

The other side of darkness

Song of Songs 2:10-15

September 2, 2012

*The winter is over, the rains have stopped;
in the countryside the flowers are in bloom ...*

You stand and you look around at all their vibrant colors: the yellow of the yarrow and the blue of the sea hollies, the soft pink of the wild roses and the tartan reds and creamy lavenders of the daylilies.

You take a long and deep breath, enjoying the subtle sweetness of the flowers' scents, drifting on the air along with the dusty perfume of the grasses. You smell the ripening fruits, too -- peaches and apricots, strawberries and blackberries and figs -- each with its own distinctive fragrance, not so subtle, but tangy and earthy and enticing.

You reach up and pluck a peach and bite off a piece, just letting it sit there in your mouth, not chewing or swallowing, just savoring its sweet juices.

You run your finger along the sharp edges of a deep green bay leaf, then brush your hand through a clump of pungent thyme.

Listen! Do you hear it? The cooing of the doves?

You turn and you look. You look at her. You look at her, from a distance, sitting there on the garden bench, and you think what a privilege and what a joy it is to live in this world, with her. You think what a joy it is that she has been gracious enough to include you in her world. She sees you looking at her and she smiles, that smile you know well, filled with gratitude for all you have already shared together, and with eagerness for all you still have to share together.

Come, my love, my darling, come with me ...

This is the other side of darkness.

We are not fighting against human beings, but against the cosmic powers of this dark age! We must not live as ignorant people, but as wise people, understanding rightly what it is we are up against. Ours is a world filled with darkness, with sorrow and with woe, there is so much around us that threatens to break our spirits, if not our bodies. We have to be vigilant. We have to fight to survive and to thrive. We have to fight to protect and preserve and restore what is good.

But we are not fighting against human beings! We are, all of us alike, imperiled by forces, by dark powers, well beyond our ability to resist. We have named some of them: greed and envy and pride, fear and hatred and vengeance, the thirst for power, the thirst for control.

We are hungry, never satisfied, but always needing more. We are restless, never content, but always wanting more. We are threatened, never secure, but needing assurance, needing control, needing to put somebody down, so we can believe that somebody has to look up, to us.

This is what we are up against. These are our enemies, and our usual weapons will simply not do. Neither guns nor money, neither any law nor any leader can protect us against the power of greed and pride and fear. We need truth and righteousness. We need God's salvation and God's word -- the gospel of peace. We need faith.

We need faith, not in ourselves, not in might or wealth or even wisdom, but faith in Jesus. Do you understand that because we are not fighting against human beings, but against the cosmic powers of this dark age, that we need more than a guide? More than a teacher? More than a friend?

We need a savior!

We need a savior who will lead us out of Egypt, out of the land of suffering and oppression!

We need a savior who will stand up to the giant before whom the whole earth trembles!

We need a savior who will mend our wounds and heal our diseases and satisfy our hunger and our thirst!

We need a savior who will shatter the chains of the sin that binds us all, who will obliterate the sting of the death that lays claim to us all!

We need Jesus!

In this world, we must be wise, not ignorant. We must be sober, cognizant of the true identity of the enemy we are up against. And we must humbly entrust ourselves -- body and soul, each of us and all of us together -- humbly entrust ourselves to the One who saves us.

Jesus saves us, not just one day, but now, now just for another life, but for this life. Jesus brings us through the darkness to the other side, to this ...

*The winter is over; the rains have stopped;
in the countryside the flowers are in bloom.
This is the time for singing;
the song of doves is heard in the fields.
Figs are beginning to ripen;
the air is fragrant with blossoming vines.*

This is God's gift, This is God's gift! A gift to be received with thanksgiving and tended with care and enjoyed without fear. Taste and see that the Lord is good! Look and listen and touch and taste and smell!

God's gift is beauty ... blooming flowers and blossoming vines, ripening fruits and singing birds.

God's gift is companionship ... the gift of a partner and lover, the gift of a friend, the gift of a family, the gift of this family.

God's gift is peace ...

*Catch the foxes, the little foxes,
before they ruin our vineyard in bloom.*

When we put our trust in God's care, when we rest ourselves in the embrace of God's love, we have nothing at all to fear from the cosmic powers of this dark age. "Even if I must go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, for you are with me!"

No, when Jesus brings us through to the other side of darkness, we have nothing to worry about, except a few little foxes digging in the garden!

Come, my love, my darling, come with me ...

This Song of Songs celebrates the wonder and beauty of human love. It need not mean anything more than that, because this is God's gift, this is what God intends for us. We may be fighting against the cosmic powers of this dark age, but when Jesus brings us through to the other side of darkness, this is where we will be!

But even so, it is not all that far-fetched to hear the voice of Jesus calling to us: "Come, my love, my darling, come with me ..."