and sensible one and stems from, I believe, several considerations, several scriptural considerations.

It stems from the fact that the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, they are full of mystical and allegorical passages which are both profitable and instructive to the church and to the people of God from time to time.

It stems also from the fact that the doctrine of Christ or the Messiah and of his being the head or the husband of the church, the savior of sinners, was well known among prophets and well known among holy men of old.

[5 : 09] And there are many passages which refer to Christ in this relationship. It stems also from the fact that our Lord compares himself to a bridegroom and his church to a bride, as we see from, for instance, Isaiah chapter 62, and calls and owns himself as the husband of his people, as we see from Isaiah 54 and Hosea chapter 2.

And it stems also from this further consideration that the 45th psalm, which we read together a moment ago, is a kind of an abridgment of the psalm, and was clearly written with Christ in mind, as all Orthodox interpreters of the Word of God will readily acknowledge.

It is Christ who is represented to us in that composition. It is Christ who is held up in all his excellence and in all his loveliness.

And so from these considerations and many others, we deem that the principal purpose of the psalm is to present us with a rare picture of Christ and his church.

In these words, we have Christ himself represented to our minds and to our hearts. Yea, he is altogether lovely.

[6 : 43] I want, if I may, to take these words as a stand and make a few passing comments on them. I don't think there is any call whatever to think of our Savior in his physical characteristics.

That is not the loveliness that we are called upon to admire. We know not what his physical characteristics were. We have seen, I suppose, many so-called paintings of our Savior, but they were all concocted in the minds of truly talented men.

But we don't know that they give us any true representation of the features of our Lord. It is not the physical features of our Lord that is represented to us here, but something infinitely more precious.

His character, his work, and his love. And it is from these different viewpoints that I would like to consider him with you. Yea, he is altogether lovely.

And the first principle point I want to make is simply this. He is altogether lovely in his character. I suggest the loveliness of his character stems from several directions.

[8 : 06] The loveliness of his character stems from that he was unblemished. That unblemishedness was the essence of his being.

He was perfect in his character. Undefined, holy, harmless. We can only imagine what an unblemished character can be like.

We don't know. We have never met with an unblemished, a holy, unblemished character. We can only use our imagination to try and describe what the unblemished character of Christ was like.

And all we have to go on, and we have sufficient in it, is the Word of God. And indeed, we have it from the very lips of those who would have dearly loved to have seen a blemish in his character.

From the very lips of his enemies. We hear the testimony, I find no fault in this man. There was nothing in him, in his character, to which men could point and say he has a blemish in his character.

[9 : 24] There is a fault somewhere. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from all men and all women.

And so then the loveliness of his character stems from this fact, that he was unblameable, unblemished in the very essence of his being.

But also the loveliness of his character stems from the fact that goodness was the quintessence of his life.

He was good. And he himself could claim to be good.

And when he made that claim to being the quintessence of goodness, then we know that he was good.

[10 : 25] And he was good because he was not simply a man, the perfect man. He was God as well. God and man in two distinct natures.

He went about doing good. He did nothing but good. All his actions were actions that were done out of pure goodness. And here we see from the scriptures and especially from the Gospels, we see the very heart of the loveliness of this person who is commanded to us here in the psalm.

He is altogether lovely. And we see that loveliness of his character in the goodness that was evident in his life.

I suggest too that the loveliness of his character stems from the fact that grace was the elixir of his lips. We sang and we read before that in the 45th chapter of the book of Psalms that grace filled his lips.

Grace was poured into his lips. And the grace that was poured into his lips was poured from his lips with every word he spoke and every sentiment he expressed.

[11 : 49] This of course is why the inspired Old Testament royal writer speaks here and says, His mouth is most sweet.

It is a spiritual expression of the grace that fell from his lips. For those who sat at his footstool, listen to the gracious words that proceeded from his lips.

There is nothing so sweet as the grace that comes from the lips of the Savior. He is altogether lovely in what he is saying and in what he is speaking to us in his word of truth.

And surely too the loveliness of his character stems from the fact that compassion was the hallmark of his ministry. He evidenced compassion at every turn and in every direction.

This was expressed comprehensively and universally in the course of his entire ministry. It was expressed, for instance, in a material direction. He had compassion on the multitude when he saw them hungry and without food.

[13 : 05] And his compassion compelled him to make the needed provision for them. His compassion expressed itself physically in that he dealt with the frailties and the illnesses of men and women.

