

Looking for love

Song of Songs 3:1-4

December 15, 2013

What is your soul longing for?

Todd and Becky have answered that question already this morning, but how would you answer it?

What is your soul longing for?

For the Bears to win the Super Bowl? For a really good cup of coffee? For a quiet evening at home with nothing -- nothing -- you have to do?

What is your soul longing for?

For next May? For an end to cold and snow and ice and winter? For next summer and a family vacation? For an August day paddling a kayak among rock-bound, fir-covered Maine islands? OK, that's what my soul is longing for!

Our souls do long for these things -- for life's little pleasures, for experiences and places and pastimes that bring us delight. But surely there is more your soul longs for. Think again. Go deeper!

What is your soul longing for?

For fulfillment and satisfaction and joy in your work? For satisfying and rewarding relationships with your colleagues? For an end to worry about making ends meet? For a sense of financial stability, if not security? For being able to provide amply, to make a good life, for those you love? For good health? For good health for yourself and for those you love?

Is your soul longing for these things? But think again. Go further! Go deeper!

What is your soul longing for?

For more than good health? For a good life, for your children, for your grandchildren? For healing of wounded souls? For deliverance from personal demons? For healthy choices and healthy relationships? For good opportunities? For fulfilling lives? For meaningful lives? For protection from evil of every kind, within and without?

Yes, my soul is longing for these things! But there is more. There is more. Think again. Go further. Go deeper.

What is your soul longing for? Not just for yourself, not just for your family, but for your community, for your nation, for this world.

Is your soul longing for peace? For peace on earth? For an end to hatred? An end to violence? An end to enmity?

Is your soul longing for justice? For food for hungry people? For water for thirsty people? For freedom for enslaved people? For salvation for exploited people? For houses and beds and fields and tools and clothes and medicine and toys for people who have nothing?

Is your soul longing for a reformation of politics, for leaders with vision who can look past differences of party or faction or nation? For leaders who care, genuinely care, about the welfare of all the people? For leaders who care, genuinely care, about the welfare of our planet as a whole?

Is your soul longing for leaders like Mandela or like Pope Francis, who break the mold, who move beyond the limitations of custom and expectation, who transform the lives of an entire people, or, at least, provide the context and the motivation for such transformation?

Yes. Yes. But go deeper! Go deeper into the core of your own soul. What do you want?

What is your soul longing for?

To matter? To be valued? To feel that your life has made, does make, a difference? To believe that the world is a better place because of you?

Are you longing to be appreciated? To be acknowledged? To be affirmed? To be told by others that the world is a better place because of you?

Can you go further? Can you go still deeper?

What is your soul longing for?

To be loved? Just to be loved, not for what you do, not for what you become or might become, but just loved as you are? Are you looking for love?

I cannot imagine that you are not! We are all looking for love. It is our deepest human need, the deepest craving of our souls. Isn't it? We are looking for love, to know and be known, as we are, outside and in, today and tomorrow and forever, because love is not something we receive once and then are done with,

but something like breath itself, that we need moment by moment, every moment of every day, to live.

But go deeper!

No, you cannot be asking us to go deeper! This is it. We have reached the very depths of our souls. It is love we are looking for. It is love our souls are longing for.

But I am asking. I am asking you to go even deeper.

What is your soul longing for?

*Asleep on my bed, night after night
I dreamed of the one I love;
I was looking for him, but couldn't find him.
I went wandering through the city,
through its streets and alleys.
I looked for the one I love.
I looked, but couldn't find him.
The sentries patrolling the city saw me.
I asked them, "Have you seen the one I love?"
As soon as I left them, I found him.
I held him and wouldn't let him go
until I took him to my mother's house,
to the room where I was born.*

Not just for love, any love, but for the one? Is your soul longing for the one? For the one you love? For the one who fills your dreams?

Because this is a dream! She dreams, night after night, of the one she loves. Thoughts of him fill not only her every waking moment, but her every unconscious moment, too. In her dreams, she longs for him. She looks for him, but cannot find him. She looks and looks and looks and will not give up looking. She asks and asks and asks and will not give up asking. And then -- finally! -- when she finally finds the one she loves, she will not let him go. She will not let him go, but takes him home, takes him home to her mother's house, takes him home to the room where she was born.

She takes him in, all the way in, all the way in and all the way back, back to the beginning, back to the place she was born, back to the beginning of her. She wants all of him and she wants him to have all of her, her life as a whole, from beginning to end.

He completes her. His love makes her. With him, she is complete. With him, she is whole. With him, she is who she is. With him, she is.

Is your soul longing for the one? For this one? For the one with whom, in whom, you are made whole? For the one with whom, in whom, you are fully who you are? For the one with whom, in whom, you are you?

My soul is longing for him!

This is what faith is about. Faith is not primarily about belief, not about saying that you believe certain things to be true. Faith is not primarily about behavior, not about choosing one way of life over another. Faith is not primarily about custom, not about habits of worship or prayer or service.

Faith is about desire, my unquenchable desire, your unquenchable desire, for the one, for the one you love. And when you find him, you will not let him go! And when you find him, when you are with him, when you know him and know that he knows you, you have found your soul's longing, your heart's desire.

When you have found your heart's desire, what else could you want? What else could you need, than just to remain there, with him? There is nothing to fear. There is nothing to lose. There is nothing that can ever again threaten you or worry you or harm you. Life can no more hurt you or rob you or disappoint you, because your life is in him!

So set aside every worry. Set aside every other desire. Set aside every other love ...

No, wait. That's what I thought I would tell you, but I was wrong. She does not leave her house to run away with him. She brings him home! He comes home, to where she lives. He comes home, to where we live.

He comes, the one we love comes, to us, in the midst of all our worries, in the midst of all our other genuine desires, in the midst of all our other genuine loves. He comes to us. Jesus, our Emmanuel, comes to us.