

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE KING.

Notes of a Sermon by the late Mr. J. E. Hazelton, of London,
on Lord's Day, November 6, 1910.

"While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof."—Song i. 12.

THE Song of Solomon is a divinely inspired expression of that holy fellowship which exists between Emmanuel and His redeemed people. There is no part of the written Word of God which has deeper mines of heavenly treasure than has the Song of Solomon; and happy are they who by faith are enabled to dig therein, and to bring up lustrous jewels, which testify to the goodness and the grace of our King.

The Old Testament might be compared to the blessed and glorious entry into the temple of the New Testament. Both are parts of the one building. The five Books of Moses constitute the great foundation. The historical Books and the writings of psalmists and of prophets are the great and glorious arch; and the keystone which unites them all is the central Book in the Old Testament Scriptures, even the Song of Solomon. If this central Song were withdrawn, all the rest would fall into confusion. What is the great end which God has in view in revealing Himself to poor sinners in Old and New Testament times? It is to bring the persons of eternally loved sinners into harmony with Himself; it is to bring a poor sinner upon the footing of justice as well as of mercy, upon the footing of righteousness as well as of loving-kindness, into the very presence of the Lord. Now in the Song of Solomon we have the Book of Communion,—communion between poor sinners and their Saviour; between the bride and the Bridegroom; the book of communion between seeking, hungry, thirsty souls and Emmanuel, who alone from His fountain fulness can satisfy their needs.

This Book may be taken as a test Song, a test Song of the state of your souls towards God. I do not for a moment say that we always have pleasure and enjoyment in reading the Song of Solomon. It is not so with me, and I venture to think it is not so with you; but are you, dear friends, deeply conscious that there are many parts of the Song of Solomon that set forth the exercises of your souls, and the strong desires of your hearts? Do you not turn again and again to that Song because of this? And are you not equally conscious that the Song of Solomon sets forth that "secret of the Lord" which "is with them that fear Him,"—that central Object which, though your souls may not yet have grasped it with full assurance, is the Object for which you long? If this be the case, if you are in earnest in the things of God, if you want to taste of the sweets and gracious joys which come through communion with Him, you will not fritter your time away in reading books as to the

character of this Song. Your desire will be that the Lord would reveal unto you, in their reality, the deep and precious and glorious things which are in the Person of our Lord, and which are set forth with imagery so sublime as that which obtains in this Book.

"The Song of songs which is Solomon's,"—not only the chief song of the 1,005 which King Solomon wrote, but that Song of songs to which all other songs in God's Word head up. If we will know a little of what it is to sing the first bars, as it were, of the Song of songs, we must know something of other songs first,—something of the song of electing love, which has given to us a name and a place better than that of sons and of daughters. We must be able to sing a little of the song of regenerating love, which has quickened our souls, and created desires which Christ, and Christ alone, can satisfy. We must sing a little of the song of adopting love which has brought us into the family of which the Father says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" notwithstanding all our backslidings and wanderings. And we must know somewhat of the song of redeeming love, which speaks to the praise of Him who stooped from His throne in heaven to the dunghill, to find us and to lift us up to His heart and to His home.

It is, then, the love of God to His church which burns and glows throughout the whole of this Book. You may search from the first chapter to the last, and will not find the word God or Lord in it. The Name of the Lord does not occur, but the whole Book is full of Jehovah Jesus; it is full of the grace and glory of our Triune God. You do not find the Name of God in the Book of Esther, but students of the Hebrew tell us that the title Jehovah is worked in an acrostic right through the Book in the original Hebrew. In the history of Esther you have the glorious title Jehovah in the marvellous deliverances which He wrought for His ancient people, deliverances typical of those He is working to-day. Now in earthly things, where you truly love, you do not find it perpetually necessary to mention the name of the loved one; the deepest love is that which deals more especially with pronouns. Look at Mary at the sepulchre. What did she say to Him whom she thought to be the gardener? "If Thou hast borne *Him* hence"—she did not say any more than that as to His Name—"tell me where Thou hast laid *Him*." Her heart was so occupied with our blessed Lord that the pronoun "*Him*" was quite sufficient to embody and describe and express her love.