He healed their bodies. He had compassion on them when they came to him, crying to him for deliverance and for help. His compassion expressed itself emotionally.

For he felt with those who were bereaved and he wept with them. We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Who does not have compassion upon his people?

And of course his compassion was expressed spiritually. He is brought before us and he is presented to us in the Gospels as weeping over Jerusalem.

Pouring out his heart of love because of his compassion for those people who didn't know their right hand from the left. Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together at the hand gathereth her chickens under her wings and you would not.

[14 : 20] We see the loveliness of his character in so many different directions. He is altogether lovely in his character. As his character is represented to us in the infallible word of truth.

But passing on, I want also to say that he is not only altogether lovely in his character, but that he is altogether lovely in his commitment.

And this brings us to look a little more closely at what he undertook. For in this we see his true loveliness as well. And the loveliness of his commitment is expressed truly in the devotion which he displayed to that commitment.

And the alacrity with which he took up that commitment. Lo, we read it even in the Old Testament scriptures in chapter 40 of the book of Psalms where we have these words.

Lo, I come to do thy will I take delight, O my God. And this was his delight, his devotion to that to which he was committed.

[15 : 35] We have expressed in it the loveliness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is altogether lovely and we see the loveliness of his commitment in the devotion which he displayed to that commitment.

And we see also the loveliness of his commitment as expressed in the integrity which he manifested to that commitment which he received from the Father.

The integrity with which he carried out his commitment. He wouldn't be deviated, he wouldn't deviate from fulfilling that commitment. Even the persuasion of friends wouldn't turn him aside.

Even the offer of an earthly crown wouldn't cause him to divert from the path to which he has set himself. I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straightened until it be fulfilled.

This was the measure of his loveliness in his commitment, in his integrity to that commitment which he undertook. Yea, he is altogether lovely and the loveliness of his commitment is expressed in that integrity which he manifested throughout his ministry to go to the cross and to accomplish what he undertook.

[17 : 04] I suggest too that the loveliness of his commitment is expressed in the faithfulness by which he was gripped.

The faithfulness by which he was gripped because of his love to the Father. His faithfulness as the Father's servant.

Because it was as the Father's servant that he was in the world, that he came into the world. It was to do his pleasure. It was his delight, as we have already said, his delight to be faithful to that commitment.

To finish the work which the Father gave him to do and to return to the Father's presence in the glory from whence he came. And every step of his life indicates to us the faithfulness which he showed as a servant in what he was undertaking, in what he had undertaken and in what he so gloriously accomplished.

He is altogether lovely in the faithfulness by which he was gripped. Surely too, the loveliness of his commitment is expressed in the sufferings to which he submitted.

[18 : 25] Yes, the sufferings to which he submitted. Meekly and of his own volition. They weren't the sufferings which came unexpectedly upon him.

As sufferings come unexpectedly on us, on ordinary men and women. It was the sufferings to which he submitted himself. And the sufferings which he knew he had to submit to.

If he was to be faithful to his commitment. And if he was to be a servant of integrity. The cup which the Father hath given me.

That is the cup of suffering, the cup of anguish. And although that was an awesome cup in his esteem. So awesome that he said at one point, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Is it possible that I can fulfill my commitments without drinking out of this cup? But there came an angel from heaven to strengthen him.

[19 : 30] And that angel was in effect telling him, no, there is no other way. There is no other way by which the commitment can be fulfilled except you drink it.

And he himself went forward in the strength of that word. And so expressed in another direction.

The loveliness of his commitment to what he had undertaken. In submitting himself to the anguish of Gethsemane.

And the awesomeness of Calvary. Of Golgotha. And the loveliness of his commitment is expressed truly in the uncomplainedness by which he was actuated.

The uncomplainedness by which he was actuated. He never spoke a word of complaint. He never complained against what God had committed to him.

[20 : 34] Or what men were doing to him. So he opened not his mouth. We read in the Old Testament. This was a testimony of Isaiah the prophet.

He is brought as a sheep to the slaughter. As a lamb before a... As a lamb to the slaughter. As a sheep before a shearer is done. So he openeth not his mouth.

How could he? Because those lips were sealed with a love that was divine. And a love which was unique. And so then as we take a comprehensive view.

Not just of his character. But of his work. Of his commitment. We have to accept the conclusion of the inspired, impalable word of the Old Testament.