And so it is in our text, "While the King"—who is He? THE King—there is no other. "While *the* King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." What had the bride been saying? Just that which meets and voices the experience of our hearts: "Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." She had a deep view of her own defilement, an intense realisation of her own shortcomings and deficiencies. She mourned over herself as a sinner before a holy

and gracious God; and suddenly there is a voice heard in her soul,—“If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,”—a voice calling her “the fairest among women,” who had been deploring her lack of diligence in not keeping her own vineyard. In an instant she knows who it is. In our text she says in effect, “It is the King; only the King could say that, and bring to my heart that peace and rest which those words have conveyed to me.” “Where the word of a king is, there is power;” and “while the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.” Our text is the delighted response of faith to the love pledges of our dear Lord. And the poor bride listens in her depression and sorrow, her heart says within her, “It is the King, I know His voice, and He alone can speak such great and precious words to me.” She recognises the voice of Him who loved her, and had brought her into His banqueting-house.

Let us now speak of the four parts into which this text divides itself: *the King, the table, the guests, and the frankincense.*

Who is *this King*? God over all, blessed for ever! God infinite, God eternal, God ineffably glorious! The holy God in communion with sinners, speaking to sinners, sitting with sinners and eating with them. It is the holy and glorious God; and publicans and sinners draw near to Him, and receive a welcome from Him. Who is the King, then? It is the King of grace,—supreme in grace. It is the King of love. It is the King of glory. It is God, the eternal Son, wearing our nature. As a godly old Puritan somewhere says, “In wearing our nature He has taken to Himself that which will never be out of fashion with Him.” “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof;” but the Son of God having taken to Himself our nature, has taken it to wear for ever and for ever. It is the King in His Mediatorial work, God the Son viewed here as Mediator, God the Son viewed as clothed with our nature, God the Son in all the fulness and the plenitude of His grace. The prophet Habakkuk shows that there were horns coming out of the hand of the God of Israel—in relation to our blessed Lord as Messiah,—horns or beams of grace and love and mercy. We see those beams of grace coming out of His hand when as a boy of twelve He is among the doctors. Outwardly, nothing differentiated Him from youths of the same age, but the horns of power came out of His hands, and the doctors and rabbis wondered as they heard Him. Horns came out of His hands in all the words He spoke and the deeds He did; and when He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, it was to give, in all the fulness of grace, gifts to men, even to the rebellious also. Here, then, is the King, the Son of God, coming forth from the bosom of the Father, wearing the nature of the bride, who says, “Look not upon me, because I am black;” wearing the pure and the unsullied garments of His dear church and people.

Now there is a very beautiful rendering in the Hebrew of part of the fourth verse. The Hebrew literally we are told has this,—“The King hath caused me to come into His chambers.” There.

is a very blessed and precious fulness in this,—“The King hath caused me to come into His chambers, where He sitteth at His table.” Oh, dear friends, salvation is all of grace from first to last. He has caused you to come in by His sovereign right. He has caused you, by divine authority, by heavenly power, to come into His chambers, by those sweet drawings of love and mercy which prove that you have been loved “with an everlasting love.” He hath caused you to come into His chambers by sweet revelations of Himself to the eye of faith, by the whispers of His love, and often by pressure from without. How often has the work of grace been commenced in the heart through pressure from without! Circumstances have oppressed, enemies in your family have oppressed, business has oppressed, awful disappointments have oppressed. You have been taught thereby the absolutely unsatisfying character of this poor world. The Lord has so wrought upon that pressure that it has pressed you towards Him, and then like Noah, He has put forth His hand, and drawn you into the ark. That poor dove was pressed to the ark. Why? Because she could find no rest for the sole of her foot, and being pressed to the ark, the skylight opened, Noah’s face appeared, his hand was stretched out, and he drew her in unto himself.

“I heard the voice of Jesus say,
‘Come unto Me, and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.’”

It is the King with divine authority, the King of sovereign mercy and of blessed power. I do rejoice that we have a Saviour who does not do and undo. That is what the best of us do. We do, and we undo; we fumble and blunder; but our King sets His hand to the work and carries it most gloriously through. Our Lord harnesses into divine and glorious harmony all the events of your lives and exercises of your soul, which appear to be clean contrary the one to the other. Our Mediatorial King, wearing our nature, who died for us, who lives for us, is He concerning whom this glorious word is spoken in our text.

Now we see here that the King was chiefest in the thoughts of His church. She does not say very much about the feast, she is thinking entirely about the King. “The King sitteth at His table;—and if the King is there, everything else will be right; I shall have all else I want.” Is not that true in its inner sense? If we can read a little of our title to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, nothing else matters; and yet it is all the other things that are denominated “else,” which crowd in, and do matter to our unbelieving spirits. If the Son of God incarnate died for you and me, our blessing and heaven are secured; our safe convoy through this world is certain; everything that we need to satisfy our poor souls is secured. From this point of view nothing else matters, for all is under the control of Him who never fumbles, but to whom all perplexities are plain, and who is working all in accordance with His own will.