Yea. He is altogether lovely. Altogether lovely in his character. Altogether lovely in his commitment. And in all that he did.

[21 : 37] But thirdly. I want to suggest to you. That he is altogether lovely in his love. Altogether lovely in his love.

And the loveliness of his love. Stems from different directions I suggest. The loveliness of his love. Stems from the undeniable fact.

That it is uncaused. It is uncreated. He became man. He took upon him the form of a servant.

But he didn't become love. He didn't take upon him the form of love. How could he? Because he was love. From all eternity.

It was uncaused. Uncreated love. That was seen. When the son. Of the father.

[22 : 36] When the father's beloved son. Stepped into the scene of time. Christ loved the church. And it wasn't a love.

He came to express. It was a love. That was hidden with him. From time eternal. We have it expressed magnificently.

Have we not? In the prophecy of Jeremiah. Where he is represented. In chapter 3. Represented us. Speaking to us in these terms. Yea. I have loved thee. With an everlasting love.

Therefore with loving kindness. Have I drawn thee. We see the loveliness of his love. From the undeniable fact. That it is uncaused.

And uncreated. But we also see surely the loveliness of his love. In the. From the undeniable fact. That it is unmerited.

[23 : 32] It is unmerited. It is unmerited. Did the world merit his love? God so loved the world.

Christ loved the church. What kind of world was it that God loved? What kind of church was it? That Christ loved?

Well listen to what I say. To what Ezekiel says. In chapter 16. Thus saith the Lord God. Unto Jerusalem. Thy births and thy nativities of the land of Canaan.

Thy father was an Amorite. And thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity. In the day thou wast born. Thy navel was not cut. Neither wast thou washed with water.

To super thee. Thou wast not saunted at all. Nor swaddled at all. None I pitied thee. To do any of these things unto thee. To have compassion upon thee.

[24 : 34] But thou wast cast out in the open field. To the loathing of thy person. In the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee. And saw thee polluted.

In thy blood. I said unto thee. When thou wast in thy blood. Live. Yea. I said unto thee. When thou wast in thy blood. Live.

This was the picture that infinite love saw. As it looked down. Upon this world. This is why I say that.

He is altogether lovely. In his love. Because that love was totally unmerited. There was no beauty. In the world of mankind.

That claimed his love. And that called forth his love. And that was able to embrace his love. The loveliness of his love. The loveliness of his love stems from this undeniable fact.

[25 : 32] That it is unmerited. That it is unmerited. The loveliness of his love also stems from the undeniable fact. That it is. Uncomprehensible.

Yes. Uncomprehensible. When all is said and done. Surely this is this. The significance. Of what the apostle says in Ephesians chapter 3.

Where he is. Commending. The love of Christ to the Ephesian believers. So that they might know. The length and the depth and the height. Of.

The love of Christ. It is. That they might be able to comprehend it. Although it passes knowledge. Although it is incomprehensible. Yet there is a measure in which it can be comprehended.

And yet there is another sense in which it remains incomprehensible. For all time. The loveliness of his love stems.

[26 : 30] From this truth. From this fact. And then too surely that. The loveliness of his love stems from the undeniable fact. That it is unending.

It is eternal. As it was without beginning. So it will be without end. We are reading Revelation.

It is not on chapter 7. Of what the Lamb will do. To those and with those. Who will be with him. In the glory that is yet.

To be revealed. The Lamb says. The Lamb says. A scripture. Who is in the midst of the throne. Shall feed them. And shall lead them.

Unto living fountains of water. He shall lead them to. Greater vistas. Of his own love.

[27 : 25] Of the excellence of his own love. Throughout the eternal ages. I believe with all my heart. That the eternal. World of heaven.

Will be a world. Where the people of God. Will go on increasing. In knowledge. All the time. In knowledge of the person of Christ. In knowledge of the love of Christ. In knowledge of the grace of Christ.

Because. They will never come to that point. Where. They shall say. We have enough. We have attained. It will be a heaven.

In which there will be an increase. In blessedness. Throughout eternity. The Lamb shall feed them. And the Lamb shall lead them. Unto living fountains of water.

And God shall wipe away. All tears. From their eyes. Yea. He is altogether. Lovely. My friend. Is it so to yourself.

[28 : 28] By way of application. Can I just commend him to you. That is all I have been trying to do. In a. Very. Lisbon. Imperfect.