"The bride eyes not her garments,
 But her dear Bridegroom's face;
 I would not look on heaven,
 But on my King of grace;
 Not on the crown He gifteth,
 But on His pierced hand,
 For the Lamb is ALL the glory
 Of Emmanuel's land!"

O Lord, so work in my heart and in the hearts of the people here that our thoughts may be taken up with Thy beauty, Thy presence, Thy covenant love, Thy unfailing faithfulness and tenderness, yea, with THYSELF. Happy the heart that can so prize God first of all, more than the gifts which flow from His hand. Occupied with Christ, so we have the blessings. I feel I want more of that spirit which filled the heart of Christian in the Palace Beautiful. He sat up talking with the maidens of the palace, and all their talk was about the Lord of the hill and the wonders He had wrought, the grace and the glory and the love which were flowing from Him. The talk of the lips about many of the subjects that occupy our attention "tendeth only to penury;" but the talk of the lips as the King sitteth at His table shall cheer thine heart.

Secondly, *the table*. The almighty, eternal Son of God becomes mediatorially King to His people. Now here is the table. What a lovely word this is, "While the King sitteth at His table," What does it mean? It is a very sacred word; home is bound up with it. Fathers and mothers here; you have your table, and your children and your friends and your dear ones round your table from time to time. "When the King sitteth at His table,"—He rests, for the King has finished His sin-atonement work, and wrought His perfect righteousness. It means refreshment, for when He sitteth at His table, and invites the guests, it is a table that is spread with a divine and glorious provision. It means fellowship, for when the family are gathered round the board they are not timid; they look to the face of their Father, and there is fellowship. In proportion as we see the face of our King, we shall turn one to another and talk about Him; but if we do not know much of Him, we shall not have much to say to those who sit with us. The King, through His work, having provided that table with divine and glorious provision, sits there; and He does not sit there having vainly besought the guests to come in. He sits there, and they come in, the guests that He expects, that He has provided for, whose names have been marked there. I have heard of people who have invited too many persons to their house, and have not had enough chairs, and there has been confusion. Everything is harmonised here, and if there is a place reserved in heaven for each heir of bliss, there is a place at the gospel table for each expected guest. Where do they come from? They come out of a dreary, cold world. They come in wet and shivering and weary; they come in, and find a robe provided, and provision upon that table.

Look at the tables which the Lord has provided, all carefully prepared. There was the table in the holy place, made of wood and covered with gold, even the table of the shewbread. The place for the table was prepared; the table itself was made according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount, and the shewbread cakes placed upon it were renewed week by week. Prepared provision in a prepared place, upon a prepared table, for a prepared people; and the priests—representing the Church of God—were to eat that shewbread as it was removed from the table week by week. The gold of that shewbread table was indicative of the Deity of our blessed Lord; the wood, of His humanity; the shewbread table and the provision thereon were for His poor and needy people. Then there are the gospel table, the table of the Lord's Supper, and finally, there is that table on which in the fulness of glory shall be the provision at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

"His table." What does David say in the 23rd Psalm? "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Have you not found that again and again in the presence of your enemies the Lord has prepared a table for you? What precedes that in the 23rd Psalm? A description of wandering, of restoration, a reference to dark and gloomy passages in life that are called "the valley of the shadow of death,"—not primarily death itself, although that is included, but dark and gloomy passages which have the shadow of death upon them. Have there not been times when you have passed that way, but the Lord has not left you, and afterwards you have found a table, you have found oil, even the oil of the Spirit? To you has been presented a mantling cup, even that cup of blessing that runneth over. O dear child of God, however dark the valley through which you pass, there is a table spread at the other end, a table prepared for you in the presence of your enemies, at which you have sat again and again. And there is provision upon the table. Is there not a beautiful illustration of this in connection with Melchizedek? Abraham returns from the slaughter of the kings, and is weary, and Melchizedek meets him, and brings forth bread and wine. And in the day of our spiritual hunger, trial and yearning, has not our great High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek, brought forth bread and wine? You have opened your Bible prayerfully, asking that some word may be spoken with power, and some word has come home to your heart which has changed the whole current of your thoughts. You have come up to God's house, and have found the sermon to set forth your experience exactly from beginning to end. O blessed and glorious gospel! Here at the table the church sits, and here the King sits, and here He ministers love and pardon, justification and peace, yea, even HIMSELF. The provision that is here is of this character, that nothing is forgotten in His sovereign grace and mercy which our needs require. "His flesh is meat indeed"—everything we want—"and His blood is drink indeed." "While the King sitteth at His table," He says, "Eat, O friends;

drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Oh that our heads may be anointed with fresh oil, so that we may take that mantling cup, and sit at that table where the King Himself waiteth to be gracious!

Thirdly. There are the *guests*. These are regarded here, of course, collectively in the person of the church, but all that is said of the church collectively, is said of every individual believer. Look at the picture of the guests who sat down at the supper at Bethany. The King sat at that table on the eve of His solemn sufferings, and who were the guests? There is a deep meaning in it. It was in the house of Simon the leper. Of course he was not then a leper, or he would have been an outcast; he was at the table, cleansed from the leprosy of sin. There was Lazarus, the raised man, a picture of him who has been quickened from the death of trespasses and sins. There is Martha, no longer cumbered with her much serving; and there is Mary, a different type, who sat at Jesus' feet, and is now sitting at the table where the King Himself sits. There are the disciples, all different. Here is the picture of the gospel feast—sinners are there, cleansed from the leprosy of sin; quickened into newness of life; with our peculiar temperaments quieted under the hand of the King. Concerning the guests the King has said, "Call in hither the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the halt."

Lastly, the *fragrance*. "While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." The bride was not boasting, but owning the Lord's grace to her and in her. Where do we have a further reference to this? In the third verse we have, "The savour of Thy good ointments;"—then the spikenard was among the "good ointments" that belong to the King, and which He had given to His bride. So when she says, "My spikenard," she means that it is "mine through the gift of the King, because He has bestowed upon me of His good ointments." But why "spikenard"? It is a little fragrant herb, emblematical of humility. Look at Mary's box of spikenard. Until it was broken, the spikenard could not emit its fragrance. So when the Lord is pleased to break these hard hearts of ours—and we want them broken again and again—the spikenard that by His grace is therein, sends forth the smell thereof, and then the head as well as the feet of our Prophet, Priest and King is anointed. "My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." It means that everything of grace that is in the believer is then drawn forth. "But you should always be on the mountain top, and if you are not rejoicing, you may depend upon it, you are a very wicked person." I do not understand that. "When the King sitteth at His table, when I see Him, when He speaks to me, *then* my spikenard sends forth the smell thereof."

"My spikenard"—*repentance*. Where do we get that from? From the King, who is "exalted to give repentance." *Faith*. Where do we get that from? "It is the gift of God." *Hope*. That is the gift of "the God of hope." *Love*. "We love Him

because He first loved us." Grace, joy and peace all come from Him. Now all these graces often lie cold and frozen in His absence; but they are drawn out towards Him as the Source whence all flowed, when Christ is seen. Hence our prayer is, "Lord, increase my faith," the hand by which I receive; the eye by which I see; and as my poor soul is taken up with a precious Christ, then it is I rejoice, and "my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." What is it melts the snow? The beams of the sun. There is an aromatic shrub; but what must bring forth its fragrance? The dew, and sometimes the pressure of the foot causes it to send forth its otherwise sealed perfumes. So in our spiritual life: often when the believer imagines that he has no grace at all, the simple presence of Jesus raises a cloud of grateful incense from the heart; the promise drops upon the soul, the Word comes home with power, the hard casket in a moment is broken or melted, and that which the casket contains—which we can never lose, but which must be drawn into act and exercise by the Spirit's revealing to us a precious and glorious Christ—sends forth the smell thereof. Our King of kings and Lord of lords is the Lord's Anointed. All His garments "smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia out of the ivory palaces" (Ps. xlv. 8),—typical of the unmeasured anointing which He has received from God the Holy Ghost, and which flows down to us who are among His members. Presently the last valley will be travelled, and the prepared people will sit at the prepared table, and in the light of His countenance we shall see His face,

"And never, never sin,
But from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."

Do your hearts know aught of these divine things? Everything else to me, and I think I can say the same concerning most of you (would I could say it of all!), everything else compared to these divine things fades and dwindles. O poor sinner, ignorant of Christ, you are upon the confines of eternity. Eternity and a holy God are before you; but the gospel is that Christ Jesus the Lord is the Saviour of poor, needy sinners. Though our hearts are often out of tune, though they emit discord from time to time, yet there is now and again a note of heavenly music; there is a drawing forth of the nard that there is within; for this poor heart is

"Strung and tuned to endless years,
And form'd by love divine,
To sound in God the Father's ears
No other Name but Thine."

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