Sort of way. Trying to. Commend. Christ's loveliness. To you. And so can I close by. Commending. His. Loveliness. To you.

As. A saviour. And the loveliness. Of his saviourhood. Consists. In this. That he is. Able to save. To the uttermost.

All. Who come unto God. By him. Seeing he ever lives. To make intercession. For us. The loveliness. Of his saviour. Of his saviour. Saviourhood.

Consists. In the fact. That he is ready. And he is willing. To receive sinners. Unto himself. And to eat. And drink with them. And to reveal himself. To them. Herein.

[29 : 22] I say. Lies the loveliness. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his saviourhood. Can I commend. His saviourhood. To you. If he is not yet. If he has not yet.

Become. Your saviour. Can you pass him by. This evening. Again. Can you ignore him. This evening again. Can you say to him.

This evening again. We desire not. This man. To reign over us. Away with him. Away with him. I commend. His loveliness.

To you. As your saviour. I commend. His loveliness. To you. As your brother. And the. Loveliness. Of his brotherliness.

Consists. In this reality. That he is the brother. Who is born. For adversity. And he is the brother. Who will never. Give you the cold shoulder.

[30 : 16] He is the brother. Who will never. Deny his brotherliness. In regard. To his family. Because. He is the elder brother. Of all.

As many. As commit themselves. To him. And trust themselves. To his grace. And to his mercy. You have experienced. You have. You have known something. Of the brotherliness.

The loveliness. Of his brotherliness. No more of it. My friend. As you go on. In the knowledge of him. I commend. Him to you. As your brother.

And I commend him. To you. As your advocate. As your advocate. As your advocate. Because the loveliness. Of his advocacy. Consists in this. That his plea. Will never be refused.

Before the father's throne. We have an advocate. With the father. And he is a righteous advocate. And when he pleads.

[31 : 14] The kiss. Of any sinner. Before the father's throne. That plea. Will be effectual. And that plea. Will never be refused.

By the father. Herein lies. The loveliness. Of his advocacy. In that there is. None of. Who can. Take that place.

But himself. And there is. None of. Who has the ear. Of God in heaven. Except. The lovely. Lord Jesus. And I can.

I commend him. Anew to you. As your master. And the loveliness. Of his. Of the. Lordship. Or the kingship.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is simply. That there is no. Master. Comparable. To him. You know yourself. Don't you. This reality.

[32 : 09] You know. That he is. The best master. You have ever served. You don't want to serve another. You served. Many masters. Throughout your life. But when you came.

To submit yourself. By the grace of God. To the lovely. Lord Jesus Christ. You found. A master. Par excellent. And you want. No other. You want to have. Nothing to do.

With another master. Because he is the best of all. He is all together lovely. Is he your master? Is he your advocate? Is he your brother?

Is he your savior? He is all together lovely. Whatever aspect of his character. Whatever aspect of his commitment. Whatever aspect of his love.

Whatever aspect of his person. You want to examine. He will come up. With the same conclusion. As the inspired. Royal writer did.

[33 : 04] Many hundreds. Many thousands of years ago. These words. Which are full. And overflowing in themselves. They cannot be added to. Yea. He is all together lovely.

And he is my beloved. And he is my friend. Can you see that? That's the most wonderful thing of all. This God man.

Who is all together lovely. He is my beloved. And he is my friend. That. Is the. That is.

Life. In all its fullness. And in all its happiness. And. In all its blessedness. We leave with you the words. Of inspired.

Of inspiration. Concerning our blessed. Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ. Yea. He. Is all together.

[34 : 01] Lovely. Is he so. In your esteem. God grant that he may. Amen. Let us unite in prayer. O Lord our God.

Remove. We pray thee. The scales. From. Our eyes. And from our hearts. So that. We might look. With.

Undimmed vision. Upon the glory. And the beauty. And the excellence. Of Christ. Christ. So that our hearts. May be drawn out.

To him. As they have never. Been drawn out before. That our lives. May be drawn out. In renewed. Commitment. To his service.

And that we might. From this day forward. Be for him. Utterly. And holy. And forever. Grant. O God. To seal.

[34 : 59] The words. Of inspiration. To our minds. And to our hearts. To our lives. With power. And may we be enabled. By the spirit's help. To think upon them.

In our own. Mind. In days to come. And get a clearer view. Of the loveliness. Of Christ. For his name's sake. Amen.

Amen.